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22 September 2020

Dear Minister Pow,

## **Beaver Introductions**

We understand and support the desire to re-introduce beavers into English rivers and recognise the potential benefits these animals could contribute both to our environment and biodiversity as a whole.

However, current EA monitoring clearly shows that no river in England has a healthy salmon population and that sea trout are at risk in over half our rivers.

Against this background of severely declining stocks, we have serious concerns about the potential impact of any additional pressures on the survival of both adult and juvenile migratory salmonids. In our professional opinion, the research to date carried out on the potential impacts of reintroduced beavers on migratory salmonids is inadequate to answer fully whether their activities could further imperil these species through delays to migration, associated increased predation, and loss of spawning habitat. The 25 Year Plan for the Environment commits Government to *“action to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species...and...to prevent human-induced extinction or loss of known threatened species in England”*. It is clear that this should include both salmon and sea trout given the current parlous state of their populations in England and the need to do all we can to prevent further declines in these populations.

Consequently, we could only support the further release of beavers into enclosed locations on river catchments that do not support runs of migratory salmonid populations. These sites can be in the vanguard of making our rivers “fit for beavers”, where the surrounding environment is managed specifically for beavers, e.g. by removal of man-made barriers, planting of riparian woodland, provision of adequate buffer strips, improved land management that prevents sediment build up behind beaver dams, and in locations where landowners are fully supportive. This controlled approach to beaver reintroduction would also allow time for further detailed research to be carried out over meaningful time periods on those beaver populations that are already present on migratory salmonid rivers in order to determine fully what impacts these might be having. It would also allow more time for wider liaison with all stakeholders and crucially the development of effective management processes.

Whilst there is general agreement that reintroduced beavers must be actively managed, it is not yet clear how this will be funded and who will decide on the priorities for management action? Further key questions include how further illegal introductions will be prevented and what happens if beavers in certain locations are found to be having unsustainable impacts?

Finally, we recognise that if managed correctly the reintroduction of beavers could contribute to the health and diversity of England’s river catchments but consider that a precautionary and measured approach is essential to ensure that the already critically endangered migratory salmonid populations are

not put at further risk. In addition, such an approach should also ensure that the wider environmental and societal benefits of beavers in the English landscape are optimised, conflicts avoided and hopefully the costs of future management reduced.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of

**Chris Mills**  
President



**Mark Lloyd**  
Chief Executive



**Shaun Leonard**  
Director



**Paul Knight**  
Fisheries Consultant



cc:

George Eustice  
Sir James Bevan  
Marian Spain  
James Wallace

Environment Secretary  
Chief Executive, Environment Agency  
Chief Executive, Natural England  
The Beaver Trust