



Somerset
Wildlife Trust

Somerset Beaver

Co-existence and Management:
Guidance and Recommendations



Farming &
Wildlife
Advisory
Group



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Executive summary

Eurasian beavers (*Castor fiber*) were hunted to extinction in Britain approximately 400 years ago. However, they have now returned across Britain, including enclosed and wild-living populations in Somerset. The term “beavers” in this document refers to the Eurasian beaver that is both native to and present in Britain, and not the non-native North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) that is not present in Britain.

Native wildlife co-evolved with beavers and remains well adapted to living alongside them. Conversely, human culture has changed significantly since beavers have been absent. Therefore, the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW), with funding from the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA), commissioned Somerset Wildlife Trust to produce a report that would help local people and businesses capitalise on the benefits that co-existence with beavers could bring and offer guidance on how potential challenges could be overcome.

A significant amount of background research has been done to compile this document. While originally dubbed a “strategy”, it felt more appropriate to reframe it as “guidance and recommendations”. That change reflects the legal frameworks that already exist, that people working with or around beavers are obliged to follow, and that this document guides them towards in Part 1. However, it also acknowledges that there are still gaps in policies and funding mechanisms in England that need addressing. As these should be delivered at a national level to provide a co-ordinated approach to beaver and people management across England, these can only be recommendations that we in Somerset advocate for and provide support to our regional and national colleagues to achieve. However, there are also actions that we in Somerset can take to affect positive change, and these are outlined in Part 2.

We are indebted to everyone who responded and gave so generously of their time and expertise to help us produce this guide. We hope it proves useful.

Somerset Wildlife Trust
March 2025



Context

Aims and purpose

This document:

- suggests how local people and businesses might capitalise on the benefits that co-existence with beavers could bring;
- describes how potential challenges could be lawfully mitigated or managed;
- outlines recommended measures that would support human communities to co-exist with beavers and enable beaver recovery within Somerset; and
- identifies areas in which practitioners in Somerset could, and would like to, support national colleagues develop robust national frameworks that consider a broad range of stakeholder needs.

A significant amount of research into ecological, legal, economic and social factors was completed to achieve those aims. This included: review of reports and publications from other beaver restoration projects; national computer modelling into habitat suitability; analysis of legislation and national frameworks; conversations with beaver practitioners around Britain; a workshop for professionals from a variety of industries; and a workshop day, series of engagement events and online questionnaire for the public. This document does not supersede existing national publications, research or frameworks. It does make those more easily accessible and hopefully prompts thoughts about what local communities may want to consider now beavers are an established part of Somerset's wildlife.

Beavers in Somerset

Wild beavers were first reported in Somerset in the early 2000s. In 2020, two beavers were released into an enclosure as part of a river restoration project at National Trust Holnicote. In 2022, a Natural England commissioned survey confirmed beavers were present on the Avon and Somerset Frome¹. At the time of compiling this guide, the Avon and Somerset Frome population is likely to be the third largest wild beaver population in England. Since then, there have been an increasing number of sightings of beavers and beaver field signs across the county; this is likely to be the result of natural dispersal from existing wild populations, escapes from enclosures, or possibly unofficial releases.

In 2022, beavers received legal protection across England and were recognised as a "native species now present". On 28 February 2025, Natural England received permission from the government to start accepting applications for wild release licences for beavers in England².

In compiling the information in this document, we have considered maintenance of existing free-living, captive beaver populations in Somerset, and the possibility of translocations, either to, from or within the county.

¹Harrington, A., Rothwell, A., et al (2023). *Wild beaver population assessment on the River Avon and tributaries. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR470*. Natural England, Worcester

²For more information see <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2025/02/28/beaver-wild-release-a-milestone-for-nature-recovery-in-england>



Stakeholder groups

Beavers are known as ‘ecosystem engineers’ for the disproportionately large impact they can have on the environment compared to their biomass. Research for this document involved listening to a variety of experts from a range of industries and local communities. Throughout this document:

- ‘land managers’ refers to anyone who can make decisions about how land is used, managed or cultivated and includes farmers, organisations and individuals;
- ‘professionals’ are people who might be called upon to offer advice or practical support to wider stakeholders. They will usually be trained licence holders;
- ‘wider stakeholders’ includes all those who might be positively or negatively impacted by beaver presence or activity.

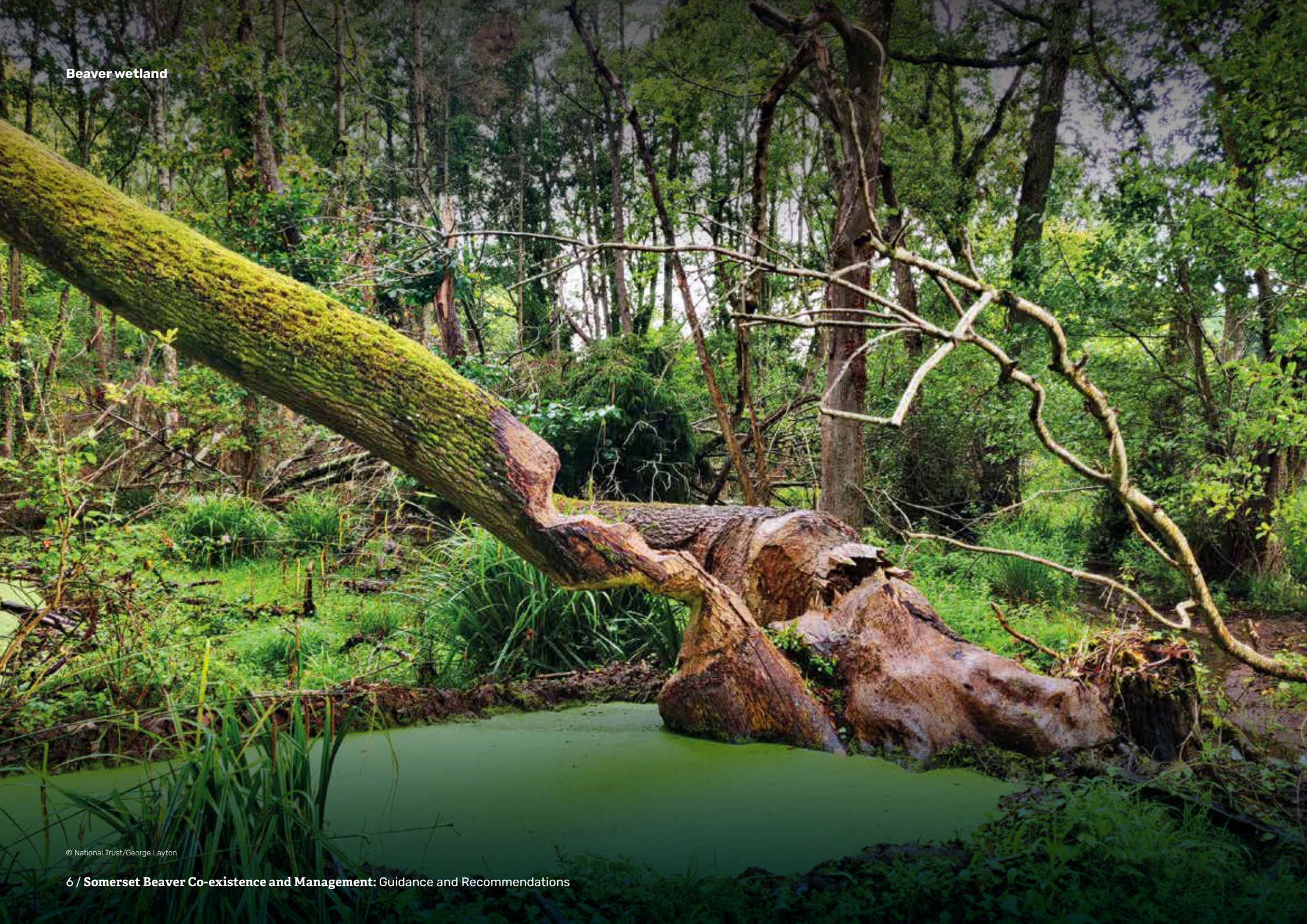
During our consultation to compile this document, most people expressed gratitude that action was being taken to consider human-beaver co-existence in Somerset and that they were being involved in those conversations. We also received feedback from some organisations that they had been prompted to think about how they could prepare for beavers’ return, and some land managers asked how they could incentivise beavers to their land. Given the diverse range of priorities and needs different communities have, there are times when unanimous agreement cannot be reached. We believe the most urgent priorities have been addressed in this document and will continue to work with all stakeholder groups when support or advice is wanted.

Review

We recommend this document is reviewed in 2030. As evidenced by the number of legislative changes, new protocols and media coverage, beavers are of great interest to a wide range of stakeholder groups. Review in five years allows time for legislative and regulatory changes to be embedded but if any further changes occur in the interim, these can – and should – be adopted as soon as identified. We hope this guidance document will empower local people and businesses to live well alongside beavers in Somerset while this happens.

Please note, this guidance document is in no way intended to replace national frameworks, which should always take precedence.

We are very grateful to everyone who gave their time, knowledge and experience to help develop this guidance and recommendations.



Part 1

Guidance





Eurasian beaver recovery in Britain

1789

Last known record of beavers in Britain (made in Yorkshire)

Early 1900s

Only 1,200 beavers remain in just 8 populations across Europe and Asia (Belarus/Ukraine, France, Germany, Mongolia/China, Norway, and Russia)

1920s

– Eurasian beavers (*Castor fiber*) are reintroduced in Sweden. Throughout the 20th century, a further 23 countries across mainland Europe also reintroduce beavers

1998

Feasibility studies to reintroduce beavers to Britain commence

2009-2014

First licenced beaver reintroduction in Britain takes place, allowing 15 beavers to be released under trial to Knapdale, Scotland (the Scottish Beaver Trial)

2015-2020

Following public criticism of a government plan to remove wild beavers that had appeared c.2008 on the River Otter, Devon, England, UK government authorises the River Otter Beaver Trial

2015

Publication of Beavers in Scotland report aggregating research into beaver interactions with the natural and human environment, legal considerations and management considerations from Scottish Beaver Trial and reintroductions across Europe and North America. This was used to inform Scottish ministers' decision on whether beavers should be reintroduced to Scotland

2021

Scottish government agrees it will support translocations of beavers to new areas to enable expansion of beaver population. A family of beavers was translocated to Argaty Red Kites that year

2022

Beavers receive European Protected Species status in England. Government guidance for how to manage beavers with and without a licence is released

2022

Natural England commissioned survey confirms presence of beavers on Avon and Somerset Frome, estimating 13 territories comprising about 50 individuals with another six individuals not in family units. This is likely to be the third largest population in England (after Devon and Kent)³

2025

On 28 February, Natural England was given permission to issue licences for wild release of beavers in England⁴

2019

2019

Beavers receive European Protected Species status in Scotland

2019

Beaver Management Framework published in Scotland

2020

English government confirms River Otter beavers can remain, making them the first recognised free-living beaver population in England

³Beaver Trust (2024) *Beaver history in Britain and Europe* (online) <https://beavertrust.org/beaver-basics/beaver-history> Accessed 28.10.2024

Campbell-Palmer, R., Needham, R., et al (2024) *Assessment of wild living beaver populations in East Kent*. NECR559. Natural England

IUCN/CPSG (2022). *Scotland's Beaver Strategy 2022-2045*. IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group, MN, USA

Harrington, A., Rothwell, A., et al (2023). *Wild beaver population assessment on the River Avon and tributaries*. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR470. Natural England, Worcester

⁴DEFRA and Natural England (2025) Policy paper: Wild release and management of beavers in England (online) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wild-release-and-management-of-beavers-in-england> Accessed 03.03.2025



Key legislation

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats 1979 (the “Bern Convention”)

The Bern Convention is an international treaty that facilitates a co-ordinated approach to species and habitat protection across the European Union and parts of Africa. It is legally binding, meaning that all signatories, including the United Kingdom, must abide by the Convention⁵.

Beavers (England) Order 2022

The Beavers (England) Order enabled amendments to be made to two key bits of wildlife legislation that affect England and Wales: the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the “Habs Regs”)

The Habs Regs made Eurasian beavers (*Castor fiber*) a European Protected Species in England. It also makes it a legal offence in England to, without an appropriate licence: deliberately capture, injure or kill a beaver; deliberately disturb a beaver in such a way that affects its ability to survive or breed; damage or destroy a beaver resting or breeding place; possess a beaver or its parts; transport a beaver; or sell, or offer for sale, a beaver⁶. Contravening any of these legal protections could result in a 6-month prison sentence or an unlimited fine⁷.



Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

With effect from 1 October 2022, Eurasian beavers were recognised as a native species that is present in England. This Act also means that species control orders (used for culling or to remove invasive animals) cannot be issued against Eurasian beavers here.

Other protected species and features

Work with or around beavers may impact other protected species or habitats, or infrastructure: these will all need to be considered when mitigation or management options are being thought about. All relevant legislation must be complied with and licences or permits obtained. Natural England, the local authority, or a land advisor can offer context-specific advice.

⁵Council of Europe Portal (2024) *Presentation of the Bern Convention* (online) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/presentation> Accessed 01.11.2024

⁶Natural England (2022) *Statutory guidance. Managing beaver activity and land without a licence* (online) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-beaver-activity-and-land-without-a-licence/managing-beaver-activity-without-a-licence> Accessed 01.11.2024

⁷Natural England and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2023) *Guidance: Beavers: How to manage them and when you need a licence* (online) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/beavers-how-to-manage-them-and-when-you-need-a-licence> Accessed 01.11.2024



Beaver field signs

Beavers are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk. Therefore, while you may see them if you out at either end of the day, you are more likely to see signs of beaver activity through the day. Shown over these pages (10 & 11) are some examples of common beaver field signs.

During consultation, the most common word associated with beavers was “dams”. While beavers do certainly build dams and these are crucial for natural flood management, flood-plain reconnection and creating a wetland habitat environment, beavers will actually only build these when the watercourse is not deep enough to submerge their burrow entrance (c.70cm) or to increase routes to good forage areas: it is not automatic and if the water is already present, they will not expend energy on unnecessarily building a dam.

A key aspect of beaver ecology is that, like us, they are mammals and can drown but they are also reliant on water presence for survival. Like us, they want a stable water table with the right amount of water in the right place at the right time (i.e. no flooding and also no drought). To achieve this, beavers may notch their own dams after periods of heavy rainfall or peak flow events. Aiding this, their dams are semi-permeable so will always let water through (hence reference to “leaky dams” and “slow the flow”). Beaver dams are also not permanent so may be partially or wholly removed during peak flow events.

Beavers are legally protected. If you see beavers or any of these signs, please do not disturb them and keep a respectful distance. Advice and support can be sought if wanted.



Lodge

© National Trust/Jack Siviter



Beaver dam

© Somerset Wildlife Trust/Alicia Hallatt



Hind pawprint

© Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust



Channel

© National Trust/George Layton



Coppiced tree showing regrowth

© National Trust/Jack Siviter



Gnawed tree stump with wood chips

© Somerset Wildlife Trust/Alicia Hallatt



Feeding trail

© Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust



River bank burrow entrance

© Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust



Felled tree

© Somerset Wildlife Trust/Alicia Hallatt



Feeding station

(C) Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust



Trail to landside collapsed burrow entrance

© Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust



Co-existence, mitigation and management

National framework – Mitigation hierarchy

In 2022, the then government published a hierarchy of mitigation and management options⁹. This outlines the order in which potential work should be considered and must be followed. It is reproduced and expanded upon below.

If applying for permission to undertake higher impact interventions, practitioners will need to evidence that lower impact options were considered first but either were deemed inappropriate or failed to achieve the management aim when tried. It is important to note that it is possible to move back down the hierarchy to a lower impact option, for example, as circumstances change or if there is an increased level of comfort living alongside beavers. Trialling a lower impact option does not preclude the land manager or licence holder returning to a higher level management option if that becomes necessary once again.



1. Get expert advice

This can be from your local Beaver Advisory or Management Group, Natural England or another beaver specialist

2. Make space for beavers

Research suggests that most beaver activity is within 20 metres of the edge of a watercourse. Leaving a 20 metre buffer strip may prevent the need for other mitigation actions to be taken. This has other benefits, for example, increased riparian vegetation reduces soil erosion and chemical leaching into watercourses, riparian land managers may become eligible for certain agri-environmental schemes

3. Undertake lawful actions that do not require a licence

Certain mitigation actions can be undertaken without a licence, for example, ordinary land management, or installing tree guards or exclusion fencing (see page 13)

4. Undertake low impact actions under licence

Low impact licensed actions typically include those under licence CL52, for example, reducing dam height or removing an established dam outside the breeding season (see page 15)

5. Undertake medium-high impact actions under licence

Higher impact licensed actions typically include those carried out by a specially trained and licenced person under licences CL51 or 50. Examples include: modifying or removing a dam during the breeding season; capture and translocation; or, as a last resort, lethal control (see page 15)

⁹For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beavers-protection-and-management/protection-and-management-of-beavers-in-england>
<https://beavermanagement.org/get-advice>



Non-licensable activities and mitigation

The mitigation hierarchy has been designed to balance the need for people to have autonomy to manage their own land while enabling beaver populations to recover.

Some less invasive management actions that can be undertaken without a licence are listed below. Advice on all these options can be found on the Government's⁹ and the Beaver Trust's¹⁰ websites.

- Normal land management in the vicinity of beaver habitat (e.g. mowing grass, removing felled trees or cultivating the land)
- Modifying land management to create space for beavers (e.g. creating riparian buffer strips or increasing planting of vegetation favoured by beavers)
- Installing fencing to prevent access to a certain area. Note that fencing must not have the effect of enclosing beavers as this does require a licence. Wherever possible, electric fencing should not be used as this can be fatal to beavers. The Government's website provides guidance about suitable fencing specifications, including when electric fencing can be used temporarily
- Modifying or removing a dam that can be proven to be less than two weeks old or that is not associated with any burrows or lodges (but be mindful of impact on other protected species)
- Using auditory or visual scarers
- Removing material from a dam that has already been destroyed by heavy rainfall if leaving that material could increase flood risk
- Protecting specific trees by installing a tree guard or using textured tree paint
- Infilling a burrow that is so damaged it cannot be used by beavers
- Infilling beaver channels if that will not affect a burrow or lodge.



Tree guard
© Kate Gamez



Tree protection
© Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust



Community engagement
© Natural England/Devon Wildlife Trust

⁹For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/beavers-managing-beaver-activities-in-england>

¹⁰For more information see <https://beavertrust.org/our-work/beaver-management>



Beaver Mitigation and Management Licences

There may be instances where making space for beavers is not possible and non-licensable mitigation methods do not achieve co-existence. In those cases, a licence, designed to balance the needs of local people, the economy and nature restoration and protection, might allow higher impact interventions. The process is not intended to be burdensome to comply with but certain conditions do need to be evidenced, including that:




- beavers are present on the land;
- the mitigation option serves at least one of the purposes of conserving wild animals or plants of conservation concern, preserving public health and safety and/or preventing serious damage to livestock, crops or other property;
- less invasive mitigation/management options are inappropriate; and
- the action will not jeopardise beavers achieving Favourable Conservation Status (defined as 5,200 family groups occupying 5,000km² of suitable habitat across England¹¹).

These licences only cover work as it impacts beavers. If other protected species, invasive non-native species or certain environmental or archaeological features are likely to be affected then the relevant legislation and permitting regimes for those will also need to be complied with. Additionally, proposed mitigation work that impacts salmon, trout or other freshwater fish, their migratory routes or their spawning grounds, will require consideration under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act (SAFFA). Definitive advice about which permits will be required cannot be provided in this guidance: instead, every situation needs to be assessed on its own individual merits. Context-specific advice can be obtained from the following:

Consideration	Body
Beaver class licences	Natural England
Protected species	Natural England
Environmental permits	Environment Agency
Management on a main watercourse	Environment Agency
Management on an ordinary watercourse	Internal Drainage Board or Lead Local Flood Authority (Somerset Council)

¹¹Morris, K., and Mousley, S., 2021. *Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for Eurasian beaver, Castor fiber*. Natural England Report RP2949. Natural England



Licence	Purpose	Who	What	Exclusions/Notes	
Beaver Management Class Licence CL52 ¹²	Allow low risk management following relevant training	Land or water owners, managers or advisers	Modification or removal of a dam or repair or removal of a damaged burrow outside the breeding season	Can only be used outside the breeding season (i.e. only 1 September to 28/29 February) and not on lodges or undamaged burrows Prior to use, must register online and receive authorisation from Natural England (usually within 15 working days)	
Beaver Management Class Licence CL51 ¹³	Allow low-medium risk management following relevant training to: prevent serious damage to property (including livestock and growing timber); preserve public health and safety; conserve wild plants or animals of conservation concern; or conduct scientific or educational work	Public Authorities Land or water owners, managers or advisers	Modification or removal of a dam, burrow or lodge during the breeding season Possess dead beavers or their body parts	Prior to use, must register online and receive authorisation from Natural England (usually within 15 working days) May also be necessary to register the site (response usually within five working days) Emergencies can be registered after carrying out the work	
Beaver Management Class Licence CL50 ¹⁴	Allow low-high risk management following relevant training to: prevent serious damage to property (including livestock and growing timber); preserve public health and safety; conserve wild plants or animals of conservation concern; or conduct scientific or educational work	Trained beaver specialists BAGs/ BMGs Natural England staff/contractor for a science and conservation project	Modification or removal of a dam, burrow or lodge Trap (using a certified Bavarian type trap), transport, possess or control live beavers Possess or transport dead beavers or their parts	Prior to use, must register online and wait for authorisation from Natural England (usually within 15 working days) May also be necessary to register the site (response usually within five working days) Emergencies can be registered after carrying out the work	

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¹²For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beavers-licence-to-modify-or-remove-dams-cl52/licence-to-modify-or-remove-beaver-dams-cl52>

¹³For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/beavers-licence-to-modify-or-remove-dams-burrows-and-lodges-cl51>

¹⁴For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/beavers-licence-to-capture-transport-and-re-release-beavers-or-modify-or-remove-beaver-dams-burrows-and-lodges-cl50>



Licence	Purpose	Who	What	Exclusions/Notes	
Beaver Management Organisational Licence	Allow organisations to undertake activities: they do frequently that would require a licence without needing to repeatedly seek and obtain permission; or that are not covered by current licences	Organisations	These bespoke licences consider each organisation's operational needs and licensed activities they will be required to do frequently	Currently only one organisational licence exists. However, any organisation could apply if they will frequently need to carry out licensed activities and the existing Class Licences do not cover everything they need	
Beaver Management Individual Licence	Managing activities that fall outside of the class licence system and that could impact beavers	Land or riparian managers	Activities that fall outside of the class licences (e.g. lethal control) and other activities that could impact beavers (e.g. drawing down reservoirs, scour valve tests, or managing water levels)	There is not currently a specific process and Natural England does not envisage many applications in the short term. However, the option is there if needed. Applications should be made using the A12 application form	
Beaver Mitigation Individual Licence A12 ¹⁵	Protect beavers (and other EPS not covered by species-specific regulations) during development work by authorising work that would otherwise be illegal	Developers and ecologists	Deliberately or accidentally capture, kill, disturb or injure beavers or deliberately or accidentally damage destroy or obstruct access to breeding or resting places during development		
Beaver Release Licence A03 ¹⁶	Authorise release of beavers into secure, fenced enclosures	Project leads	Release beavers into secure, fenced enclosures		
Species Release Licence A69 ¹⁷	Authorise release of beavers into the wild in England	Project leads	Release beavers into the wild in England	An Expression of Interest must be submitted to, and approved by, Natural England prior to submitting an A69 application form	

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¹⁵For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-protected-species-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>

¹⁶For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-native-species-apply-for-a-licence-to-release-them>

¹⁷For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beavers-applying-for-a-licence-to-release-beavers-into-the-wild/beavers-applying-for-a-licence-to-release-beavers-into-the-wild>



Health and welfare

Disease Risk Analysis

In January 2024, an updated Disease Risk Analysis (DRA) (Report NECR540) was published that details the risk and likelihood of various infectious and non-infectious illnesses and other hazards (e.g. road traffic accidents) that beavers could be subjected to during translocations to England¹⁸. While more hazards were analysed than in the original DRA published in 2020, the updated DRA does not suggest any significant change in the overall low risk either to or from beavers, or detriment caused by the beavers of unknown origins.

To maintain the positive situation of beavers presenting a low risk to humans, livestock and other wildlife, a disease risk management and post-release protocol was published in May 2024 (Report JP055)¹⁹. The protocol uses the DRA to provide practical guidance for best practice when translocating beavers in England.

Everyone working with beavers in England must follow national guidelines to ensure the highest standard of beaver welfare and good biosecurity. This will ultimately also benefit humans, other wildlife, livestock and domestic animals.

Population control

Beavers do have natural predators in Britain, principally foxes, domestic dogs, birds of prey and pike. Otters will predate on kits (young beavers) but there is not believed to be any risk to adult beavers.

Another key driver of beaver population control will come from the beavers themselves. Beavers are a relatively slow-breeding, territorial animal that have only one breeding pair in each family unit. Their populations do not continue to expand exponentially but, instead, become self-regulating in response to factors including available habitat and competition with other beaver families.

It is important to highlight that beavers are an endangered and legally protected species in Britain with a very low population number. There are also a wide range of mitigation and management options and grants available that enable co-existence and consider socio-economic needs. It is not envisaged it will be either necessary or appropriate to consider population control during the lifetime of this guide.

Interaction with Invasive Non Native Species (INNS)

The limited research into the effect of beaver activity on INNS suggests there will be mixed outcomes. Beavers may help limit spread of some INNS, for example eating them before INNS can propagate or weakening INNS and limiting their growth rate. Conversely, burrowing, gnawing, or using INNS as a material for dam construction may create fragments that are dispersed in watercourses.^{20, 21}

Good biosecurity practices should always be used when working around any wildlife or in any natural environment. This remains very relevant where beavers are present to ensure INNS are not allowed to benefit from habitat changes. The Beaver Class Licence training highlights the importance of responding to the presence of INNS, including:

- ☐ vigilance to identify and respond proportionately to INNS;
- ☐ joined-up working between practitioners; and
- ☐ continued use of the best practice biosecurity protocol “check, clean, dry”.

For more information, see the Non-Native Species Secretariat.

¹⁸Common, S., Donald, H., Sainsbury A. (2024) *Revised Disease Risk Analysis for the Conservation Translocation of the Eurasian Beaver (Castor fiber) to England* [NECR540], Natural England. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6606976927399936>

¹⁹Howe, C.V., Campbell-Palmer, R., et al. (2024) *Eurasian Beaver Disease Risk Management and Post-Release Health Surveillance Protocol*. Natural England Joint Publication JP055. Natural England, The Beaver Trust, RZSS, ZSL, APHA, Five Sisters Zoo.

Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6304925718675456>

²⁰Stringer, A.P., Blake, D., and Gaywood, M.J. (2015) A review of beaver (*Castor* spp.) impacts on biodiversity, and potential impacts following a reintroduction to Scotland. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 815*. Scottish Natural Heritage, Inverness, Scotland

²¹For more information see <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/about/newsletters/non-native-species-newsletter10>



Financial incentives

There are a range of payments available that encourage co-existence with beavers.

Government grants can subsidise mitigation activities or reward delivery of a range of environmental and social services that beavers help bring about. Philanthropists, trust funds and other donors are also still generously providing *ad hoc* grants. Innovative businesses across a variety of sectors are diversifying to incorporate beaver presence into their business models. However, there is a legal requirement to prevent beavers from harm. Any income derived due to beavers being present should be regarded as a bonus rather than a lack funding being a reason to exclude beavers or not take lawful action around them.

Government grants for land-managers

There are currently three grants that relate specifically to beaver activity, all through the Countryside Stewardship scheme: crop protection fencing for permanent crops (BC3); tree guards (BC4); and expert dam management (BC5)²².

There are also payments that, while not specific to beavers, apply to beaver activity and wetlands. Again, under the Countryside Stewardship scheme, these include (but are not limited to): 4m to 6m buffer strip on cultivated land (SW1); 4m to 6m buffer strip on intensive grassland (SW2); in-field grass strips (SW3); 12m to 24m buffer strip on cultivated land (SW4); riparian management strip (SW11); and making space for water (SW12).

Other agri-environmental schemes also provide rewards for allowing beaver activity²³, including: Sustainable Farming Incentive²⁴ and England Woodland Creation Offers²⁵. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme²⁶ has also been successfully used alongside SW12 to develop a beaver wetland²⁷: this is an encouraging and inspiring example of innovative thinking to apply an existing agri-environment grant to beaver activity.

These wider payments could enable land managers to make space for beavers while still deriving an income, reducing costs of cultivating that land, and delivering highly necessary and desirable environmental and social benefits.

Land managers and organisations should consult with the Rural Payments Agency, Natural England, or your usual land advisor for up-to-date advice about the full range of options available to you.

²²For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants>

²³For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers>

²⁴For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sustainable-farming-incentive-guidance>

²⁵For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/england-woodland-creation-offer>

²⁶For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>

²⁷For more information see <https://www.eastdevon-nl.org.uk/2023/07/11/making-space-for-water-and-the-beavers>



Grants for organisations

Some industry specific grants have been created to help organisations meet biodiversity, climate adaptation or flood resilience targets. For example, the Environment Agency provides grants through the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England (FCERM) to support Risk Management Authorities deliver flood management and climate adaptation projects. These grants have been used to mitigate the impact of burrowing by badgers, another protected species, where their activity undermines flood banks. While it requires further investigation and testing, it is reasonable to assume that the same could apply to beaver activity.

Philanthropy, donations and non-governmental grants

Funding is occasionally available from donors and philanthropists, companies and local organisations. These generous donations are an invaluable source of income for beaver practitioners. However, while very gratefully received, they do not allow for long-term planning owing to their *ad hoc* nature. There is also concern that this support may become more challenging to secure as beavers become more normalised and less exciting to funders. How to ensure beavers remain interesting and attractive to financial supporters is a question practitioners need to remain aware of.

Business diversification

Business diversification has enabled some smaller, private companies to capitalise on the willingness of the public to pay for the experience of seeing a new and exciting species and to achieve greater financial stability against the backdrop of rising prices, climate change and other pressures on their existing business models. Examples include: guided walks; holiday accommodation; hospitality outlets; photography opportunities; and merchandise. As outlined at the start of this section, we are not encouraging commodification of beavers that have a value beyond purely financial. However, if there are ways to enhance income generation at a time when many rural businesses are looking to adapt and become more resilient, while also creating opportunities for people to reconnect with nature and not harming beavers or natural habitats, then this merits attention.



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Part 2

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Recommendation 1 – Human resourcing

Current

In some other counties where beavers are present, or it is anticipated that beavers will soon be present, there is a named person dedicated to supporting local communities prepare for, or adapt to, living alongside beavers, and/or Beaver Advisory Groups (BAGs)/Beaver Management Groups (BMGs). Due to lack of funding and resourcing, there is no local group or individual dedicated to supporting beaver recovery or human communities adapt to beaver presence in Somerset. Instead, this work is currently largely done voluntarily by professionals working in relevant areas as an additional component on top of their pre-existing job roles.

While the Avon and Somerset Frome probably has the third largest wild beaver population in England, and beavers are increasingly widespread across the county, reports of negative impacts have been minimal. However, potential co-existence challenges may increase as the beaver population continues to expand and human-beaver interactions increase.

Where proactive engagement is conducted with affected stakeholders at the early stages of species recovery projects, the outcomes for both people and wildlife are improved. Yet, without a sustainable funding model, there is limited capacity to offer proactive engagement events that could increase acceptance of beavers and co-existence.

Vision

A sustainable funding model will be in place for a dedicated beaver officer who will be hosted by an organisation in Somerset with a mandate to support local people, or that has experience of wildlife, riparian habitats or land management. A sustainable funding model will also be available to enable the BAGs to be created and operate for as long as they are still useful. The officer and BAGs would increase ability for wider stakeholders to get involved in beaver recovery and human-beaver co-existence, for example: facilitating annual Partnership Forums; delivering community engagement events; offering advice; upskilling land managers to lawfully co-exist with beavers; facilitating volunteer groups; and training and supporting peer-led, community champions.

Due to lack of funding, there is no local group or individual dedicated to supporting beaver recovery or human communities to adapt in Somerset. A sustainable funding model would enable BAGs to be created and wider stakeholders to get involved in beaver recovery and human-beaver co-existence.



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
1.1 Appoint a Beaver Officer to conduct community engagement work, offer in situ advice, and train land managers and local communities with the skills they need to live alongside beavers	An organisation with a remit to represent local communities, or experience in wildlife, riparian habitat management or land management advice	<p>Funding has been secured for, at a minimum, one two-year, full-time Beaver Officer for Somerset and a person appointed to this role</p> <p>The Beaver Officer will be developing positive, trusting relationships with local communities</p> <p>Wider stakeholders have the knowledge and skills to lawfully manage beaver activity and riparian habitats</p>
1.2 Agree a consistent charging model for advice and work provided by BAGs/BMGs/beaver practitioners across England	BAG Chair(s)	<p>Practitioners in Somerset have engaged in national discussions to establish a consistent charging model for advice and support provided by licensed professionals to local land managers and businesses across England</p> <p>The charging structure is affordable to land managers, reflects the specialist advice being provided, and is financially viable for the expert advisors to have paid employment and be able to offer support long-term</p> <p>The charging structures consider the services and fees of other professionals external to BAGs/BMGs (e.g. ecologists)</p>
1.3 Increase the number of volunteer opportunities (e.g. citizen science, supporting community events, peer-to-peer advisors)	BAG partners and other organisations working with volunteers in riparian habitats	<p>Organisations are delivering a broader range of volunteer opportunities and citizen science projects that engage wider stakeholders with beavers and riparian/wetland habitats</p> <p>Opportunities will be increasing connections with nature and understanding about beavers to support beaver population recovery</p>
1.4 Set up BAGs based on the Bristol and Avon Catchment Partnership and the Somerset Catchment Partnership footprints	See page 24	See page 24



Recommendation 2 – Beaver Advisory Groups (BAGs) and Partnership Forums

Current

The River Otter Beaver Trial created a Beaver Management Group (BMG) to allow professionals from a range of sectors to make co-ordinated, strategic decisions that considered the needs of local people, beavers and the wider environment. The post-project evaluation indicates the BMG took significant resource to run but was considered helpful by those involved²⁸. BMGs have since been established at river catchment scale elsewhere in England. These groups are funded either by the partner organisations or donors, although Natural England has commissioned a consultation to consider more sustainable, long-term and possibly more centralised funding models to support beaver recovery and management projects (report due March 2025). Without funding, it will be challenging for anyone in Somerset to establish or maintain a BAG or associated Partnership Forum for wider stakeholders.

Current BMGs report experiencing an expectation by land managers that the BMG will take responsibility for beaver mitigation activities on privately owned land. This goes against the intention for wider stakeholders to have the knowledge and skills they need to manage their own land and live alongside beavers as they do other native wildlife. An alternative suggestion is to term these groups “Beaver Advisory Groups” (BAGs). BAGs would primarily share knowledge and advice but could offer short-term practical assistance where required.

Vision

The outcome of Natural England’s consultation on a funding model could enable practitioners across England to provide dedicated advice and support. Our vision is that, in line with other active beaver restoration projects in England, Somerset will have catchment-based, multi-disciplinary BAGs that make co-ordinated support available at a local level. A Partnership Forum will also be facilitated to enable two-way dialogue between beaver practitioners and wider stakeholders. Meeting frequency, how a Chair will be elected, and preferred communications methods will be informed by findings from the public consultation held in relation to this Somerset guide in 2024.

It is recognised that, in some locations, beavers may have a bigger impact on the environment than some other wildlife and that additional advice and support would be beneficial as we transition back to living with beavers.

²⁸Auster, R.E., Barr, S.W., & Brazier, R.E. (2022) *Beaver Management Groups: Capturing lessons from the River Otter Beaver Trial and River Tamar Catchment*. Natural England. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6315571141672960>



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
2.1 Practitioners in Somerset contribute to the consultation for a financial model for organisations BAGs/BMGs and beaver management activities	Natural England, organisations with a remit to support local people, provide wildlife, land or riparian habitat management advice, or who have a specific remit that overlaps with or incorporates beaver activity	<p>Natural England's consultation regarding funding for BAGs/BMGs has resulted in a sustainable funding model that enables local practitioners to support local communities adapt to living alongside beavers</p> <p>The funding mechanism allows for medium-long-term business planning by advisors and practitioners and local land managers</p>
2.2 (Re)activate BAGs for Somerset and Bristol and Avon Catchment Partnership footprints	Recommendations are that membership is flexible and responsive as beaver recovery projects progress and local needs change. Existing BAGs/BMGs in England include representatives from government, water management companies, land management advisors (farming and forestry), wildlife NGOs, and other interest groups (e.g. fisheries). Who will lead on this in Somerset depends on available resource	<p>Whether through private sources or, ideally, central and long-term government support, funding is available for BAGs that follow the Catchment Partnership footprints</p> <p>An organisation in Somerset is using that funding to establish and maintain the BAGs, including hosting regular meetings</p> <p>BAG partners are committed to supporting the BAGs long-term but flexibility within membership is ensuring that the most relevant organisations with capacity and willingness to engage are represented in the BAGs</p>
2.3 BAG partners have (a) named representative(s) who actively engages with the BAGs	All BAG partners	<p>Named representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• regularly and reliably attend and contribute to BAG meetings• disseminate outcomes within their organisations• consider succession planning should they no longer be able to fulfil the role• support other BAG partners and wider stakeholders to enable beaver recovery and co-existence• drive forward the recommendations in this document
2.4 Somerset's BAGs contribute to, and receive communications from, national beaver groups	BAG Chair(s)	<p>At least one named person from each BAG is responsible for, and is, participating in national beaver practitioner meetings</p> <p>That representative quickly disseminates information between local BAG partners</p> <p>Local approaches are promptly amended to reflect national changes as appropriate</p>
2.5 Partnership Forums, attended by BAG partners and wider stakeholders, are hosted annually	BAG Chair(s)	<p>A Partnership Forum is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• organised and promoted by a named person within the BAGs who also has responsibility for post Forum follow-up• hosted once every year• attended by representatives from a broad range of stakeholder communities



Recommendation 3 – Community engagement and knowledge sharing

Current

Successful species recovery projects engage all relevant stakeholders at every stage of the project, including post-translocation. At the time of compiling this guidance, the wild beavers in Somerset arrived as a result of natural dispersal, escapes from enclosures or from other unknown origins. This means that neither a formal consultation nor education and engagement events could be undertaken with local communities before the beavers arrived. However, there are practitioners in Somerset with the knowledge to advise on beaver impacts, co-existence and mitigation options. This includes advice in relation to specific industries. In other countries across Europe where beavers have been reintroduced, wider stakeholders, including farmers, act as volunteer peer advisors for their own communities.

Educational resources already exist in Britain that are based around beavers as a way to engage children of all ages with literacy, numeracy, science, history and geography²⁹. A new Natural History GCSE was also being scoped that could increase awareness of native biodiversity, including beavers, although progress on this has stalled.

Vision

This guide, created following comprehensive engagement with a wide range of professionals and the public, will be increasing awareness of the guidelines local people and businesses must follow to pragmatically and lawfully manage their land with beavers. It will also be increasing awareness of the support that is available to achieve this. There will be more financial and human resource, leading to an increase in engagement and knowledge sharing opportunities across the county. More engagement events will be occurring at sites where beavers are present to enable people to visualise the potential impacts of beaver activity and discuss how they might make space for that in their own communities.

Whether through their role in climate mitigation and water management, their enigmatic characters and appealing appearance, or their own intrinsic value, there is a lot of potential to engage communities with beaver restoration and, ultimately, wider environmental restoration and custodianship.

²⁹See e.g. <https://beavertrust.org/education/education-resources>



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
3.1 This guide is published online or otherwise made available by the range of organisations who might be approached to give advice or support	Public-facing organisations with a remit to support local people, provide wildlife, land or riparian habitat management advice, or who have a specific remit that overlaps with or incorporates beaver activity	<p>Practitioners are sharing this guide with clients/contacts seeking to encourage beavers to their land or wanting support with co-existence</p> <p>Organisations and land managers are using the guide to consider how to optimise the benefits and minimise the challenges of living and working alongside beavers</p>
3.2 More publicly accessible sites that demonstrate beaver activity in Somerset are used for community engagement work	Land managers, peer/community advisors, beaver practitioners, Beaver Officer	<p>More public access sites, whether privately owned or public spaces, that have beavers are being used for community engagement events</p> <p>Land owners who have beavers on their land and are happy to allow public access (including on pre-booked, ticketed events) are benefiting from a new income stream of hosting/enabling educational events</p> <p>Events are connecting people with nature and helping them learn about beavers and the broad range of impacts of beaver activity (e.g. ecosystem restoration, riparian habitats and biodiversity, natural water management)</p> <p>Events respect beavers as a wild and legally protected animal, minimising disturbance and potential harm</p>
3.3 BAG partners collaborate on public-facing communications to ensure information is given clearly, consistently and in a timely way	BAG partners	<p>Discussing communications approaches, messaging and content is a standing item on BAG meetings</p> <p>Partners share and implement those agreed approaches within their own organisations</p> <p>Wider stakeholders have easy access to all relevant information quickly after it becomes available</p>
3.4 Dedicated person to monitor social media sites to ensure they are being used appropriately, e.g. accurate information is being shared and misinformation is being refuted	BAG partners, local Beaver Officer, volunteers	<p>Social media feeds are regularly monitored</p> <p>Reports of beaver activity or references to beavers are appropriately and promptly actioned (e.g. sightings reported to Somerset Environmental Records Centre or Mammal Mapper; misinformation directly addressed)</p> <p>Post content is used by practitioners to understand, for example, current public sentiment and knowledge about beavers, which is then informing public engagement events (e.g. content, locations) to maximise the benefit delivered</p>



Recommendation 4 – Research and monitoring

Current

Where environmental or social conditions are similar, research can be cross-applied. As research can be time-consuming and expensive, there is little practical advantage in recommissioning an identical piece of research (unless monitoring is the aim). Research has already been conducted into the environmental and social impact of beaver activity at various stages of beaver recovery projects. Where those findings can be transferred, there is no need to duplicate the work. This existing research has been used to inform national management approaches, including those outlined at the start of this document.

Yet some research gaps remain. Somerset has highly modified environments that have evolved in the absence of beavers. Somerset also has some very capable practitioners who are experts in their fields, a wealth of committed, knowledgeable community action groups, and is close to several universities. Cumulatively, the environments and people could contribute to answering unanswered research questions where increased learning remains advantageous.

Vision

The recommendations in this document underline the need for a pragmatic approach. Research with transferrable findings will not be duplicated. Instead, practitioners and wider stakeholders in Somerset will be led by existing evidence so all management advice and decisions are based on the best and most up-to-date evidence, and are consistent with national approaches. However, practitioners in Somerset will help advance national understanding by commissioning or being involved in research that answers new or evolving research questions. New findings will be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders (e.g. in national beaver practitioner forums or local Partnership Forums). This will enable Somerset to support colleagues nationally who face similar opportunities and challenges. We hope the British government will draw on this to develop and deliver policies and frameworks that enable beaver recovery and consider the nuanced needs of a wide range of stakeholder groups and environmental contexts.

The current frameworks to help people co-exist with, mitigate or manage beaver activity while enabling beaver recovery are based on sound scientific evidence. However, there are some research and policy gaps that need to be developed.



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
4.1 Increase public awareness of beaver field signs and how to record wildlife sightings (e.g. through Somerset Environmental Records Centre and wildlife recording apps)	BAG partners, wildlife organisations	<p>Links to Somerset Environmental Records Centre and nature recording apps (e.g. Mammal Mapper) are more prominent on BAG partners' websites</p> <p>BAG partners and people hosting engagement events are actively promoting wildlife recording systems (e.g. through social media, newsletters and with volunteers)</p> <p>Wider stakeholders are recording more wildlife sightings. Ideally, this extends to a variety of species, not just beavers, to overcome the data deficit</p> <p>Better understanding of beaver distribution across the county is used to inform community engagement and ecological management plans</p>
4.2 Complete population surveys to get a better understanding of the size and distribution of Somerset's current beaver population and likely dispersal trajectory	Natural England, Environment Agency, Beaver Trust, ecologists, academia, Wildlife Trusts. This could also be done by organisations/individuals that are not part of the BAG with a Memorandum of Understanding or other agreement	<p>Funding and approval to commission a beaver population survey in the county has been received and a survey undertaken</p> <p>Better understanding of beaver distribution across the county is used to inform community engagement and ecological management plans</p>
4.3 Complete or contribute to research that increases understanding of beavers' impacts in novel or unusual situations or that uses new methods and share findings as appropriate	Dependent on expertise required for particular research area. Researchers to disseminate findings more widely using the support of BAG partners and the Partnership Forums	<p>Priority is given to research that provides new and useful data and that expands our understanding of the impacts of beaver activity or the interaction between beavers and other species (including humans) and ecological processes</p> <p>Research findings are being applied to improve riparian habitat management, biodiversity recovery, co-existence and development of policy and guidance in Somerset and elsewhere</p> <p>Research questions are regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure they remain relevant and helpful</p> <p>New learning generated in Somerset is shared with relevant stakeholders (e.g. BAG Steering Groups, Partnership Forums, national forums, Natural England case study library)</p> <p>New learning from outside Somerset provided through the Natural England library, at national forums or identified from practitioners' own wider reading, is shared locally where it is appropriate to do so</p>



Recommendation 5 – Funding

Current

The government provides a limited number of grants to incentivise and enable land managers and organisations to create space for beavers or to support management of certain potential negative impacts (see page 18). A wider suite of grants is also available that could be cross applied (e.g. creating riparian buffer strips). However, applying for those wider grants that were not written specifically with beavers in mind is, understandably, daunting.

Projects that increase beaver populations (e.g. translocations) are currently appealing to donors who want to support projects that enhance biodiversity recovery, climate mitigation, natural water management or connecting people with nature.

The outcome of Natural England's consultation on possible funding mechanisms for BAGs/BMGs (winter 2024/25) may also have an impact on how advice and support can be delivered across England, including in Somerset.

Vision

As beavers become more commonplace or the focus moves to providing day-to-day advice and monitoring, they could become less appealing to donors, despite their support still being very necessary and valuable. Keeping beavers relevant and attractive to donors is a question that we need to remain aware of.

Land management advisors will have increased awareness of how existing revenue streams, including for natural flood management, climate resilience and ecosystem service provision, can be applied to beaver activity. They will be more willing to offer positive but pragmatic advice about accommodating beavers to their clients.

Land managers and organisations will be more aware of and confident accessing the broad range of funding streams available to them for adopting beaver-friendly land/asset management and for delivering a public service. Whether as a result of grants such as BC5 or a secure financial model for BAGs/BMGs, fees for expert advice and, if necessary, undertaking lawful licenced mitigation, will present good value to those in need of support and be sufficient that those expert, trained professionals can be employed and continue to provide support over the medium-long term.

Beavers could support a range of nature-based solutions. The future could hold opportunities for a range of public bodies, land managers and private companies willing to embrace this transition.



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
5.1 Land management advisors offer more positive but pragmatic guidance to increase the number of land managers making space for beavers using the financial incentives available to them	Land management advisors, for example, FWAG SW, Country Land and Business Association, NFU, farm cluster facilitators, community champions, local Wildlife Trusts	<p>Land or riparian habitat management advisors in Somerset are offering more positive, pragmatic advice about beavers and the wide range of revenue streams that can be used to incentivise, reward and enable making space for beavers or improving riparian habitats</p> <p>Land advisors are liaising directly with green finance officers and agri-environment scheme advisors in national bodies (e.g. Natural England, Rural Payment Agency), local colleagues (e.g. BAG partners) and finance officers in other counties to remain aware of updates to funding streams</p>
5.2 Grants available to Risk Management Authorities for flood management and climate adaptation projects (e.g. Grant in Aid, Local Levy, Natural Flood Management Funding) are made available to mitigate any potential impact of beaver activity on flood defences and to capitalise on beaver activity as a form of natural flood management	Natural England, Environment Agency, Wessex Water, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium, Bristol and Avon Catchment Partnership, Somerset Catchment Partnership	<p>Following advice provided by Responsible Organisations, DEFRA is approving grants for flood and coastal erosion risk management projects to account for beaver activity and updated, clear guidance will be available</p> <p>Flood Risk Managers are using these grants to support flood mitigation and water management projects, both to protect infrastructure against beaver activity and to make space for beavers as a supportive factor in providing nature-based solutions</p>



Recommendation 6 – Policy

Current

As beavers have been missing from Britain for several centuries, there has, until recently, been no need to consider them or their activity within policy or regulations. Some legislation and regulations have been amended to reflect that beavers have returned to England. However, there are still some frameworks that have not been updated or that are incongruous for beavers compared to other native, legally protected species (e.g. there is no specific guidance for developers to consider for beavers in the same way as there is for bats, great-crested newts or badgers).

The Environment Agency has offices in Bristol and Bridgwater. It has a key role developing, influencing and embedding key policies, programmes and plans associated with the water environment, and long-standing relationships with stakeholders. Environment Agency and Natural England working together can be a strong voice. As at the date of this guide, they are working to integrate beaver into policies at all levels, for example, *Plan for Water*, *River Basin Planning*, *Catchment Action Plans*, and *Flood Risk Management Strategies*. Other organisations involved in any proposed BAG in Somerset operate at a local/regional level, so their ability to alter national legislation, regulations and guidance is limited but they can offer support and advice, and get involved in advocacy and campaigning. The public can also be strong drivers of policy change, for example, public pressure was a key factor in the government's decision to allow the beaver population to remain on the River Otter and the commencement of the River Otter Beaver Trial.

Vision

This Recommendation relates to national frameworks and, therefore, responsibility ultimately rests with national, not local, bodies. Insofar as possible, practitioners in Somerset will contribute their expertise to development of robust policies that equitably consider the social and economic needs of a broad range of stakeholders. Policies in England will be updated to reflect that beavers are a native and protected species. Discrepancies between how beavers and other native, legally protected species are provided for or considered will be addressed. While responsibility for being aware of and complying with policies rests with the person conducting any activity with or around beavers, there will be greater clarity about appropriate behaviours so that possible benefits can be maximised and risk of harm minimised. This greater clarity could include, but is not limited to, publication of guidance (e.g. Codes of Practice) for specific industries.

Policies in England will be updated to reflect the needs of a broad range of stakeholders and reduce discrepancies between how beavers and other native, legally protected species are considered and provided for.



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
6.1 Legislation and regulations are updated to reduce discrepancies between beavers and other native, protected and resident species (e.g. in release procedures, guidance for specific industry sectors, etc)	Natural England, Environment Agency, industry advisors/representatives	<p>Legislation, regulations and guidance is updated to consider beavers in the same way as other native, legally protected and resident species</p> <p>Updated legislation, regulations and guidance is widely and transparently communicated and easily available to all relevant stakeholders</p> <p>There is greater clarity about appropriate courses of action when working around beavers, including where other protected species or environmental features are also present, and bespoke guidance for specific industries</p>



Recommendation 7 – Health and welfare

Current

Research and practitioners' experiences of working around beavers have led to publication of health screening and handling and management protocols. If followed, those protocols will enhance beaver welfare and promote broader environmental health (see page 17).

Despite more potential hazards and transmission pathways being analysed in the 2024 DRA compared to the 2022 report, the overall risk to people, domestic animals and wildlife remained low. This includes beavers presenting a very low risk as potential vectors of Bovine TB. As a native species, other native plants and animals co-evolved around beavers and they remain well adapted to living together.

There is little information available about interactions between beavers and INNS. This could be due to lack of research, or due to beavers avoiding INNS so there being little/no observable impact to report on.

Human society and land use has changed during beavers' absence. Notwithstanding how detrimental this is proving to be for our own health and prosperity, climate and wider biodiversity, it could also be a threat to beaver recovery.

Overall, research indicates that while some species or individual organisms (e.g. individual trees) may experience detriment due to beaver activity, renewed co-existence between beavers and other native species has a net beneficial effect, restimulating healthy, balanced and resilient ecosystems.

Vision

Enabling environmental recovery benefits everyone ecologically, socially and economically but it will require us to change how we relate to and manage our land and water. Any action with or around beavers should always follow national guidelines and there should be adequate human and financial resource to deliver this. Community engagement will increase public awareness and understanding of zoonoses and other hazards as they relate to beavers, humans, other domestic animals and wildlife. This will reduce perpetuation of misinformation, unnecessary fear and persecution, instead, enabling harmonious co-existence with beavers contributing to healthy, resilient ecosystems.

Overall, current research shows that while some species or individual organisms (e.g. individual trees) may experience detriment due to beaver activity, renewed co-existence between beavers and other native species has a net beneficial effect, restimulating healthy, balanced and resilient ecosystems.



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
7.1 The mitigation hierarchy (see page 12) is more actively promoted to increase awareness among organisations and individuals living or working alongside beavers and enable compliance	BAG partners, land management advisors, practitioners holding public-engagement events	<p>There are more community engagement events, including the Partnership Forum (page 24) in which the mitigation hierarchy and other supportive frameworks are promoted</p> <p>The mitigation hierarchy is more visible and obvious on public-facing resources and communications (e.g. websites, social media, etc)</p>
7.2 Anyone working with or around beavers in Somerset always follows national guidance for best practice, including but not limited to Disease Risk Analysis, translocation and handling protocols, and wider biosecurity advice including around INNS (see page 17)	Natural England, veterinary practices, animal/wildlife welfare organisations, practitioners, land managers and individuals working with or around beavers and their habitats, all individuals involved in translocation projects	<p>Natural England is circulating all updated guidance to beaver practitioners/BAGs/BMGs as soon as it becomes available</p> <p>Practitioners are disseminating updated guidance within their own organisations and to external clients and contacts</p> <p>Organisations working with or around beavers are proactively identifying and applying the most up-to-date health and welfare protocols</p> <p>Practitioners involved in translocations are complying with national guidelines to ensure their projects are lawful and follow best practice</p>
7.3 Blood/tissue sampling is conducted wherever reasonably practical (e.g. during translocations or rescues) and data logged with the studbook keeper	Practitioner leading the project, ZSL/ RZZS, studbook keeper (currently Beaver Trust), veterinary practices, wildlife rescue and welfare centres	<p>It is standard practice for blood or other non-invasive sampling to be conducted whenever a free-living beaver is caught</p> <p>Samples are being assessed by ZSL/RZZS and results of the screening provided to the studbook keeper</p> <p>Practitioners in Somerset are aware of this protocol and have sufficient resource to ensure it is always followed</p>
7.4 Genetic diversity is considered within any translocation that affects Somerset's beaver populations to optimise health, welfare and resilience	Practitioner leading the project, studbook keeper (currently Beaver Trust)	<p>Information held by the studbook keeper is being used to optimise health and resilience in beaver populations, whether Somerset is a recipient or donor population</p>
7.5 Practitioners are able to clearly communicate health and welfare information to wider stakeholders to provide reassurance and enable them to act appropriately around beavers. This will be enabled by researchers communicating updates to practitioners in a timely way	Natural England, veterinary practices, animal/wildlife welfare organisations, land management advisors, practitioners involved in public engagement and/ or advising on beaver co-existence and mitigation	<p>Practitioners are aware of relevant updates through direct communications from national beaver and wildlife welfare groups</p> <p>Practitioners are confidently and accurately disseminating information about health and welfare to wider stakeholders</p> <p>Land managers and the public are aware of the (currently low) risk from beavers, which is providing reassurance, and reducing spread of misinformation, unfounded fears, and beaver persecution</p> <p>Everyone working or living around beavers is aware of, and implementing, good biosecurity protocols and managing land and water courses appropriately to optimise human and other animal welfare</p>



Recommendation 8 – Integration into wider policy

Current

Historically, biodiversity declines, climate change, flood risk management, environmental degradation, challenges within the agricultural sector, and lack of connection with nature have tended to be viewed as isolated issues. This erroneous belief fails to recognise how interrelated the problems and, therefore, the solutions are.

Research findings indicate that beavers can deliver a variety of nature-based solutions. As their impacts are so broad and beavers are a novel and interesting species, they could be attractive to a spectrum of stakeholders, and act as ambassadors for other environmental restoration and species recovery projects. As the conservationists, business leaders and citizens of tomorrow, younger people are an important demographic to engage with. As outlined in Recommendation 3, some informal educational materials are available that incorporate beavers as an engaging and interesting basis for a range of school subjects. Allowing beavers and their activity to return can have very significant financial, social and environmental value.

As beavers have only relatively recently returned to England, many organisations have not considered how to integrate beavers or the impacts of their activity into business strategies, plans or other resources.

Vision

An opportunity now exists to consider how to integrate beaver activity with broader strategies and goals. Ultimately, beavers could be considered an important supportive factor and included in any policy or strategy that addresses climate adaptation and resilience (including business diversification options), promotes biodiversity recovery or enables people to connect with nature. Again, this Recommendation has two levels of impact:

- within Somerset, people have the power to campaign for, and local organisations have the power to make, changes to policies that operate at a local level.
- at a regional or national level, people in Somerset can exert a level of influence and advocacy even if the final decision must remain elsewhere.

Our vision is that organisations, land managers and community groups will be thinking innovatively about how to include the huge potential beavers can provide within all new or updated strategies and policies. Similarly, education providers will be engaging the younger generation with nature, using beavers (and other native species) to bring the curriculum to life. Alongside this will run clear communications and learning opportunities to increase the wider public's ability to take actions that help restore a healthy environment with beavers as a key part of the natural mitigation 'toolkit'.

Organisations, land managers and community groups will be thinking innovatively about how to realise the huge potential beavers can provide by considering and, where appropriate, including their activity in all new or updated local strategies and policies.



Recommendation	Who	Indicator of success
8.1 Wider stakeholders are supported to understand the overlap between the climate, biodiversity and social crises so that integrated solutions can be created. Example policies this could relate to include but are not limited to: Local Nature Recovery Strategy; Biodiversity Action Plans; Catchment Action Plans; Catchment Flood Management Plans; Biodiversity Net Gain	Bristol and Avon Catchment Partnership, Environment Agency, FWAG SW, Natural England, Somerset Catchment Partnership, Somerset Council, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium, Somerset Rivers Authority, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Wessex Water, wider stakeholders, local businesses and community groups	<p>Organisations are considering the symbiosis between nature recovery, climate action and socio-economic prosperity and including integrated solutions when updating or writing new policies</p> <p>While this action may necessarily have started with only a few trailblazer groups and organisations, as the positive outcomes are realised, more will be following their lead until a crucial tipping point is reached and integrating nature, climate and connections with nature has become “the norm”</p>
8.2 How the return of beavers (and other native species) can support business diversification and potential revenue creation, and enable people to have meaningful connections with nature is incorporated into the Somerset Tourism Strategy and other private businesses’ tourism, visitor engagement and education strategies	Somerset Council, Country Land and Business Association, FWAG SW, National Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Avon Wildlife Trust, wider stakeholders, local businesses and community groups	<p>Somerset Council has incorporated opportunities for eco-tourism derived from beaver (and other native species) presence into the Somerset Tourism Strategy</p> <p>Business owners, management teams and education providers are capitalising on opportunities presented by beavers in their own visitor engagement strategies and education strategies</p>
8.3 Grants and incentive-based schemes integrate climate adaptation, natural water management and biodiversity recovery options	See Funding (page 30)	



Appendix: Useful websites and contacts

Beaver reintroduction and management in England

Natural England

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beaver-reintroduction-and-management-in-england>
Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wild-release-and-management-of-beavers-in-england/wild-release-and-management-of-beavers-in-england>
Email: beavers@naturalengland.org.uk

Beaver groups and advisors

Beaver Management Groups

Web: <https://beavermanagement.org>

Beaver Trust

Web: www.beavertrust.org
Email: info@beavertrust.org

Environment Agency Regional Beaver Team

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
Tel: 0203 025 2230

National England Beaver Team

Email: beavers@naturalengland.org.uk or
beaverlicence@naturalengland.org.uk

Co-existing with beavers without and with a licence

DEFRA

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beavers-protection-and-management/protection-and-management-of-beavers-in-england>
Email: beavers@naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England/DEFRA

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beaver-licences>
Email: wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk and
beavers@naturalengland.org.uk
Tel: 0300 060 3900

Class licences – Training

CIEEM / Beaver Trust

Web: <https://cieem.net/i-am/upcoming-training-and-events>

Natural England

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beaver-licences>
Email: wildlifelicencing@naturalengland.org

Land advice

Catchment Sensitive Farming (Wessex)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/catchment-sensitive-farming-reduce-agricultural-water-pollution#wessex>
Email: csf.wessex@naturalengland.org.uk

Country Land and Business Association South West

Web: <https://www.cla.org.uk/in-your-area/south-west>
Email: southwest@cla.org.uk
Tel: 01249 599059

Environment Agency (re environmental permits)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
Tel: 03708 506506

Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest

Web: <https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/Pages/Category/farm-advice>
Email: info@fwagsw.org.uk
Tel: 01823 660684

Farming Clusters

Web: <https://www.farmerclusters.com>

National Farmers Union South

Web: <https://www.nfuonline.com>
Email: nfu_south@nfu.org.uk
Tel: 02476 939404



Water course advice/permits

Catchment Sensitive Farming (Wessex)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/catchment-sensitive-farming-reduce-agricultural-water-pollution#wessex>

Email: csf.wessex@naturalengland.org.uk

Environment Agency (re flood risk activities)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Tel: 03708 506506

Internal Drainage Boards (re Land Drainage Consents)

Email: admin@somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk

Tel: 01278 789906

Advice regarding other protected species

Natural England/DEFRA

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wildlife-licences>

Email: (for other protected species licence queries): protectedspecieslicensingandmanagement@naturalengland.org.uk

Email: (for work related to wildlife management): wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Email: (for work related to scientific research or conservation): wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk

Email: (for replacement/renewal of EPS licences): eps.mitigation@naturalengland.org.uk

Tel: 0208 026 1089

Non-Native Species Secretariat (re INNS advice)

Web: <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/what-can-i-do/check-clean-dry>

Email: nnss@apha.gov.uk

Agri-environment Schemes

Natural England

Email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Tel: 0300 060 3900

Rural Payments Agency / DEFRA Rural Services Helpline

Email: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 020 0301

Country Land and Business Association South West

Web: <https://www.cla.org.uk/in-your-area/south-west>

Email: southwest@cla.org.uk

Tel: 01249 599059

Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group South West

Web: <https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/Pages/Category/farm-advice>

Email: info@fwagsw.org.uk

Tel: 01823 660684

Local Protected Landscapes Body (re Farming in Protected Landscapes)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>

National Farmers Union South

Web: <https://www.nfuonline.com>

Email: nfu_south@nfu.org.uk

Tel: 02476 939404



Somerset Beaver

Co-existence and Management:

Guidance and Recommendations



Somerset Wildlife Trust was commissioned to produce this report by **Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest** with funding from **Somerset Rivers Authority**.

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We strongly recommend you check for updates in legislation and guidance before proceeding with any work around beavers or their habitat.

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Wildlife Trust**



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