

Beaver reintroduction in the Brit



We want to hear **your** views

In late 2026, West Dorset Wilding plans to submit a licence application to release Eurasian beavers into the wild in the Brit Valley. Their reintroduction is part of the Brit Valley Project which has been developed through funding from Defra's Landscape Recovery programme – and if successful would come with 25 years of funding for nature recovery in the Brit catchment, including to support the work with beavers. The licence would be granted by **Natural England**, who consider the views of the local community when deciding whether to agree to these projects. There are currently beavers in the wild in nearby catchments including the Otter, and Dorset Stour, as well as three beaver enclosures already in the Brit area.

If successful, the first beavers might be released from Autumn 2027. We plan to release around 8 adult pairs of beavers over 3 years into separate locations dispersed in different parts of the catchment. The beavers would either come from the wild in Scotland, or from enclosures here in England, and they would be subject to detailed health and welfare checks to ensure they are fit and healthy before release. Some of these pairs may already be pregnant or have dependant young who would arrive with their parents.

Beavers are ecosystem engineers and restore watercourses and wetlands. Their dams and burrows can sometimes cause issues with existing land-uses, so experts would be on hand to help manage problems.

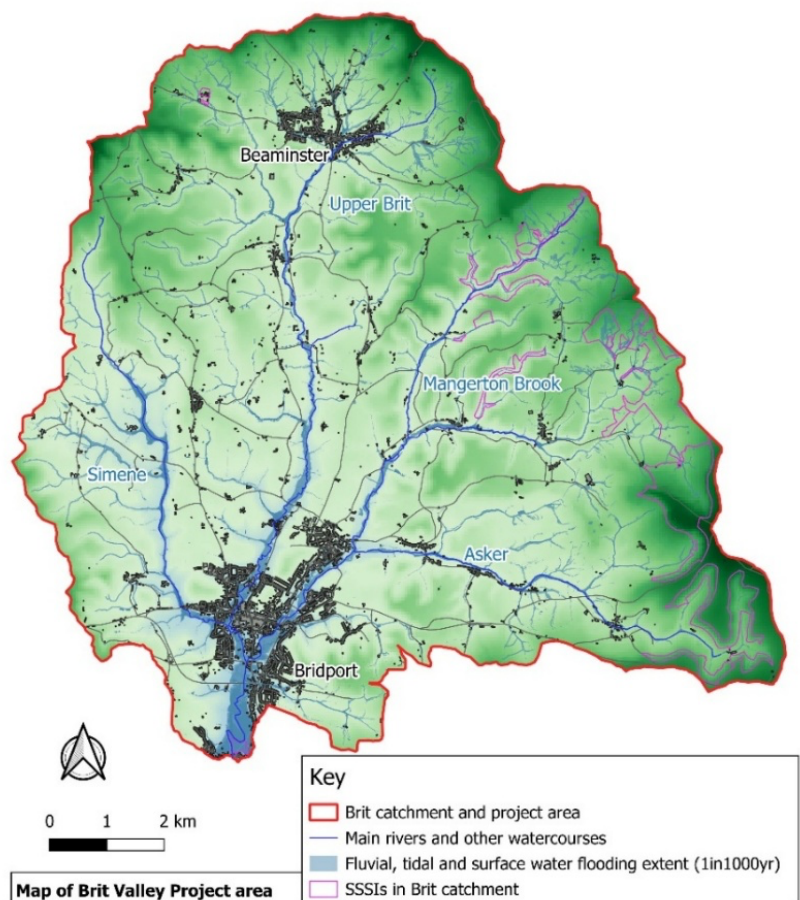
The Project Area

Beavers move through the landscape along watercourses and generally stay within the network of rivers and streams that make up a river catchment; in this case the Brit valley which also includes the Simene, Mangerton Brook and Asker. In the years ahead, as the population expands, they may travel along the coast and into one of the nearby rivers such as the Bride or Char, or they may cross overland into the Hooke and Frome.

We really want to hear from you, whether you want to ask how a location within the catchment might be affected by the beavers, or whether you just wish to register your views more generally. To find out more or simply wish to register your views, please go to:

westdorsetwilding.org/beavers

If you would like to meet the team involved and discuss your thoughts directly with them, two drop-in events are planned for Beaminster and Bridport in July. **To find out more, visit the website.**



Map produced by Mark Elliott on behalf of West Dorset Wilding and the Brit Valley Project to support licence application to release Eurasian beavers. June 2026

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Beavers:

Myths and reality!

Myth: Beavers live in dams

Reality: Beavers live in burrows and lodges. However they sometimes build dams downstream so that the burrow or lodge entrance is submerged in deep stable water.

NB. A similar project led by the **Dorset Wildlife Trust** is being proposed for the adjacent Hooke and Frome catchment just to the east of the Brit. Although we work closely together, these projects would be licensed and managed separately. Click [here](#) or Google "Dorset Wildlife Trust Beaver consultation" for details

Myth: Beavers cause flooding

Reality: It depends where in the river system you are. By building dams in small streams, scientists have shown that beaver-created wetlands reduce flooding to communities living downstream. However, in order to achieve this, the watercourses and wetlands will need space in the headwater streams.

Myth: Beavers kill trees

Reality: Beavers browse on riverside trees and shrubs, particularly in the winter when there is less soft vegetation for them to feed on. They prefer species like willow, poplar (aspen) and birch trees which aren't generally killed but readily resprout (coppice) in response to being felled. They do sometimes feed on other riverside trees like oak and apple trees, but these can easily be protected where necessary.

Myth: Beavers eat fish

Reality: Beavers are herbivorous animals, so they eat plants not animals.

Myth: Beavers don't have any predators in Britain, and so their numbers will get out of control.

Reality: Beaver kits are vulnerable to otters and sometimes foxes when they are young. Adult beavers do not have any natural predators, but beavers are fiercely territorial and kill each other as their populations build, and this helps regulate numbers.

Myth: Reintroduced beavers have caused havoc in Patagonia and will do the same in Britain

Reality: North American beavers were introduced into southern Argentina in 1946 for fur farming. In South America they are a non-native *invasive* species, and are very damaging to the local vegetation (eg. Southern beech forests) and their numbers are also not regulated by the natural climatic or ecological factors. However, they are native to Britain and have been part of the European ecosystems since before the last ice age, co-evolving with other species like Salmon, and their food species such as willow and hazel.

Myth: Beavers are heavily protected so you can't manage any problems they cause.

Reality: As of 1st October 2022, beavers became a European Protected Species in England. Mindful of the need to manage the impacts of this keystone species, the government have published a 5-step Management approach and issued 'Class Licences' which allow the management of conflicts for those people that need to do so.

West Dorset Wilding is a registered UK Charity No. 1196964, established December 2021
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Go to westdorsetwilding.org/beavers for more details and to tell us your views



Adult Eurasian beaver with kits. Photo by David White