

Appendix 2

Developing a Beaver Management Strategy Framework for the River Otter (post 2020)

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Background

The River Otter Beaver Trial (ROBT) is a five year trial reintroduction of beavers into the River Otter, Devon that concludes in March 2020. At the conclusion of the Trial, Natural England / Defra are responsible for deciding the future of the beavers currently living wild on the river.

The ROBT Steering Group, made up of a diverse range of stakeholders, recognise the critical need to prepare for a potential scenario that Defra allows the beavers to remain in the River Otter catchment after 2020. The development of a Management Strategy Framework now will help inform decisions regarding the long term management of beavers, the wetland habitats they establish, and their general activities in the River Otter in the future. This proactive, constructive approach will help ensure many con-tested and complex issues regarding management associated with beavers have been agreed well in advance of any government decision. This protects the interests of communities living on or near the river, of the environment and of the beavers.

The ROBT Steering Group has established a Beaver Management Working Group (BMWG) to develop this approach for the River Otter, with reference to neighbouring catchments, that could be put in place when the Trial concludes. The Framework was produced with expert input from a wide range of national stakeholders and international advisors. This was to ensure the approach could be more easily adapted and adopted nationwide for other catchments where beavers might be reintroduced or colonise, thus ensuring a more consistent approach.

Developing consensus among varied stakeholder groups

The ROBT Management Group is responsible for facilitating the development of the Management Strategy Framework. The Management Group includes Devon Wildlife Trust, The University of Exeter, Clinton Devon Estates, Derek Gow Consultancy and Dr Roisin Campbell-Palmer.

The full Beaver Management Working Group also comprises representatives from:

- Natural England;
- Environment Agency;
- Forestry Commission;
- National Farmers Union;
- Country Land and Business Association;
- Westcountry Rivers Trust; and
- Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Timescales and process

The Working Group met on six occasions. The first priority was to develop a set of Core and Supplementary Principles which were agreed by the Steering Group in April 2018. These



formed the foundation for the rest of the document which should now assist Natural England / Defra make a decision about the future of the beavers on the River Otter by April 2020.

Funding for the development of his BMSF has come from Devon Wildlife Trust and from Defra, with significant inputs of time from all of the partners involved with the process.

