



Western Sussex Rivers Trust position on wild beavers

Background

In March 2025, Defra announced that Natural England would begin accepting and assessing licences for the release of beavers into the wild. These beavers will be allowed to naturally expand their range, with a minimum of 10-year management plans in place to promote their positive return to the landscape. Previously, licences were available to release beavers into enclosures.

In May 2025, the National Trust submitted an expression of interest to release Beavers in the Western Rother catchment and Natural England have requested further information before a formal application for a release license can be submitted.

You can read more about the process for wild beaver release here:

[Wild release and management of beavers in England - GOV.UK](#)

Our position

The Western Sussex Rivers Trust support free living beavers as we feel they are an important part of functioning river systems. We wish to ensure that beaver releases are happening in a planned process with effective beaver management in place.

Beavers can bring many benefits including boosting biodiversity, creating and restoring wetland habitats (thus capturing carbon), providing drought resilience and reducing downstream flooding. Beavers are 'ecosystem engineers' and their positive effect on water ecosystems can bring benefits for a variety of other organisms.

However, they are not a panacea for our rivers, and their reintroductions must be carefully planned to avoid negative effects, such as on farming, food production, fishing and infrastructure. They may pose challenges to those responsible for land and infrastructure in some locations, especially if their reintroduction and subsequent activity is not effectively managed.

We are a member of both the [Sussex Beaver Partnership](#) (hosted by the Sussex Wildlife Trust) and the [Western Rother Beaver Group](#) (WRBG) and would like to help work with landowners to achieve a well-planned release of beavers into the wild. Working together, the WRBG is collecting evidence to demonstrate how the Western Rother catchment could be a potential area for a beaver release project while carefully minimising and managing potential impacts on landowners.

For further information about the Western Rother Beaver Group and the proposed application for the release of beavers into the Western Rother catchment, please visit: [Western Rother Beaver Group](#)