

Board Paper

09 July 2015

Paper Title	European Beaver in Wales
Paper Reference:	NRW B B 41.15
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Purpose of Paper:	Information
Recommendation:	Briefing note
Decision Required:	n/a

Natural Resources Wales' position with regards to Eurasian beaver reintroduction to Wales.

1. Previous work undertaken by NRW and the Welsh Beaver Assessment Initiative have established that the reintroduction of European beaver to Wales is feasible and would be desirable from an ecosystem management perspective.
2. It has been agreed that the initial focus on a reintroduction project must be upon gaining stakeholder consensus before proceeding with a reintroduction to a suitable catchment.
3. The NRW landholding and visitor centre at Bwlch Nant yr Arian in Ceredigion has been identified as a suitable location for a constrained release of a family of beavers to a small 4Ha lake. This could then be used as an opportunity to utilise the existing visitor centre facilities as a focus for stakeholder engagement. There would also be likely to be some increased socio-economic benefits in the vicinity due to increased visitor numbers. The cost of this initial phase in the project could be expected to be around £50k over 2 years.
4. A paper outlining the Bwlch Nant yr Arian proposal was presented to the NRW Board on the 26th of March, and a further briefing session was held with the Environment Board Group on the 1st of May. As a result of this, further work was been requested on a number of areas before the proposal is considered further by the board, these are namely;
 - a. Sounding out the views of key stakeholders, to include representatives of agriculture, anglers, landowners and other rural interests.
 - b. An assessment of the potential impacts on fluvial flooding.
 - c. Further consideration of outputs from trial releases in Scotland.
 - d. Development of an Engagement Plan with NRW Communications colleagues in External Relations.
 - e. Further development of the socio-economic benefits of the project.
 - f. Further development of the project costs.
5. This project was not however amongst those prioritised for funding in the Natural Resource Planning projects list for this year. As such unless external funding opportunities are available, this project will not move forward at the present time.
6. In addition, the recent inclusion of Eurasian beaver on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), now means that a NRW license would be required for any reintroduction. Any assessment to enable such a license to be issued for this purpose would have to be made under stringent segregation from other NRW interests here to ensure that any decision was made from a purely

objective viewpoint in the same way any other Schedule 9 application would be considered.

7. We are aware a number of third-party proposals for Eurasian beaver reintroduction in Wales. These would also be subject to Schedule 9 licensing requirements before beaver could be lawfully released into the wild. NRW must adopt a neutral position towards applications for beaver reintroduction by third parties in Wales, always deciding any applications on its individual merits.

Draft Position Statement

“Natural Resources Wales has undertaken a review of the desirability of reintroducing Eurasian beaver to a river catchment in Wales. This follows on from previous work undertaken by NRW’s legacy bodies and the Welsh Beaver Assessment Initiative.

This work confirmed that reintroducing Eurasian beaver would, on the whole, be beneficial to the Welsh environment. However, legitimate concerns remain from stakeholders, particularly those regarding the potential impact on flooding and agriculture.

Work is being undertaken elsewhere in the UK to study the impact of reintroduced Eurasian beavers. NRW will carefully consider the environmental management, ecosystem and socio-economic impacts identified there as part of any decision making process.

Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Ceredigion has been identified as a suitable constrained release site and as a means to undertake stakeholder engagement. This would be likely to benefit the environment and also possibly help the local economy by attracting more tourists. We do not however believe that this would be appropriate for NRW to fund this project at this time.

NRW is also aware that there are others planning Beaver re-introductions across Wales - these would all need to be licensed by NRW and we will carry out a thorough assessment before making a decision on any of these.”