



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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TITLE Welsh Government plans to amend the legislative framework in Wales to provide additional protection to European beavers (*Castor fiber*) in Wales

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BY Huw Irranca-Davies, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Last year, the Welsh Government announced its support for the managed reintroduction of European beavers (*Castor fiber*) in Wales. Since then, I have been working closely with colleagues, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and stakeholders to progress this important initiative.

I am pleased to announce that we will be extending legal protections to European beavers in Wales. These amendments will ensure beavers are recognised as a Native Species and afforded legal protection as a European Protected Species, making it an offence to deliberately harm them or damage their habitats. This follows a targeted engagement exercise to gather views on proposed amendments to the legislative framework. I would like to thank all those who engaged for providing a well-balanced view of the benefits and concerns. I'm pleased to confirm that after consideration of the responses I have agreed to move forward with the proposed legislative changes which will bring Wales in line with England and Scotland.

The ecological benefits of beaver reintroduction are well evidenced with recent evidence showing beaver dams help trap sediments and filter pollutants, significantly reducing nutrient loads such as nitrogen and phosphorus from agricultural runoff. This natural nutrient mitigation supports cleaner rivers and contributes to our broader goals for water quality improvement and ecosystem resilience in Wales.

I recognise the legitimate concerns among landowners, farmers and the angling community and the reintroduction of beavers into the wild will require careful consideration and management. NRW will retain the requirement for a licence for any release into the wild, and will have the authority to issue management licences, where necessary, to mitigate adverse impacts.

While the ecological benefits are clear, it's important we balance these with the concerns around potential species impacts, land use, and water systems. I'm committed to a collaborative, evidence-led approach, and I'm pleased to confirm the establishment of a Wales Beaver Forum to help manage these issues which will meet for the first time later this year.

This work forms part of our wider response to the nature emergency and the urgent need to halt biodiversity loss in Wales. The reintroduction of beavers is a tangible example of how we can restore ecological function and resilience in our landscapes. It aligns with our obligations under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and our international commitments to reverse species decline and enhance ecosystem health. By working together, we can create a future where nature thrives, and communities benefit from the services healthy ecosystems provide.