

Beaver Reintroduction Strategy for the Brit Valley

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The town of Beaminster at the north end of the Brit Valley, surrounded by steeply rising farmland

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Beavers | Wetlands | River Restoration

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Executive summary

- This Beaver Reintroduction Strategy explores different options for reintroducing wild beavers into the Brit Valley. It is designed to allow the project partners decide whether and how to proceed with reintroduction.
- On 28th February 2025 Natural England began granting licenses for the release of beavers into the wild in England. A detailed application process has now been outlined which is likely to take *at least* a year to complete. The initial stage is the submission of an Expression of Interest (Eoi), with successful applicants then invited to begin the formal application process. The first application window for Eois closes on 2nd May 2025.
- Central to any application will be a detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan which is designed to ensure that the community is actively involved and generally supportive of the proposals to reintroduce beavers, and that any issues have been considered and addressed.
- In April 2023, a public consultation exercise was undertaken by the Brit Valley Project through a series of public events and a questionnaire (Appendix 3). 85% of local residents were in support of wild beaver reintroduction into the Brit catchment, with 67% of farmers and landowners also supportive. This corroborates the findings of the large national survey undertaken by the University of Exeter in 2017 which showed 86% of people supported beaver reintroduction.
- Initial discussions with Environment Agency, Dorset Council and Natural England have highlighted issues that will need to be considered. These include areas at risk of flooding and flood defences, plus designated sites such as the West Dorset Alder Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- A series of release options are examined and roughly costed here. The final approach adopted would be developed as part of any licence application, and depend on the outcome of discussions with landowners and other stakeholders. It suggests the use the existing enclosures at Slape and Mapperton as soft release locations, potentially combined with a small number of additional releases. In this way, it would balance the need to establish a genetically diverse founder population, with the ability of the community to adapt to the presence of beavers and manage any potential conflicts successfully.
- A project will need a fully resourced Beaver Officer on the ground, providing advice and support for at least 10 years, and a project ecologist who might manage the project. They would report to a Steering Group, as well as to the Dorset Beaver Management Group.
- As part of a suite of supporting documents and plans, an Exit Strategy must be in place which either demonstrates after 10 years that the beavers have been successfully integrated back into the catchment, or results in early termination due to failure or other factors.

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Background and Purpose

The Brit Valley project is a collaborative initiative involving more than 50 farmers and landowners in the Brit catchment, and incorporating nearly 8,000 acres around the Brit, Symene and Asker Rivers, and the Mangerton Brook. This is over 35% of the catchment. Managed by West Dorset Wilding and funded by DEFRA under their Landscape Recovery programme, the aim is to support land managers to make collective and coordinated changes in land and water management practices to allow nature to recover and thrive.

This Project Development Phase (PDP) phase lasts 2 years (April 2024-March 2026) and will develop a set of plans for the subsequent 20-30 years. Alongside other funders, Defra would fund these changes through ELMS, allocating public money for public goods for things such as sustainable soil and water management, and restoring wetlands and watercourse corridors to increase our resilience to climate change by reducing flood risks and ameliorating drought impacts, as well as enhancing biodiversity.

As part of this PDP, West Dorset Wilding is exploring options for the reintroduction of beavers into the Brit Valley after April 2026.

In June 2021, Professor Richard Brazier from the University of Exeter, working with Dr Roisin Campbell-Palmer, Derek Gow and Dr Alan Puttock published a feasibility study (Brazier et al, 2021) to investigate opportunities for beaver enclosures in five estates within the Brit catchment. They identified a number of possible options on each estate and outlined the suitability of each, as well as providing an overview of sourcing and health screening beavers and details of fencing requirements.

This led to the construction of two enclosures in the catchment; near the main stem of the Brit at Slape Manor, and in the Mapperton Estate on the Mangerton Brook. In May 2022 a pair were introduced into the Slape enclosure and they bred in 2023 and 2024. In October 2022 a pair were introduced into the Mapperton site. The enclosure is in a steep valley and the high fluvial energy makes the fence difficult to manage, and the beavers have escaped from here twice. Efforts are ongoing to locate them, but it seems likely they are living unobtrusively in a secluded part of the catchment, or even further afield.

In March 2023, the University of Exeter team conducted a more detailed modelling exercise of Beaver Dam Capacity (BDC) and mapped the Beaver Habitat Index (BHI) (Puttock and Brazier, 2023). Using the BHI they produced detailed maps of the catchment and showed that only 1.7% of watercourses were unsuitable, with 42% containing highly suitable (preferred) beaver habitat.

The BDC models the theoretical maximum number of dams a reach of watercourse could support based on its physical characteristics and what is known about beaver behaviour. It assumes the population is at ecological carrying capacity and so in reality the numbers generated by the model are unlikely to actually occur on the ground. However, it is a useful way of understanding which watercourses might be heavily modified by beavers, generating ecosystem services, potentially also interfering with existing drainage and land-use.

The model classified the watercourses in the Brit catchment as follows:

- No capacity for damming - 8.5 km (1.8%)
- Beaver dams rare (0-1 dams / km) - 100.3 km (21.5%)
- Beaver dams occasional (1-4 dams / km) - 86.8 km (18.6%)
- Beaver dams frequent (5-15 dams / km) - 80.4 km (17.3%)
- Beaver dams pervasive (16-30 dams / kms) - 189.7 km (40.7%)

The **purpose of this document** is to explore different options for reintroducing wild beavers into the Brit Valley. Four different reintroduction scenarios have been designed and costed, based around the licence application process now outlined in the [Wild Release Criteria](#) and the [Code and Guidance for Conservation Translocations](#). It includes a governance structure for the reintroduction and ongoing management of beavers in the catchment that would dovetail with the Landscape Recovery project.

It outlines the opinions of local stakeholders, and the specific issues raised by the local Natural England and Environment Agency teams. It also sets out the phases of a stakeholder engagement schedule, taking account of the outcomes of previous events and the developing LR stakeholder engagement plan.

It makes use of the two existing beaver enclosures in the catchment, and notes the potential presence of escapees within the catchment and how these may need to be incorporated into a reintroduction licence application. It also discusses the sourcing and health screening of beavers for release.

Next steps

Now that Natural England have published guidance on applying for wild release licences, the Brit Valley Project is in a better position to decide about how best to proceed. If a decision is made to go ahead with a wild release, an Expression of Interest should be submitted by 2nd May, and a Steering Group established to oversee the application and release process.

There will be other windows for submissions of Expressions of Interest if the partners do not wish to proceed at this stage. However, there will be a limited number of projects asked to enter full applications in each period, so choosing not to complete the process after successfully completing an EoI could delay another projects' application.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Sam, Millie, Nick and Katie in the Brit Valley Project team, and to Steve Oliver at Dorset Wildlife Trust. Thanks also to those landowners that have kindly allowed me access for survey work.

It is also important to acknowledge the previous work carried out by Prof Richard Brazier and Dr Alan Puttock from the University of Exeter, as well as Dr Roisin Campbell-Palmer from the Beaver Trust and national beaver specialist and author Derek Gow. Their modelling work has been vital for understanding the habitat suitability of the catchment for beavers, and the dam capacity of different watercourses.

Their initial costing for sourcing beavers have also been used for the production of the costed options, supplemented with additional information from Roisin.

***Tagged beaver on the River Otter feeding on riverside willow
(Picture by Chris Townend)***



Introduction to Eurasian Beavers

- Eurasian Beavers (*Castor fiber*) are a native species across much of Europe and Asia. They were hunted to extinction across much of their range, primarily for their valuable pelts, including in Britain where they probably became extinct around 400 years ago.
- Beavers are the second largest rodent in the world (after the South American capybara), with adults weighing up to 30 kg, and being over a metre in length.
- Family groups generally comprise a stable adult pair and up to two generations of offspring. Kits are born around May, when any 2-year-olds then disperse to find mates and establish new territories.
- They are fiercely territorial, and a family group can occupy several miles of riverbank, with the size of the territory being dependant on the quality of the habitat available. This territorial behaviour results in some mortality, increasing as the population approaches carrying capacity.
- Beavers are entirely herbivorous, although the diet can be varied and is quite seasonal. During the summer months when there is ample soft riverside vegetation they may feed less on woody scrub and trees. During the autumn and winter, the diet is predominantly bark and smaller shoots of woody species particularly willow, poplar, birch, hazel but almost any species can be utilised.
- Although they don't feed on the wood itself, they will fell trees of any size to reach the upper branches, and to stimulate young fresh growth within their territory. Many of the trees they feed on, particularly their favoured willows and poplars, coppice in response to being cut. In doing so, they can change the canopy structure of riparian woodland and create more open and varied habitats alongside watercourses.
- Beavers are an adaptable species and will occupy a wide range of watercourses from the smallest (1st order) streams and headwater wetlands, right down to the largest rivers and upper estuaries. They like to occupy deep water where they live in burrows and lodges that have submerged entrances. In areas where water levels aren't deep or stable enough, they will construct dams to impound water.
- They don't build dams across larger rivers (>6m wide), and their dams are often temporary features in smaller streams, creating important in-channel habitats for fish and other aquatic species. In heavily modified watercourses, dams are more likely to obstruct free movement of fish during drier conditions. Although more research is essential, the evidence suggests that the significant habitat benefits for fish populations might outweigh any localised and temporary negative effects on migration.



The return of beavers to Britain

The reintroduction of the Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber*) into Britain has a complex history.

In 2002 the Kent Wildlife Trust introduced beavers into a semi-wild enclosure at Ham Fen – the first licensed release into an enclosure in England (excluding zoological collections). Since then, beavers have been released into over 40 enclosures across England, as well as others in Wales and Scotland.

However, beavers are notoriously difficult to keep inside enclosures for any length of time, and from the very beginning, they began escaping into the adjacent watercourses and dispersing from there. In addition, there have been numerous incidents of ‘beaver bombing’ where they have been deliberately released into different catchments.

In 2009 Natural England published a national feasibility study which concluded that it was clearly feasible to reintroduce beavers into England and that many benefits were likely to accrue, not least the potential of beaver to assist with river and floodplain restoration.

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/45003>

Around the same time the Scottish Beaver Trial began in Knapdale (Argyl and Bute), and following its successful conclusion, beavers were granted protected status north of the border in 2019, and a strategy for their wider reintroduction across Scotland has now been published (2022).

<https://www.nature.scot/doc/scotlands-beaver-strategy-2022-2045>

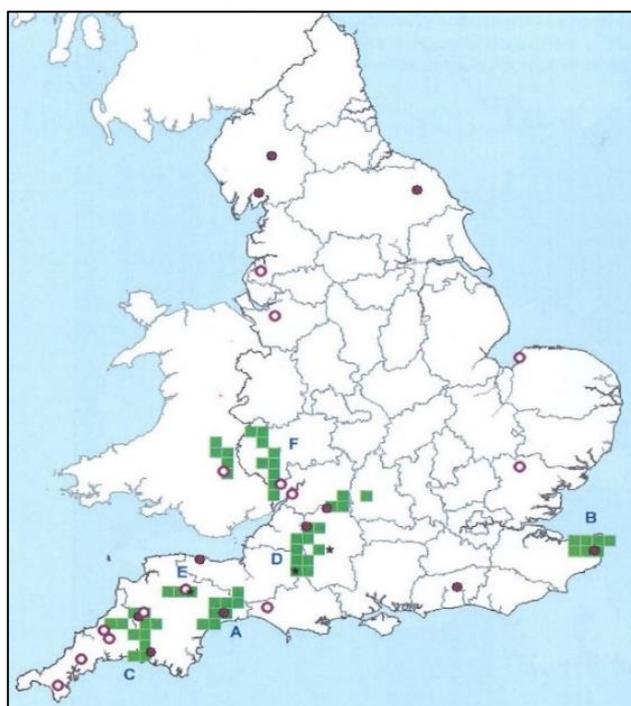
In England, the first *licensed* re-introduction of beavers into the wild occurred in the River Otter in Devon. It followed the discovery of a wild-living population and a campaign by local people that they be permitted to remain. The River Otter Beaver Trial (ROBT) ran from 2015 to 2020 and was managed by the Devon Wildlife Trust working with University of Exeter and other partners. The ROBT Science and Evidence Forum published detailed findings of the Trial. <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/creww/research/beavertrial/>

In 2020 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced that the wild beavers living on the River Otter would be permitted to remain and spread naturally into adjacent catchments, and in October 2022 beavers were granted European Protected Species (EPS) status in England. However, it remains illegal to release them into the wild without a licence.

In August 2021 Defra launched a consultation on a proposed *Approach to beaver reintroduction and management in England*, and this was accompanied by the publication of extensive supporting evidence documents, which included a summary of the distribution of known wild beaver populations.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/beaver-reintroduction-and-management/>

Distribution of wild beaver populations in 2021 (in green) from the Natural England publication ‘Beaver Reintroductions to England 2000-2021.’ The circular icons indicate the locations of licensed enclosures at that time.



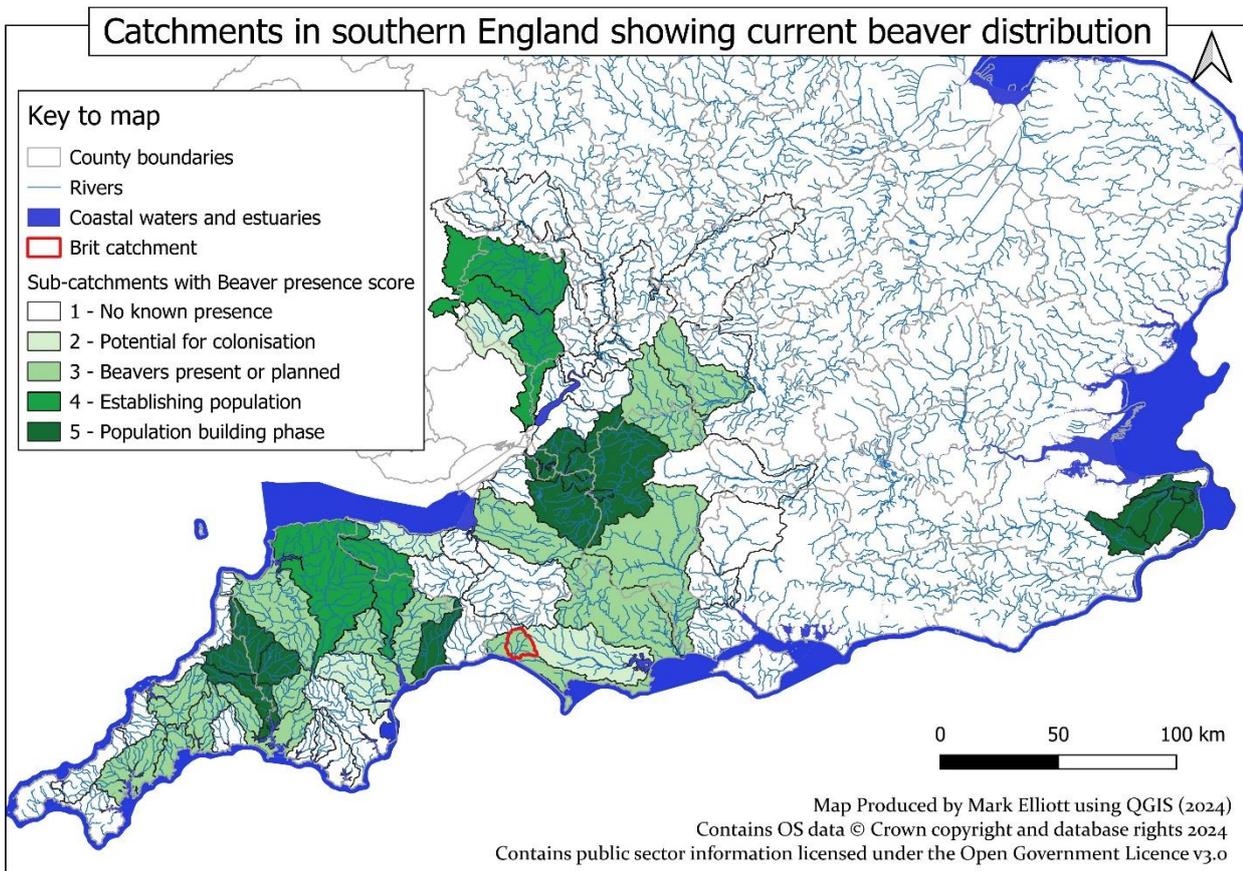
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5363285194178560>

Wild beavers in southwest England

Beavers colonise the landscape through the network of watercourses that make up a river catchment. Dispersing youngsters particularly can navigate long distances along rivers and streams, exploring the catchment for suitable habitat and other beavers. However, they rarely cross between catchments as this means leaving the safety of a watercourse. This is particularly so, when populations are small as there is less territorial pressure on them to disperse.

As a result of escapes and deliberate releases, many river catchments in the southwest now contain wild beavers. The map below indicates roughly the different stages of colonisation in the river catchments of southern England. The largest populations in the southwest are in the Tamar, Otter and Bristol Avon and Frome, with other establishing populations in the Exe, Taw and Wye. Elsewhere small numbers of escapee or dispersing beavers occasionally turn up and some could be expected to establish populations in the future.

The South Dorset streams area is in the middle category (beavers present or planned) because of escapee and wild beavers in the Brit and in nearby Studland, this proposed reintroduction into the Brit, and the one now underway into Studland.



Legal status of beavers, and licensing of wild releases and management

Licensing of beaver releases and management is undertaken by Natural England under the following two pieces of legislation:

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

In 2015, Eurasian beavers were added to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 making it an offence to release or allow them to escape into the wild without a licence. A licence is therefore required under S.14 to release them either into the wild, or even into an enclosure because of their potential to escape.

Consent is also necessary to use certain methods (cage traps) to trap Eurasian beavers under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

From 1st October 2022, beavers were listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, making it an offence to deliberately capture, injure, kill or disturb them, or damage and destroy their breeding sites or resting places without a licence.

This means that trapping and transport of beavers for wild release also needs to be conducted under a separate licence. For those keeping beavers in enclosures, a possession licence is also required under these regulations.

The protection of breeding sites or resting places means that burrows, lodges and their associated dams become protected features. Where dams are *definitely not* associated with a burrow or lodge, or are less than two weeks old, they are not covered by this legislation.



Removing a beaver dam by hand on the River Otter

To streamline the licensing under this legislation, one of three Class Licences are used. People are required to undergo appropriate training and are then registered to use one of the following:

- **CL50 – Licence to capture, transport and re-release beavers or modify or remove beaver dams, burrows and lodges** - for experts, specialists or those in a beaver management group.
- **CL51 – Licence to modify or remove dams, burrows and lodges** - for land or water managers or those who work for a public body or authority.
- **CL52 – Licence to modify or remove dams and damaged burrows** - for farmers, landowners, fishery managers or foresters outside the beaver breeding season.

The licencing process for wild releases

The recent announcement of the licensing process by Natural England now provides enough detail to enable the Brit Valley Project to decide whether and how to proceed with release.

Central to the process is the [Code and Guidance for Reintroductions and other Conservation Translocations](#). A brief summary of how the Brit Valley Project currently meets the 9 key principles of *the Code* is included in Appendix 1.

In addition, the [Wild Release Criteria](#) explain the information that will be needed as part of the submission to Natural England to demonstrate that the benefits of the project outweigh any potential negative effects.

There are nine parts of the criteria, many of which overlap with the principles of the Code:

- **Identify the issue and form a conservation strategy** – A project plan, must identify the purpose of the wild release and define the project’s future vision, goals and objectives.
- **Stay legal** – Obtain any permissions and consents that are necessary.
- **Maximise success** – Identify an appropriate donor population and project area. Create a release strategy as part of the project plan.
- **Biodiversity outcomes: benefits and risks** – This includes assessing the effects on designated sites, habitats and species of principle importance, and completing a biodiversity risk assessment for any negative effects that the project could cause.
- **Socio-economic outcomes: benefits and costs** – the project plan must describe how the release will interact with any land, infrastructure, fisheries and all stakeholders. A socio-economic risk assessment must be produced to include any negative effects the project could cause.
- **Engagement, consultation and transparent communication** – a detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan will need to be produced and implemented.
- **Governance and resourcing** - Projects need to show who will carry out the project plan and that they have enough funding for the 10-year project. The governance structure must be outlined and include someone to represent the licensee, a project steering group, a local beaver officer, and a project ecologist.
- **Monitor and evaluate** – A plan should include actions to monitor progress against the project management and objectives, as well as monitoring of the beaver populations, and the main benefits and risks.
- **Management and exit strategy** – A Management Plan will need to be produced to show how beavers and their effects will be managed. It must include how that management will be carried out alongside the community and how they will input into the process. The project must have an Exit Strategy that covers both successful delivery of the project, and early termination due to failure or other factors.

Stakeholder Engagement

Is there support for beavers in the Brit Valley?

In 2017, as part of the River Otter Beaver Trial a detailed national survey was undertaken by researchers from the University of Exeter into social attitudes towards beaver reintroduction. The findings published in 2020 showed 86% of 2,741 people supported beaver reintroduction, increasing slightly to 90% by the end of the Trial.

A breakdown of the respondents into their various occupations showed more uncertainty with those that worked in Farming and Agriculture, and Fisheries and Aquaculture. Of the Farming and Agriculture respondents 47% supported reintroduction, 42% didn't with 11% undecided. Towards the end of the trial, those farmers who had seen direct impacts on their farming activities highlighted the importance of good communication with the team managing the reintroduction.

In April 2023, a Brit Catchment public consultation exercise was undertaken through five village hall meetings, around eight enclosure tours and an online information page and questionnaire. Around 70% of those that attended one of the village hall meetings completed one of the questionnaires.

About 60 people attended the guided tours of the two enclosures in the catchment. These are a very important aspect of a public consultation as they enable people to see first-hand the realities of beaver ecosystem engineering such as dam and canal building, as well as allowing people to discuss their behaviour and contextualise it better in the landscape.

From those who filled in the online questionnaire (n=155), 87% of people were in support of wild beaver reintroduction in the Brit catchment with the majority being 'very supportive'. 11% were unsure, with 2% not supporting the process. When considering the view of local residents only (n=133) 85% were supportive, 11% were unsure and 5% did not support reintroduction into the catchment.

From the subset of landowners and farmers who completed the survey, 67% were supportive, 24% not sure and 8% opposed, which gives a clear mandate for further conversations with this audience. The vast majority of people recognised the benefits that beavers can bring, except in the case of economic benefits, about which people were less clear.

The Brit Catchment Beaver Project public consultation report can be found here:

https://www.westdorsetwilding.org/files/ugd/459a8b_12ea0064aeeb4159b216546e9302a88f.pdf

Overall, the consultation process appears to have been a very positive experience. The majority of the attendees from the community appeared not to come with strong opinions about beaver reintroduction, but instead came with questions and interest. The questions are similar to those that frequently crop up in any public discussions about beavers, highlighting the issues that come with reintroducing an animal that has been absent from our landscape for 400+ years.

Much more has been written about this, and the concept of 'Renewed coexistence' has been developed by Dr Roger Auster at the University of Exeter (Auster et al, 2022) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10344-021-01555-6>

The softer social benefits for mental health and wellbeing should also be taken into account when considering the reintroduction of species like beavers. People often remark about how beneficial these experiences are for their general wellbeing in places like Otterton where beaver watching has become an important community pastime. There are also considerable education opportunities associated with reintroductions for students of all ages, from primary up through universities and colleges.

Consultation with Statutory bodies

Several statutory bodies will need to be consulted and engaged with at different stages of the project.

Initial consultation with **Natural England** suggests support in principle from the local team, with Emma Tomlin, Senior Manager for the West Dorset team responding in September 2024 that ‘the proposal sounds like a great opportunity for Dorset’s environment.’ In her response, she made it clear that the project will require a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for West Dorset Alder Woods SAC and quite possibly SSSI consents / adjusted SSSI favourable condition criteria (See Designated sites in the catchment, below).

The **Environment Agency** have responded to an initial scoping exercise with helpful and generally positive comments. They raised the potential of the beavers to trap sediment in the headwaters, which is a major issue. They identified potential issues around Beaminster, with multiple assets, culverts and a flood storage reservoir, and asked who would be responsible for monitoring and management – and how robust would this be in high risk areas.

They raised the recent bank erosion issues on the main Brit between Beaminster and Bridport, most likely the result of the higher-than-average flows.

The comments from the Flood and Coastal Risk Management Officer were similar, who would need to be reassured that there was a plan in place to monitor beaver activity and remove / modify dams if they are built at a location which could increase flood risk to properties, infrastructure or cause problems for flood defence assets... especially the flood defence assets from Beaminster to West Bay.



The Upper Brit in Beaminster

Dorset Council will need to be involved throughout the process. Their role as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), as well as being responsible for Highways and Rights of Way will make their response critical to the success of the project. The Environment Agency have oversight over watercourses defined as ‘main river’ but the Local Authority is responsible for regulating ‘ordinary watercourses’ and for surface water flooding.

Dorset Council are already involved in a Natural Flood Management Project in the valley and will also have an interest in the Historic Environment.

Regular engagement with the Parish and Town Councils will also be vital.

Wessex Water and **National Grid Electricity Distribution** infrastructure will also need to be considered in the Beaver Management and Monitoring Plan.

Wessex Water staff have attended beaver information days in the River Otter catchment where they own Otterhead Lakes.



Next Steps

A detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be key to the success of any proposal to reintroduce beavers into the catchment, and this is a major part of the licence application process.

One of the main strengths of the Brit Valley Project is the landowner-led approach, and the longstanding relationships that exist between the project team and the farmers and landowners in the valley.

There will be different phases of engagement through the project.

Phase 1 – Before the Expression of Interest is submitted (by 2nd May 2025). Deciding as a project partnership, including the partner landowners and other stakeholders, whether to progress to the next stage.

Phase 2 – Application stage. Establishing a steering group and governance structure for the project, must ensure that a wide range of stakeholder views are represented through the application process. To be successful, the application will need to show evidence of engagement and sufficient support from all parts of the community.

Phase 3 – The reintroduction process. This is likely to be phased over 2 years from 2026, and will include a number of different stages. Advice and support for the community learning to live alongside this species once again will be central to the work of the team. There is likely to be extensive interest in the project and the beavers during this period, and the demand for talks and walks will likely be high. These will need to be adequately resourced and are vital for ongoing myth busting and keeping the community informed with progress.

Phase 4 – Ongoing support as the population builds. The practical support for landowners is likely to ramp up during this period as the numbers of beavers increases in the catchment. Increasing the capacity of the community to live with beavers will be important, providing training and support for statutory organisations and others.

Phase 5 – Stepping back. After the initial 10-year period, the objective would be to implement the exit strategy, and conclude that the project has been a success. There are likely to still be occasions where practical support is required, and the Brit Valley Project is likely to still be able to provide this, but the objective would be that this becomes ‘business as usual.’

Ongoing 2-way communication with landowners, farmers and other stakeholders might be through an annual Beaver Management Group Forum. These meetings are designed to bring people together for detailed updates and discussion about the beaver population and their management. The geographical focus of the Forum would likely change from year to year as beavers colonise different areas.

*Tamar Beaver Management
Group Forum*



Designated sites within the catchment

The Brit catchment contains a significant number of sites designated for their nature conservation, landscape and historical significance.

The entire catchment falls within the **Dorset National Landscape** (formerly AONB). There have yet to be discussions about beaver reintroduction with the Dorset National Landscape Partnership, but it will be important to consider this designation during the licence application process.

<https://dorset-nl.org.uk/resources/landscape-character-assessment/>

There are a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the catchment. These are:

- **Drakenorth SSSI** – A predominantly south-facing sloped grassland site but containing several streams in deeply incised wooded ravines.
- **Eggardon Hill & Luccas Farm SSSI** – This site contains a range of habitats including rich chalk, neutral and acid grassland communities, but also with flushes and woodland.
- **Haydon and Askerswell Downs SSSI** – Dry calcareous species-rich grassland site.
- **Horn Park Quarry SSSI** – This geological site is a key reference section for rocks of the Aalenian Stage of geological time (170 million years ago).
- **Mapperton and Poorton Vales SSSI** – A series of remote west Dorset valleys with diverse nature conservation interest. The valley floors contain wet woodland, fen or marshy grassland, providing outstanding habitat for invertebrates and supporting many rare and nationally scarce species.
- **Powerstock Common and Wytherston Farm SSSI** – Oak, ash and alder woodland with grassland communities containing rare and scarce invertebrates and lower plants, as well as dormice and great crested newts.
- **West Dorset Coast SSSI** – A much larger site which stretches between Chesil Beach and Devonshire Head. The only part of the SSSI within the catchment is at West Bay; ‘an area of brackish meadow dominated by Creeping Bent with frequent Bulbous Foxtail, a nationally scarce plant.’
- **Whetley Meadows SSSI** - These traditional hay meadows and disused railway line support an exceptionally diverse flora.

Significant parts of Mapperton and Poorton Vales SSSI and Powerstock Common and Wytherston Farm SSSI are also included within the **West Dorset Alder Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**. This is the most significant nature conservation designation within the catchment.



The West Dorset Alder Woods SAC is designated for its:

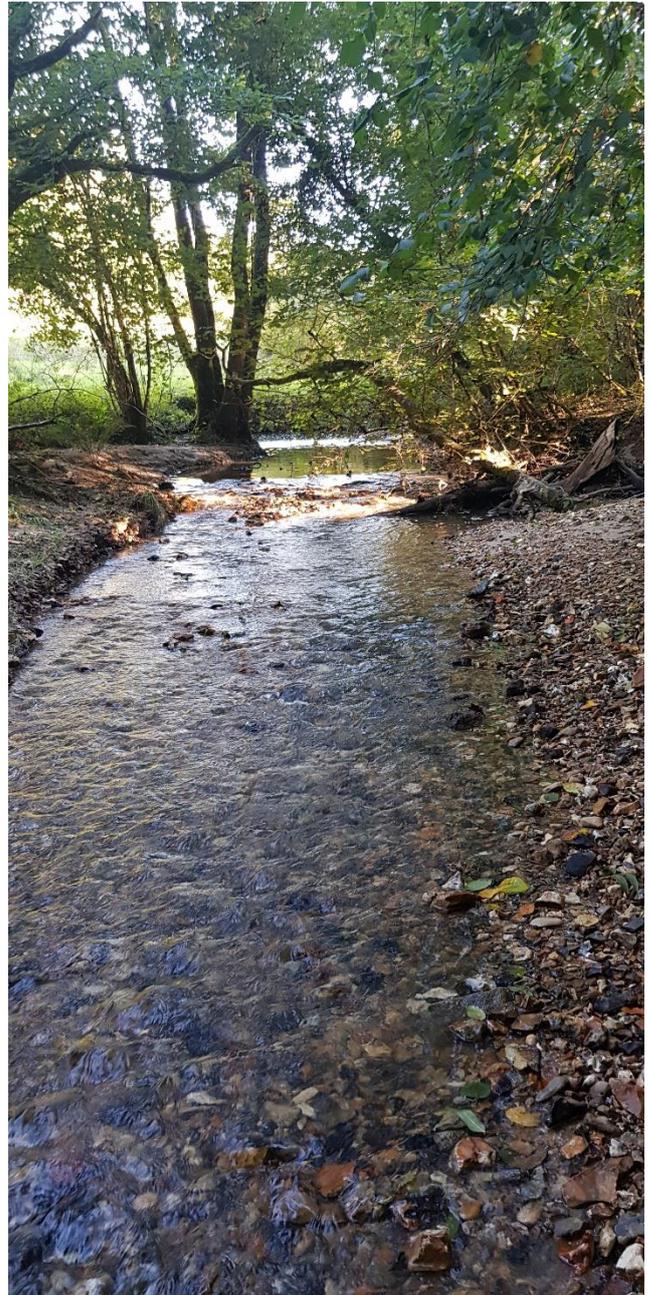
- Alluvial forests with Alder, *Alnus glutinosa* and Ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*. (Priority feature),
- *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (non-primary feature)
- Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains (non-primary feature).
- Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* (primary feature)
- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (non-primary feature)

Beavers are likely to have various effects on this site, increasing dynamism and changing some aspects of the habitat, potentially benefitting some species, and maybe not others. Habitats for marsh fritillary butterflies may be enhanced through the removal of encroaching scrub into open grasslands, whilst potentially also affected by higher water levels. Great crested newts may benefit through the creation of clusters of new ponds, although there is always the potential for short term impacts on water quality.

Powerstock Common and Wytherston is also included with larger the **Kingcombe National Nature Reserve (NNR)** which is designated because of its national importance.

There are also three designated Local Nature Reserves (LNRS) around Bridport. These are **Askers Meadow LNR** owned by Bridport Town Council, and **Jellyfields and Botherhampton LNRS** which are also now under the management of the Town Council.

There are numerous **Scheduled Ancient Monuments** within the catchment. Without detailed analysis, these appear to be predominantly hilltop sites where there would be no impact from beavers. It may be necessary to consider the effect of locally raising water levels in valley bottoms on any archaeological remains. Experts on the Historical Environment from Bournemouth University are working closely with the Brit Valley Project, but at this stage discussions have not been held with the County Archaeologist or English Heritage.



Practicalities of releasing beavers

Establishing a population of such a large, mobile and territorial animal is not straightforward. Beavers will fight over territory and are well equipped to inflict serious, sometimes fatal injuries on each other.

Although they will adapt their environment to suit themselves, they are semi-aquatic animals, so need areas of open water. They also require suitable food resources to suit their seasonal diet, with extensive areas of broadleaved trees (especially willow) for winter browsing, and lush wetland vegetation for the summer months.

The sourcing of the beavers is discussed in more detail below, but biosecurity is an important consideration, and detailed health screening by veterinary experts is part of the release process. This introduces additional logistical challenges with the risk of further stress and associated mortality for the animals themselves.

Beavers are also defensive and will occasionally bite and charge if cornered, making trapping and handling them difficult and risky. Their size and their weight (when combined with a robust transport crate) also makes it difficult to carry them long distances to a release location without vehicle access.

The use of enclosures for release

Release techniques can be characterised as hard or soft depending on the approach taken to supporting the released animals in the early stages:

- **A hard release** involves releasing the animals straight into suitable habitat without acclimatising them to their new home, and is generally used for beaver releases.
- **A soft release** involves a pen of some description into which the animals are initially released, allowing them to acclimatise to their environment with shelter and food available, before the pen is opened up. It is widely used for species like dormice and pine martens. With beavers it would allow them to develop a lodge and dams in an area where their presence would be particularly valuable, and from where they could gradually disperse over time.

With beavers, the use of temporary fencing to construct a pen is difficult because they are so adept at escaping. Electric fencing has been used occasionally in the past, but it is not always successful and welfare concerns now prevent its use. Constructing a truly beaver-proof pen is difficult and very expensive (£10,000++) and if only for a few months for the purposes of a soft release, might not be justified.

However, with so many 'permanent' enclosures now in existence around the country, these are an opportunity to apply soft release techniques to releasing some beavers into the wider catchment, with the existing enclosures in the Brit being a good example.

The downside of hard releasing beavers is that they are immediately able to move away from the release location, making it harder to target ecosystem services such as flood storage or biodiversity enhancements. By using the existing enclosures, the beavers have already been able to form a territory and create habitat, providing benefits to the watercourse and communities downstream. When a section of the fence is then removed, the adult pair are likely to remain in their existing lodge but potentially extending their territory, with the sub-adults then able to disperse further afield.

Stakeholder engagement can also be focused around the existing enclosures, enabling people to witness first-hand the effects that beavers have on the watercourse within the 'safety' of the fence.

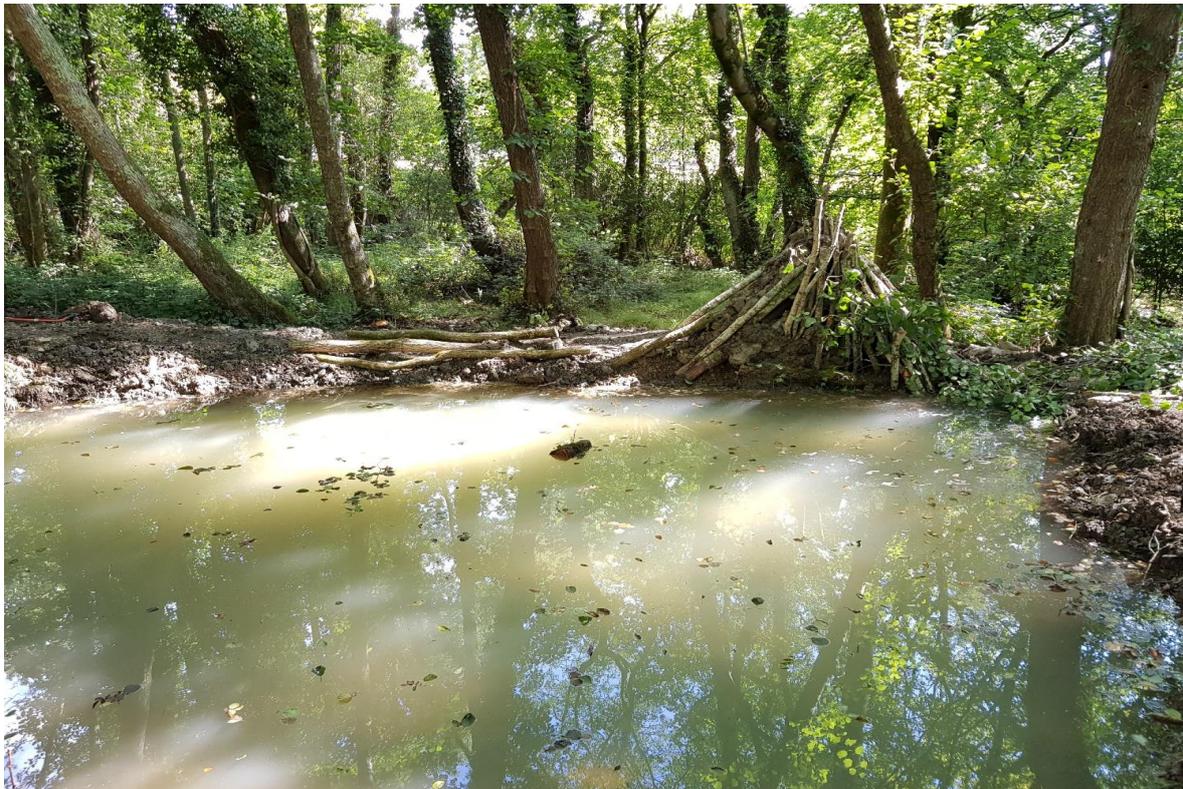
Selection of suitable release sites

It can be challenging to find enough release locations in a small catchment, and this gets harder as the beaver population expands, colonising areas of suitable habitat naturally.

Translocation releases can be stressful for beavers, and mortality in the first few days after release is a risk. If a fenced site is not being used, a hard release can result in the beavers immediately moving away from the release site; almost exhibiting a flight response. On some occasions in the past, this has resulted in animals crossing catchment boundaries or swimming downstream into saltwater. Releasing into an offline pond can encourage them to settle and relax at the point of release, rather than immediately moving off.

The key characteristics of a suitable release site are:

- Extensive areas of suitable habitat, including areas of willow and emergent vegetation, not only at the point of release, but also in the adjacent watercourse.
- An off-line release pond, containing some areas of deep water (~1m depth) making it more likely that the beavers can immediately settle and find shelter on release.
- Supportive landowners, either with a large landholding, or with relatively supportive neighbours. NE may want to see that there is support within the immediate community.
- Not part of an active beaver territory. Some signs of occasional use by other exploring wild beavers are acceptable, but it's important that beavers are not released into the territory of another family group, otherwise immediate conflicts are likely.
- Relatively easy access by vehicle to deliver heavy beaver transport crates.



A recently constructed artificial release pond and lodge ready to receive a pair of beavers in Plymouth

Assessment of costed options

The wild-release criteria require that a founder population must have at least three unrelated beaver families.

It is unlikely that the Expression of Interest will require the project to specify the details of the release strategy as these would become clear as feasibility work was undertaken and in consultation with stakeholders.

However, four different scenarios have been considered and roughly costed. They include a more ambitious strategy to release a larger number of beavers to increase the genetic diversity of the founder population and speed up the rate that they colonise the catchment. In this way the ecosystem services and ecological benefits would accrue faster, but the rate of any conflicts may also increase.

They are:

- **Option 1 – No releases. Just support around any wild beavers.**
- **Option 2 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton enclosures, plus from one new enclosure.**
- **Option 3 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton enclosures, plus hard release of two new family groups into wild sites over two years.**
- **Option 4 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton, plus hard release of five family groups into the catchment over three years.**

Staffing

Staffing costs are the most significant element of the estimated budget for all options. The wild-release criteria require that the project employs a local beaver officer and a project ecologist for 10 years with funding guaranteed for the entire period.

Beaver releases are complex, time consuming and can be controversial. They are high profile projects, and it is therefore vital that they are conducted to a high standard, to ensure risks are adequately managed and to minimise the risks of a negative public reaction. Such reputational damage might not only impact the project and its partners, but also the wider reintroduction of the species back into England.

During the River Otter Beaver Trial, two initial family groups of wild-living beavers were trapped, health screened and re-released in the catchment. Their impacts were closely monitored, and conflicts were proactively managed. Five additional beavers were also released into the catchment to enhance genetic diversity. There was huge interest in the project and the demand for stakeholder engagement therefore very high with 242 presentations and 164 field events provided to >15,000 people over the course of the Trial.

The project was led by a Devon Wildlife Trust Director and a full time Project Manager. In year three, a full time Field Officer was employed to assist with management of the increasing beaver numbers. Extensive additional support was provided by education staff and partner organisations. Five years after the end of the Trial, a full time Beaver Project Lead and a full time Field Officer continue to provide ongoing support for stakeholders.

It is likely, as one of the first catchment scale releases permitted under the new regime, that a project in the Brit catchment would require a similarly significant level of staff resources.

From the beginning, and throughout the 10 years of the project, it might be possible for the Beaver Officer work would be integrated into the roles of the Brit Valley Rangers. It will be vital that there are sufficient Rangers to provide this support throughout the 10 years required by NE.

Option 1 – No releases. Just support around any wild beavers.

This option would see the existing beavers retained within the enclosure at Slape, but with no deliberate releases into the wider Brit catchment. Natural England still require the recapture of the pair that have escaped from Mapperton if they can be located and successfully trapped. Otherwise, ensuring that any impacted landowners receive readily available beaver management advice should reduce the likelihood of negative reactions from the local community.

Over the next few decades, it is likely that beavers will gradually recolonise the Brit from the neighbouring catchments; either via the Axe to the west, or from the Frome in the east, neither of which are currently thought to have *wild-living* beavers in them. There is also the possibility that accidental escapes or illegal releases might occur.

With this option, the field staff would focus their efforts making the catchment 'beaver ready' by encouraging landowners to provide more space for watercourses, restoring buffer strips, restoring stream floodplains and valley bottoms. Even without the presence of beavers, this would benefit the water quality and biodiversity of the watercourse corridors, but if beaver do recolonise, these corridors could then be rapidly rewetted and restored by the beavers with minimal impacts on existing land-uses.

Advantages

The costs to the Brit Valley Project would be minimal, with no legal obligation to spend resources on beaver management. Furthermore, the Project would have no reputational liability for any issues arising from their presence when they do colonise.

Issues and Risks

The Brit Valley Project, or any of the stakeholders that they liaise with, would have little influence or control over the return of beavers.

If the escaped pair from Mapperton are still in the catchment, they would be at risk of inbreeding without the introduction of additional beavers. Any mortality could restrict the establishment of a healthy viable population. It may be decades before other beavers colonise the catchment, and there would be no opportunity to proactively restore a significant and healthy population of beavers in the short to medium term.

If the beaver management advice and support for landowners was *not* provided (and there would be no obligation to), there would be the risk that the presence of escapee beavers creates division and hostility in the community.

As any beavers within enclosures breed and the fences become older, it would be increasingly difficult to manage the beavers within the existing enclosures and escapes would become more likely, leaving the site owners vulnerable to breaching their NE licences.

The licences require the trapping and removal of dispersing sub-adults, which can be a time consuming and sometimes impossible task. Encouraging target animals to enter beaver traps is not straightforward and is often not successful. Furthermore, beaver fences become less and less beaver-proof over time, as the effect of raised water levels and submerged burrowing undermines the integrity of the fence.

Option 2 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton enclosures, plus from one new enclosure.

This option would aim to see the animals from the Slape enclosure allowed to disperse. In this way, the enclosure would act as a soft release pen. It is likely that the main breeding pair would remain in their current lodge, but the removal of the fence would enable the territory to expand outwards, and dispersing sub-adults would be able to establish new territories anywhere within the catchment.

The enclosure at Mapperton would be restocked with beavers and used in the same way, with an initial period where beavers are held within the fence before a section of it is removed.

This option would see the construction of a third enclosure in a location to be determined. The specifications for a soft release pen would be less onerous than a permanent enclosure, but a fence would still need to be well-engineered if it were to hold the beavers for long enough for them to imprint on the site. The beavers would likely be retained in the fence for six months to ensure they had properly imprinted onto this location.



The existing enclosure at Slape would make a good soft release location

Advantages

This would reduce the pressure from the beavers on the enclosure fences and remove the ongoing need to manage the beavers within the enclosures.

It would allow a small wild beaver population to become established, enabling it to be monitored carefully, and for any conflicts with existing land-use to be managed. This much slower approach would enable stakeholders, and also the project team, to slowly build their expertise in beaver management, and mitigation techniques, and more gradually develop the capacity to co-exist with them.

The third enclosure could be located to provide tangible ecosystem service benefits, with an increased likelihood that the beavers would remain when the fence was removed.

Issues and Risks

This option starts with a minimally genetically diverse founder population. There is also the possibility that any mortality risks the successful establishment of a healthy viable population, although this could be managed with additional releases if necessary.

This option comes with significant extra costs and ecological impacts associated with constructing another enclosure, which would only be in use for less than a year.

There is a risk that the enclosure at Mapperton might not function effectively as a soft release pen, with the beavers escaping into the catchment prematurely. This would just mean that they would be less likely to continue to use the stretch of watercourse in the enclosure in the longer term, and could disperse anywhere within the catchment.

Option 3 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton enclosures, plus hard release of two new family groups into wild sites over two years.

Combined with soft releases from Slape and a restocked Mapperton enclosure, this option would see two new family groups released straight into the wild. Suitable release sites containing off-line ponds and suitable habitat would be selected and prepared, and small family groups would be released into them during the autumn / winter of two consecutive years. These would likely comprise a mixture of wild caught Scottish family units, and young animals from English enclosures, selected and paired up to maximise their genetic diversity.

Advantages

Wild release sites could be located to maximise opportunities for ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits.

This is a less expensive and environmentally impactful way of releasing beavers without the construction of an additional enclosure.

This option sees the release of a manageable population of beavers. It would enable the establishment of a *relatively* genetically diverse founder population without overwhelming this small catchment with beavers too quickly. In this way, the community would increase their capacity to live alongside them as the population increased.

Issues and Risks

Wild-released beavers are free to disperse from the release site immediately if they wish, limiting the ability to deliver rapid ecosystem services in a particular location. The selection and preparation of sites, and the correct management of the beavers prior to release can reduce the likelihood of this happening.

In the event of significant beaver mortality, there could still be issues with successfully establishing a healthy viable population, although additional releases may be permitted.



Potential wild release sites should contain an offline pond and extensive adjacent habitat.

Option 4 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton, plus hard release of five family groups into the catchment over three years.

This is a more ambitious approach which proactively introduces significant numbers of beavers into the catchment to establish a significant genetically diverse beaver population.

In addition to restocking Mapperton, it would require the identification and preparation of up to five suitable release locations spread throughout the catchment, and the trapping, health screening and transport of at least six pairs / family groups from Scotland and English enclosures. The releases would be concentrated into three consecutive autumn / winter seasons.

Depending on the coverage of supportive landowners, and the land-use changes implemented, the beaver team might need to respond to a number of impacted stakeholders during the first few years.

Advantages

The main advantage of this approach is the rapid establishment of a larger, genetically robust beaver population. It would be more impactful, and with good stakeholder support, the objectives of enhancing biodiversity and reducing flood risks might be more quickly achieved. If combined with detailed high quality scientific research, the success of this approach to flood risk management might even be demonstrated within a relatively short space of time.

The genetic health of the population would likely be guaranteed without the need for further releases, and it is likely that beavers would begin to disperse more frequently into the adjacent catchments.

Issues and Risks

This approach would probably see the beavers affecting the watercourse and drainage network in a number of locations fairly quickly. This would need to be proactively approached, with intensive landowner support and community engagement through a network of beaver advisors and volunteers providing expertise and practical solutions to problems as they arise. This would need to be adequately resourced, particularly in the autumn and winter.

Risks could also be managed by reducing the extent of agricultural land-use in low lying areas adjacent to watercourses where beavers are more likely to create wetland habitats.

The capacity of the project to deliver, and scale up this expertise, within the first two years would also be challenging, but it could be a good case study for community beaver management, especially if teams of volunteers were recruited to deliver action on the ground and engage with stakeholders.

A number of suitable wild release sites have been identified for consideration during the project development.



Approximate costs of different options

Appendix two contains an itemised approximate budget for the four different options outlined above. These are summarised in the table below. The costs are for the full 10-year period of a project and based on current figures. There is no allowance for inflation either between now and the start of the project, or over the 10-years of the project. They exclude payments for landowners to incentivise land-use change, and the creation of buffers and wetlands. These would need to be funded through Agri-environment agreements separately.

Areas of work	Option 1 – Do nothing (except support around any escapee beavers)	Option 2 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton enclosures, plus from one new enclosure.	Option 3 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton enclosures, plus hard release of two new family groups into wild sites over two years.	Option 4 – Soft releases from Slape and Mapperton, plus hard release of five family groups into the catchment over three years.
Staff Costs	£ 86,500	£ 871,000	£ 871,000	£ 1,049,000
Licenses and consents	£ -	£ 90,000	£ 90,000	£ 90,000
Communications materials	£ 1,000	£ 4,000	£ 4,000	£ 4,000
Beaver sourcing / health and welfare	£ -	£ 11,000	£ 18,000	£ 37,000
Releases and enclosure management	£ -	£ 32,000	£ 12,000	£ 27,000
Beaver management in catchment	£ 500	£ 20,000	£ 22,000	£ 30,000
Science and Monitoring	£ -	£ 10,000	£ 110,000	£ 120,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED 10 YEAR BUDGET	£ 88,000	£ 1,038,000	£ 1,127,000	£ 1,357,000

Recommended Strategy

The exact release strategy does not need to be determined at this stage, and should emerge from more detailed feasibility work and community engagement carried out as the application process proceeds.

There are advantages and disadvantages from each option, and the final strategy does not have to precisely match one of the four options outlined here. The number of suitable wild release sites identified in different parts of the catchment, with necessary landowner support, might determine the number of sites that will eventually be proposed.

As has been stated, there is clearly a trade-off between the desire to quickly establish a genetically diverse beaver population, and the Brit Valley community being able to adapt to their presence and manage any conflicts in a short space of time.



Beavers have the potential to reduce flood risks to Beaminster and Bridport, but it will be necessary to learn to manage additional risks in certain locations.

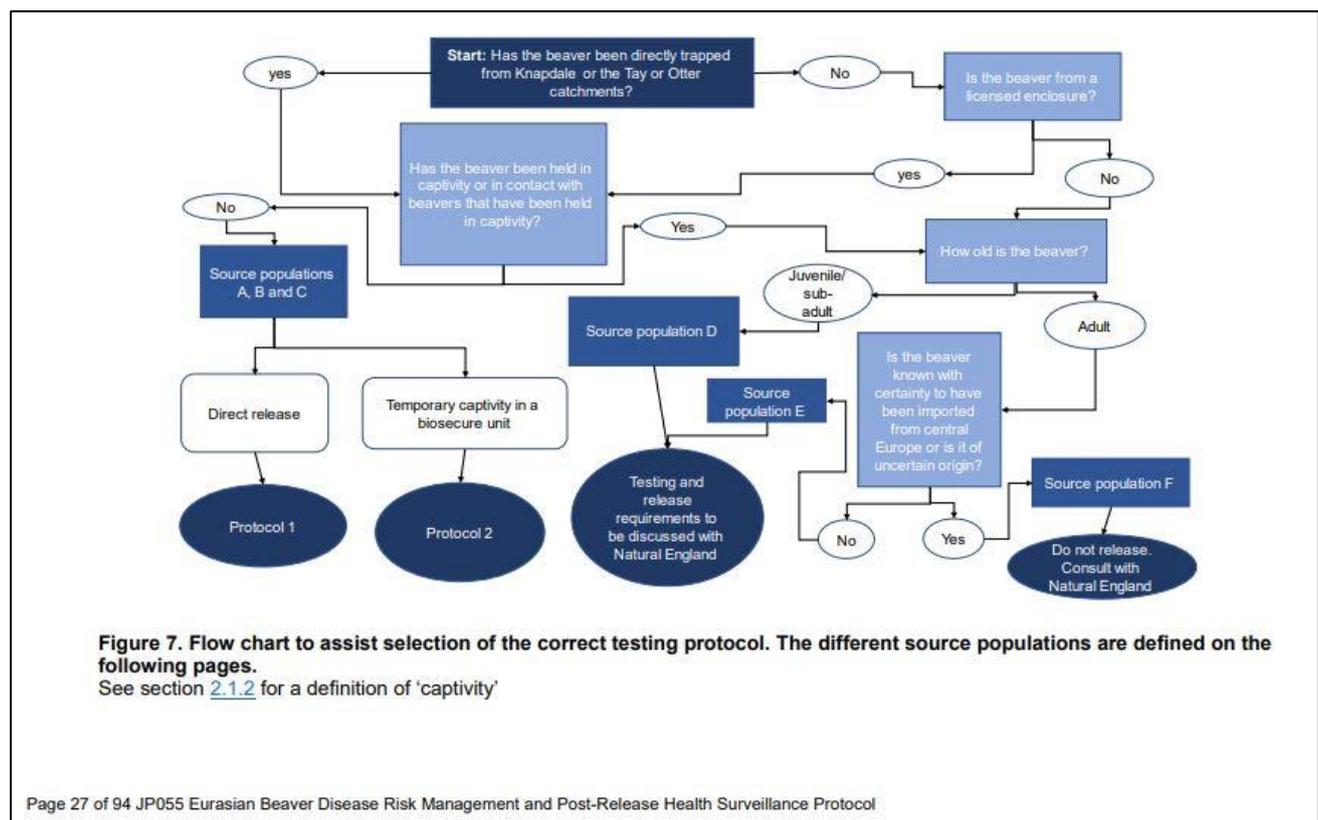
Sourcing and health screening of beavers for reintroduction

The sourcing of the beavers would be through the Beaver Trust who hold the studbook for beavers in Britain and supply beavers for enclosures and would likely do so for any wild releases.

The beavers would come from a combination of animals wild-caught in Scotland, and offspring from enclosures. With the studbook the Beaver Trust would be able to analyse ‘relatedness’ of beaver offspring in enclosures to maximise the genetic diversity of the animals used.

Beavers would be released as pairs or in family groups. Any wild-caught beavers would be trapped and released as complete family units with any dependent kits transported and released together. The make-up of the family group is often unknown before trapping commences, so licensing will need to reflect this slight uncertainty.

All beaver trapping, transport and release is subject to complex licensing as outlined above, with the exact pre-release health screening dependant on the source of the animals, with the requirements outlined in the [NE Health Screening Protocols](#) (Natural England 2024). The decision-making flowchart from this document (below) enables the correct health screening protocols to be applied to animals from different sources.



The **indicative costs** outlined in the Feasibility Study for Beaver Reintroduction (Brazier et al 2021) estimated the supply of a pair / small family group from Scotland would cost c £6,000. This includes health screening (£350 per animal), as well as the trapping time (est. 10 days at £350 per day), captive care costs (£30 per pen per day) and transport costs (£700 per journey).

The provision of animals from enclosures in England would likely be less expensive, with Beaver Trust’s transport time and costs considerably lower. Trapping of animals from enclosures would probably be carried out by the project staff, and it is suggested that some costs should go to the project in question to cover their time. Health screening costs would be similar (at c. £350 per animal).

Governance

A reintroduction project would be conducted in a number of phases, with the governance adapting to the needs of each phase. This would need to be aligned with the governance of the Landscape Recovery Project.

During the Project Development Phase (PDP) of the Brit Valley Landscape Recovery Project, the licence application process and the production of supporting documents would continue to be led by West Dorset Wilding on behalf of the partners.

If the project partners agree, and a licence is granted by Natural England, the management of the beaver reintroduction would need to be overseen by a Steering Group.

In the longer term the Dorset Beaver Management Group (BMG) would be responsible for overseeing the management of the population. This BMG would also steer the work of the field staff, providing advice and support for stakeholders, with the roles and responsibilities for the BMG probably consistent with a national model outlined by NE.

It is anticipated that the beaver field work and day-to-day support for landowners would be integrated into the service provided by the Brit Valley Rangers working on the wider Landscape Recovery Project.



The Steering Group for the River Otter Beaver Trial has now morphed into the Beaver Management Group for East Devon.

References and recommended reading

References

Beaver Dam Capacity and Habitat Suitability: Brit Catchment, Dorset. Dr Alan Puttock and Prof Richard Brazier. March 2023. Available from West Dorset Wilding on request.

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River Otter Beaver Trial Science and Evidence Report. Brazier, R.E., Elliott, M., Andison, E., Auster, R.E., Bridgewater, S., Burgess, P., Chant, J., Graham, H., Knott, E., Puttock, A.K., Sansum, P., Vowles, A., (2020).

Recommended reading

The project library should have the following publications in it:

Beavers. Ecology, Behaviour and Management. Frank Rosell and Roisin Campbell-Palmer. Oxford University Press (2022)

Eurasian Beaver Handbook. The Ecology and Management of *Castor fiber*. Roisin Campbell-Palmer *et al.* Pelagic Publishing. (2016)

The Eurasian Beaver. Roisin Campbell-Palmer *et al.* The Mammal Society / Pelagic publishing (2015)

Beavers – Nature’s Water Engineers. Devon Wildlife Trust. (2017)
<https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Beavers%20-%20Nature%27s%20Water%20Engineers.pdf>

Devon Beavers – Ecological changes within the Enclosed Beaver Project. Devon Wildlife Trust (2022)
<https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/research-and-evidence-beaver-re-introduction>

Beaver Management Strategy Framework for the River Otter (post 2020). ROBT Steering Group (2019)
https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Beaver%20Management%20Strategy%20Framework%20for%20River%20Otter_0.pdf

Scottish Beaver Strategy 2022 – 2045. Nature Scot. (2022) <https://www.nature.scot/doc/scotlands-beaver-strategy-2022-2045>

Beaver Trust Website – contains a wide range of information and resources. <https://beavertrust.org>

Appendix 1 – Reintroductions Code Principles

The [Code and Guidance for Conservation Translocations](#) produced by Defra in 2021 outlines that principles that reintroductions in England should follow. They are based on the internationally recognised IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Guidelines which outline best practice for reintroductions and translocations.

As part of the licensing process for the reintroduction of beavers, Natural England will expect applicants to demonstrate that they have followed this code. The following section lists the Principles from the Code and briefly explains how they would be met. This is intended to help with a licence application that would need to be submitted to NE.

Principle 1: Identify the conservation need and set goals

Natural England's assessment is that Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) would be achieved when 5,200 family groups of Eurasian beavers occupy 5,000 km² of existing suitable habitat throughout England.

It is currently difficult to estimate the ecological carrying capacity of a river catchment in lowland England without having established populations available to validate any model. During the River Otter Beaver Trial the team modelled this catchment of 237 km² containing 275 kms of main river. Their Territory Capacity Model predicted between 147 and 179 territories (Brazier et al, 2020). The Brit catchment is about half the size at 113 km² with proportionally shorter length (49 kms) of main river.

Clear goals for the project will need to be established.

Principle 2: Evaluate whether conservation translocation is an appropriate option

In the medium term, the translocation of beavers into the catchment is the only option available to establish a healthy and viable population here - even with a small number of escapee beavers that may already be in the catchment from Mapperton, and with the recent release of beavers into Studland.

Whilst in the longer term, the species may colonise the catchment from neighbouring river catchments, there is little prospect of that occurring quickly as beavers are not currently living wild in either the neighbouring Axe or Stour.

Principle 3: Where translocation is appropriate, develop a plan

This document is intended to help in doing this, but a more detailed project plan would be needed if a decision is made to proceed.

Principle 4: Get permissions, meet legislation and follow good practice

Natural England and Environment Agency have been consulted regarding the need for consents and permits. Dorset Council and others will also need to be engaged.

The conditions of the NE licensing process including the supporting documents such as the Beaver Monitoring and Management Plan, as well as the contents of this strategy are designed to ensure good practice / IUCN guidelines are followed, and all legislation is met. For example, this document discusses the sourcing of the beavers to minimise disease and genetic inbreeding risks and maximise opportunities.

Principle 5: Maximise chances of successful establishment

This strategy discusses the issues around reintroduction, including the balance between maximising the numbers of animals released to enhance the genetic diversity of the founder stock, with the need to gradually increase numbers within the catchment so that the community can learn to live alongside them.

Principle 6: Maximise biodiversity benefits and minimise the risks of harm to biodiversity

This species is a native keystone species, and the evidence strongly suggests that its presence will be beneficial for other wetland species within the catchment. The areas that have been designated for their biodiversity and landscape value within the catchment have been considered in consultation with NE, and necessary mitigation measures will need to be put in place. A Biodiversity Risk Assessment will need to be produced as part of the application process.

Principle 7: Consider societal benefits and minimise conflicts with others

Beavers are ecosystem engineers and will have positive and negative effects on the catchment and on the existing land uses.

This project is being conducted, in part, to manage water more sustainably, potentially reducing the risks associated with flooding and droughts on communities within the catchment. However, there are inevitable impacts on existing land-use, and these are covered in detail in the Beaver Monitoring and Management Plan. A socio-economic risk assessment will be produced as part of the application process.

Principle 8: Show accountability, transparency and openness

The Brit Valley Project's approach to stakeholder engagement is a good example of best practice when it comes to openness and transparency. The plans will continue to be communicated in detail to the community as the project progresses, if indeed it is acceptable to the Brit Valley Project partners and stakeholders. A stakeholder engagement plan will be developed as part of the application process.

Principle 9: Record translocations and monitor, evaluate and communicate outcomes

The licensing process requires that detailed records are kept on all beaver movements and communicated with NE.

The Monitoring and Management Plan outlines the research and monitoring work that will be undertaken as part of the project.

It will be necessary to report the findings of this research to the project stakeholders moving forward, and the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy outlines these processes.

Appendix 2 – Estimated itemised budget for four beaver release options

See attached spreadsheet.

Appendix 3 – Brit Catchment Beaver Project Public consultation report

See document attached