

## Protecting local wildlife

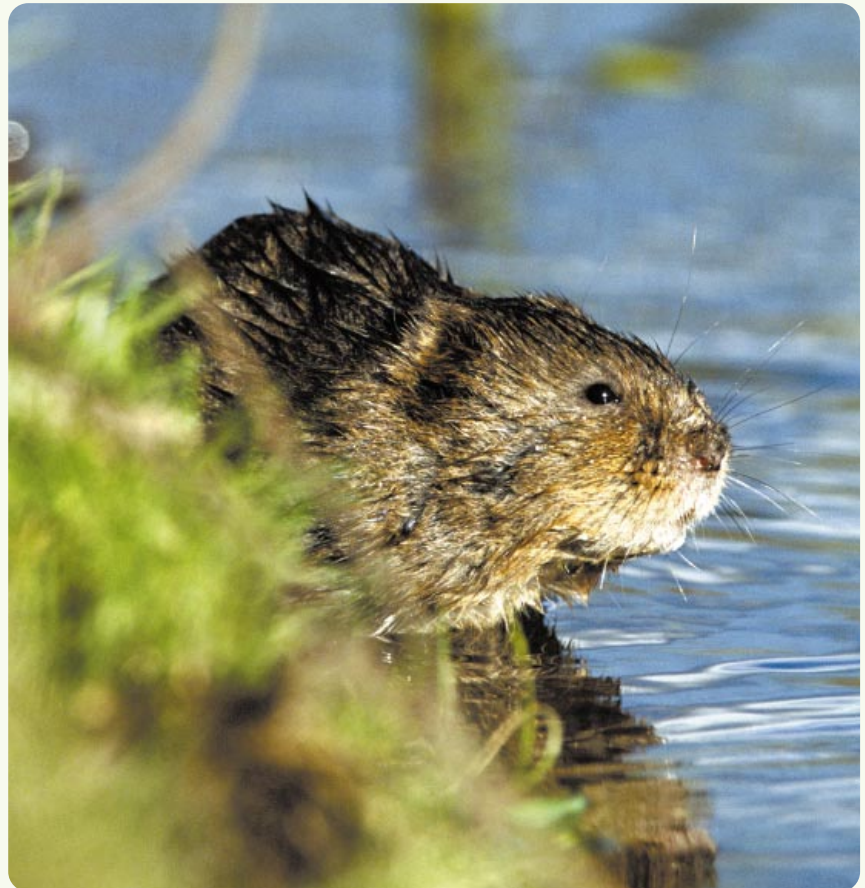
The M6 Toll motorway – the long-awaited alternative to our congested West Midlands road network.

It's important to us to minimise the impact of the new motorway on local wildlife. In 2000 we started researching the best ways to protect sites of ecological importance, before beginning construction work in Spring 2001.

### fastfacts

#### New environments we have created

- 18 new ecological ponds
- 20 balancing ponds, to balance flood water run-off from the road
- 6 otter holts
- More than 20 otter habitats
- Around 20 otter passes under the road
- More than 20 habitats for white clawed crayfish
- 4 badger setts
- Around 10 passes under the road for badgers
- 6 water vole habitats
- Around 20 potential habitats for great crested newts
- Around 300 bat boxes



Water vole

#### Using less land

To limit general disruption, we decided to use as little land as we could for construction and landscaping – around 600 hectares – and to follow existing roads wherever possible.

#### Consulting English Nature

Because there are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) along the route – Chasewater Heath, Hatherton Clay Pit, the River Blythe and Middleton Fish Ponds – we discussed all our plans for these sites with English Nature before starting work.

#### Working with ecology specialists

Our surveys also identified other sites we needed to conserve – including

heathlands, woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, streams, rivers and ponds. Here, we employed ecology specialists Cresswell Associates to advise on how to protect these sensitive areas, for example fencing them off during construction. We also worked alongside professional habitat rescue teams on a number of large-scale conservation projects along the route.

Here are some details of our work to help protect a wide range of local wildlife.

#### Water voles

After identifying where voles were living, we trimmed the banks of streams and rivers to encourage them to move downstream. Where this wasn't possible, trained ecologists moved the water voles

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to habitats outside the new motorway area. This is part of our agreement with the Environment Agency, which we will keep to throughout our construction contract.

### Badgers

There are a number of badger setts along the motorway route. Where necessary, we built replacement setts close to the existing ones, but far enough away from construction to avoid disturbing the animals again. We carried out all sett closures under licence from English Nature. We've also provided pipe tunnels under the road as safe crossings, particularly where there are setts on either side of the new motorway.

### Otters

In addition to animal tunnels, we're also building special ledges to help otters migrate during periods of flooding. Using upturned tree stumps, we've also created otter 'holts' – dens located above flood level – along typical watercourse routes and habitats in new motorway landscape areas.

### Bats

We employed bat specialists to check all the trees along the motorway route. Where necessary, we fitted exclusion devices to encourage the bats to find alternative roosts. We've also attached nearly 300 bat boxes to suitable trees along the route to create new roosts.



### Newts

On two sites along the route, we found great crested newts, a protected species. Again, we worked with specialists to move these populations to new habitats outside the site, and to new ecological ponds we've provided as part of our general conservation work. We did all this under special licences from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

### Aquatic species

Hatherton Clay Pit and other small watercourses in the area also contain the native white-clawed crayfish, a protected



Bat specialists working on the M6 Toll route

aquatic species, which is becoming increasingly rare. We are taking care to protect this animal and its habitat during construction, preserving the ecology of these sensitive habitats.

### General conservation

With plenty of safe passages over or under the new road, animal population growth in the area should be able to continue as normal.

We're also creating mounds and planting around one million trees – many more than the 12,000 or so we've had to remove. This will protect the landscape of the surrounding area and provide new woodland habitats for many species.

### About us

Midland Expressway Limited is a private company with the Government concession to design, build and operate the 27-mile M6 Toll motorway until 2054. Our partners in design and construction are CAMBBA, a joint venture of Carillion, Alfred McAlpine, Balfour Beatty and AMEC.

For more information, visit our website at [www.M6Toll.co.uk](http://www.M6Toll.co.uk)

