

NEWBALD WATER VOLES

A Guide for Residents Adjacent to the Beck

THE DUTIES OF RESIDENTS

If you own property alongside the Beck, you may be a 'riparian owner'. As such you have by law specific responsibilities, which include:

- maintaining the Beck's bed and banks.
- allowing the flow of water to pass without obstruction.

In carrying out this duty, you have to take care to look after protected species, such as the water vole.



NEWBALD WATER VOLE POPULATION AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Water voles are currently declining at a rapid rate. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. **It is an offence to in any way damage, destroy or obstruct their breeding and resting places.**



Newbald Parish Council commissioned the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to do a survey in October 2013 to ascertain the full extent of the water vole population in Newbald. It is clear that the village has two distinct populations along the Beck – one in the Mires and the other in the Becksies.

Although the survey did not find any specific evidence that there are water voles along the stretch of the Beck on Eastgate, we know from previous eyewitness sightings that they are there, or have been in the past. To be sure of complying with the law, Newbald Parish Council recommends that we do our best to preserve their habitat along the whole of Eastgate as well; that way too the population of these special water voles will increase.

GUIDANCE ON BEST PRACTICE FOR CLEARING THE BECK

(Provided by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)

When undertaking maintenance work to remove excessive weed growth in and around the Beck, the following guidance provides advice on how to minimise the potential impacts on the water vole population. **Any contractors employed to undertake clearance work should be made aware of these guidelines and commit to working within them.**

- Work should be done in the autumn and winter months to avoid the breeding season and times of highest water vole activity.
- If mechanical tools are used (ie: digger, tractor) to remove the weed, care should be taken not to damage or dig into the banksides as this could destroy water vole burrow entrances. Care should also be taken not to over-deepen the stream bed as this could cause banks to become undercut with subsequent slippage and increased erosion.
- Bankside vegetation should be left as tussocky and thick as possible to reduce predation (village cats can and do cause heavy predation pressure). If bank clearance/cutting is done it is preferable to use hand tools (strimmer/ brushcutter) with a height of 15cm of vegetation cover left.
- Aquatic vegetation removed from the beck should not be left to rot down on the bank side as this will increase nettle, thistle and other weeds to become more established, leading to increased management over time. Ideally it should be left for at least 24 hours to allow any aquatic invertebrates to find their way back into the beck and then removed to be composted.