

Beavers in the forest

Forestry England's role in beaver recovery



Photo credit: Kirsty Frith
University of Exeter



Ed Parr Ferris, Species Recovery Manager



Forestry Commission established under the Forestry Act 1919 to:

- increase the amount of woodland in Great Britain through afforestation and reforestation
- promote forestry and the production of timber for trade



Following devolution since 2019, the **Forestry Commission** comprises:

Forest Services – grants and regulation

Forest Research – forestry and tree-related research, GB and internationally

Forestry England – manages the public forest estate – the Nation's Forests

Legislative and policy drivers



Environment Act 2021



- Restore or create a total of 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside of protected sites by December 2030.
- Increase England's tree canopy and woodland cover by 0.33% of land area by December 2030 from the 2022 baseline of 14.9%. (Equivalent to a net increase of 43,000 hectares).
- Take targeted action to conserve and recover threatened species.
- Halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

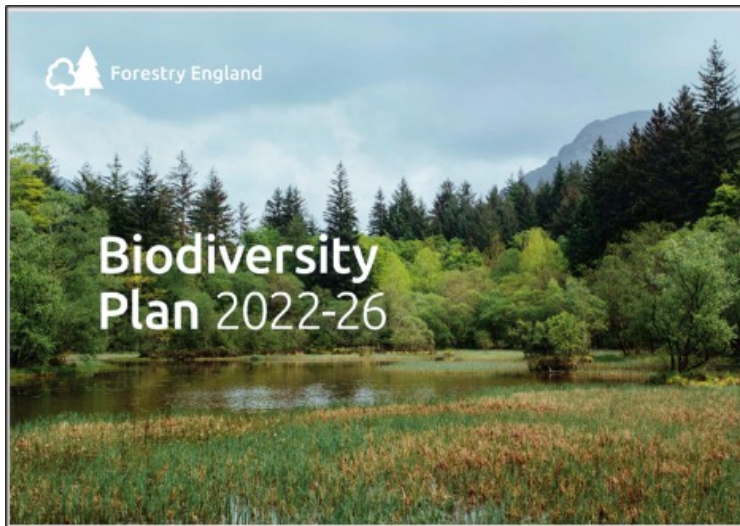
On land and in freshwaters:

restoring 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition,

creating or restoring 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network

taking action to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species of animals, plants and fungi

increasing woodland in England in line with our aspiration of 12% cover by 2060



“ We will lead the development of fully functioning ecosystems, where species can establish, thrive and spread across landscapes.”

Biodiversity Plan - five focus areas:

1. Protecting wildlife
2. Creating networks of open and dynamic habitats
3. Ancient woodlands and trees of special interest
4. Restoring species
5. Wild Areas

Forest Wilding Programme

£10 million Defra funding (2022-2026)
£0.6 million corporate sponsorship (2022-2026)

Corporate aspirations:

- Create 6000ha of new wild areas
- Each district with at least one species recovery project

Forest Wilding Projects 2022 - 2026

6 wild area projects – 12,700ha

Over 30 species projects

- Lead
- Core
- Support

National groups



Wild Ennerdale – 4300ha



Wild Kielder – 6300ha



Wild Purbeck – 2100ha



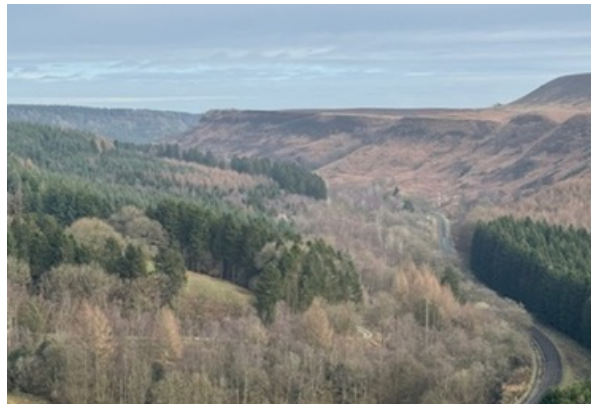
Wild Neroche – 814ha



Ingoldsby - 80ha



Wild Newtondale – 458ha



Ruby Country - 3000ha



Common features:

- All or part SSSI
- Mixture of forested and open habitats
- Already some momentum for nature conservation action
- Have potential for expansion through neighbouring partnerships



What is a Wild Area?

A place of innovation to rebuild biodiversity through restoring natural processes

***Reinstate** - reintroduce ecosystem engineer species; restoring natural hydrology*

***Accelerate** - species translocations; tree veteranisation*

***Replicate** - deer management; soil disturbance*



Species Reintroductions



Species Reintroductions

Priority species projects

Beaver

4 enclosed populations
 5 'Expressions of Interest' for wild release
 Nation's forests strategy development

Wildcat

2 feasibility studies
 National Disease Risk Analysis

Pine Marten

2 population monitoring projects
 3 feasibility studies
 2 active releases

1 post-release

Disease Risk Analysis

White Tailed Eagle

1 active release
 1 feasibility

Golden Eagle

National recovery feasibility
 1 supporting recovery



Wood ants

National recovery feasibility
 2 pilot translocations

Fungi

National Survey & Disease Risk Analysis
 1 pilot translocation

Why beavers and Forestry?

Refugia

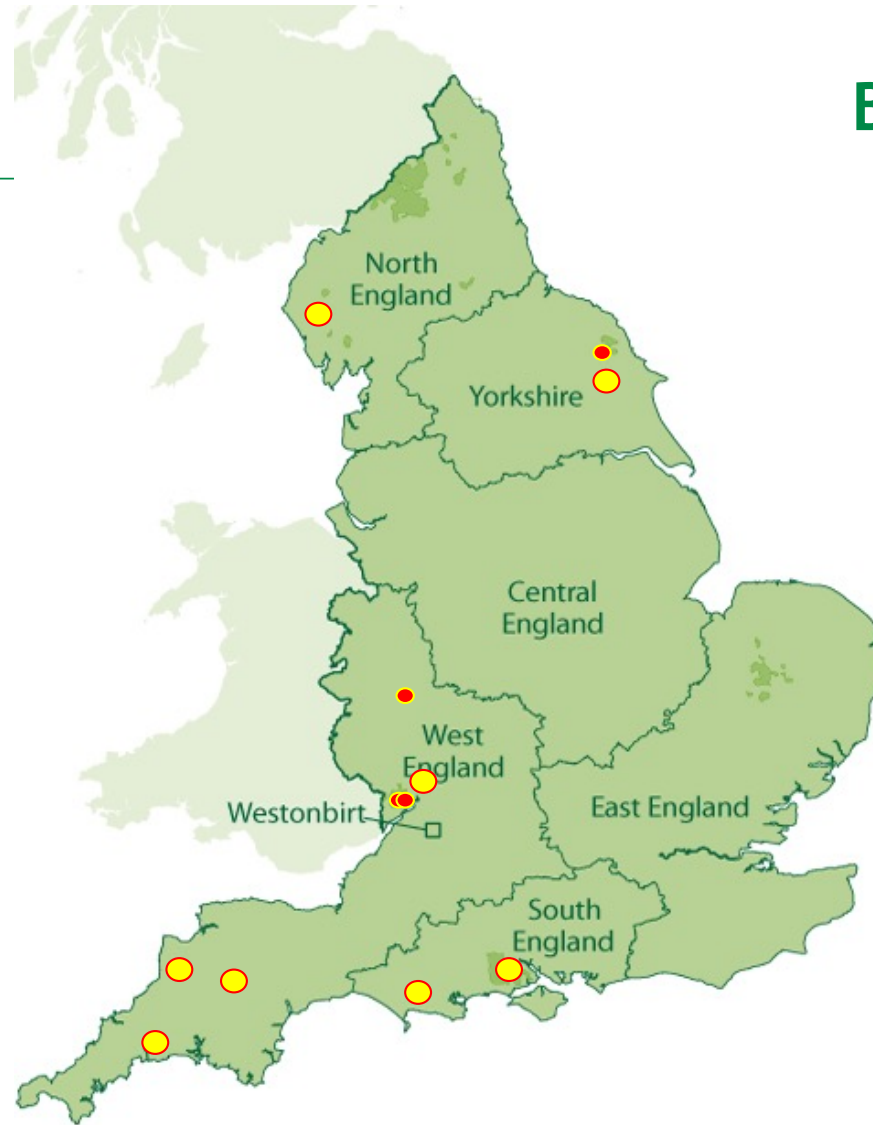


Fire breaks

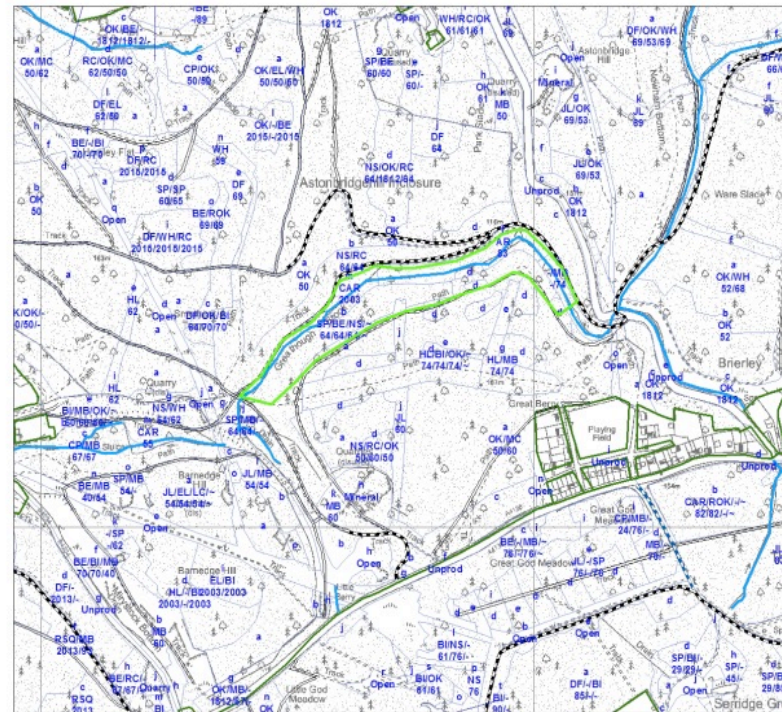
Drought tolerance



Beaver projects



Greathough, Forest of Dean




Forestry Commission
 West England District

Beaver Inclosure



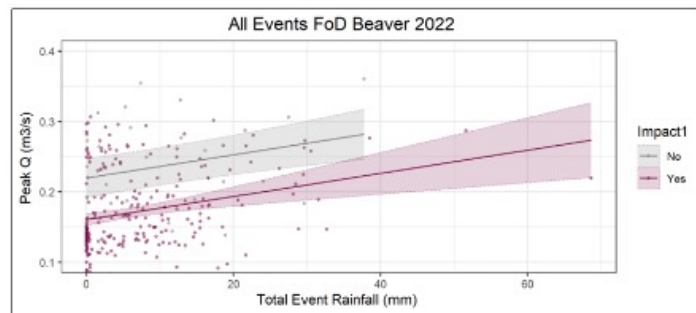
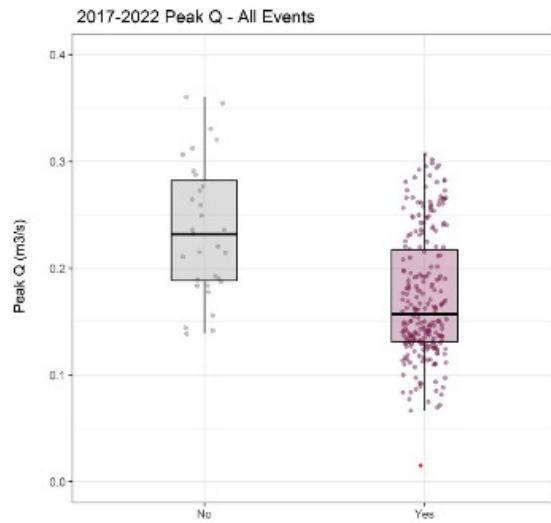
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Date: 07/12/2015

Greathough, Forest of Dean





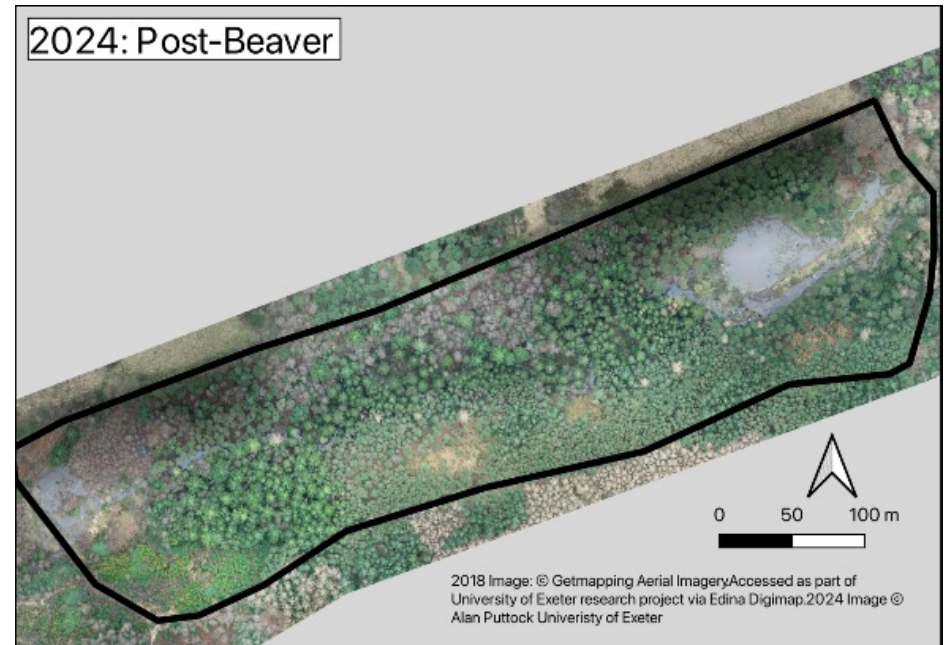
- To assess the impact beavers have on the way water moves through the site
- To monitor changes in biodiversity of the riparian zone as a result of beaver activity

Cropton, North York Moors

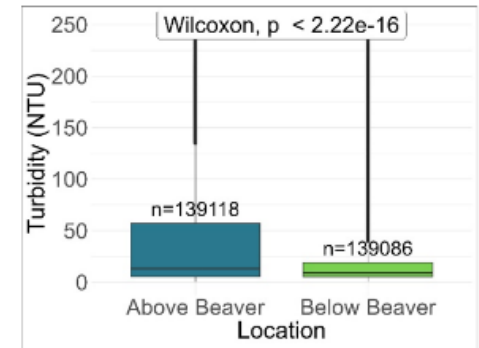
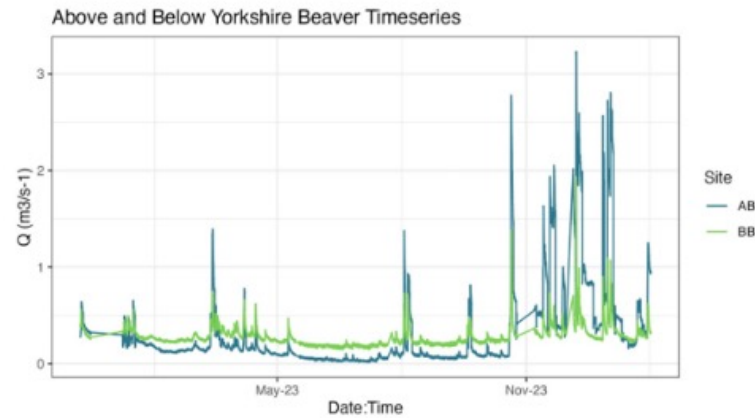
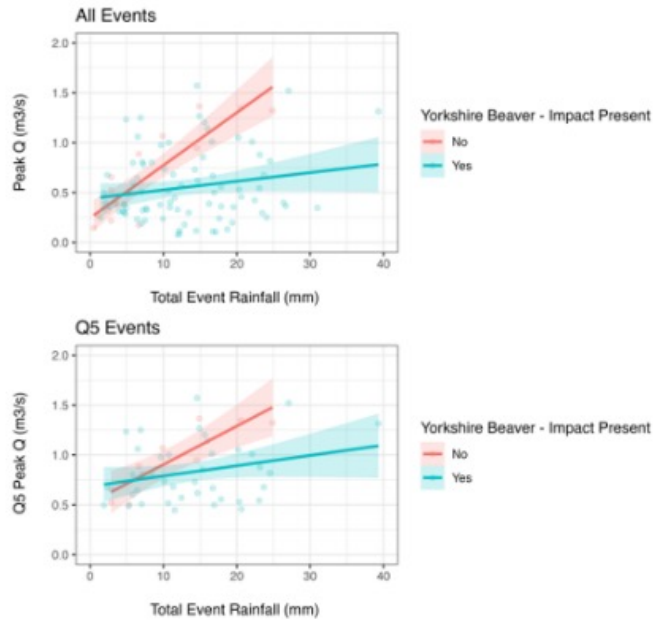




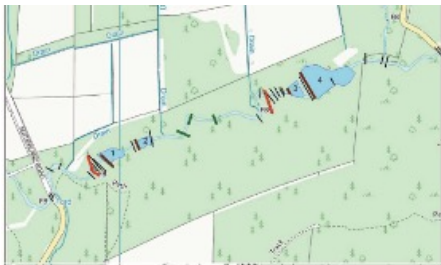
Cropton, North York Moors



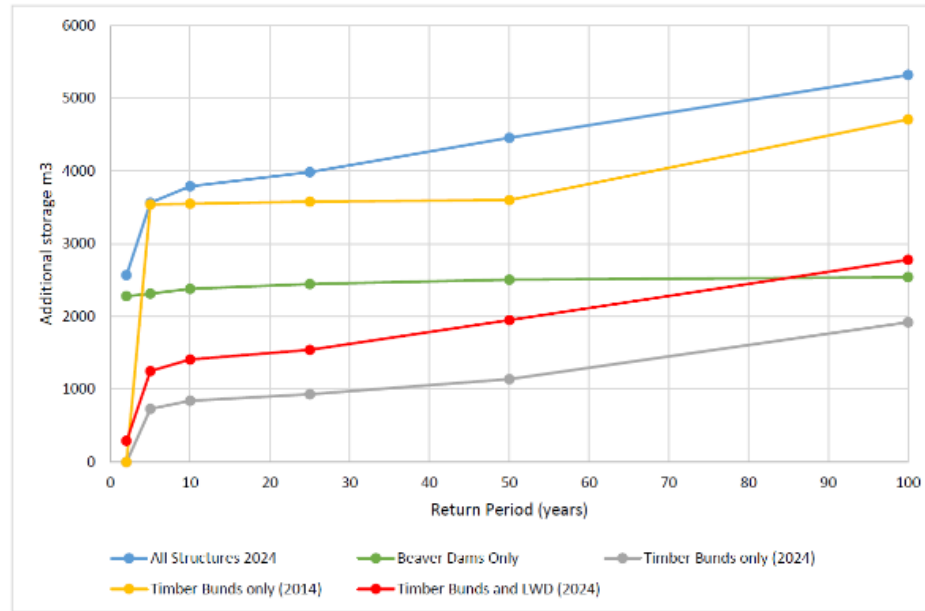
Cropton, North York Moors



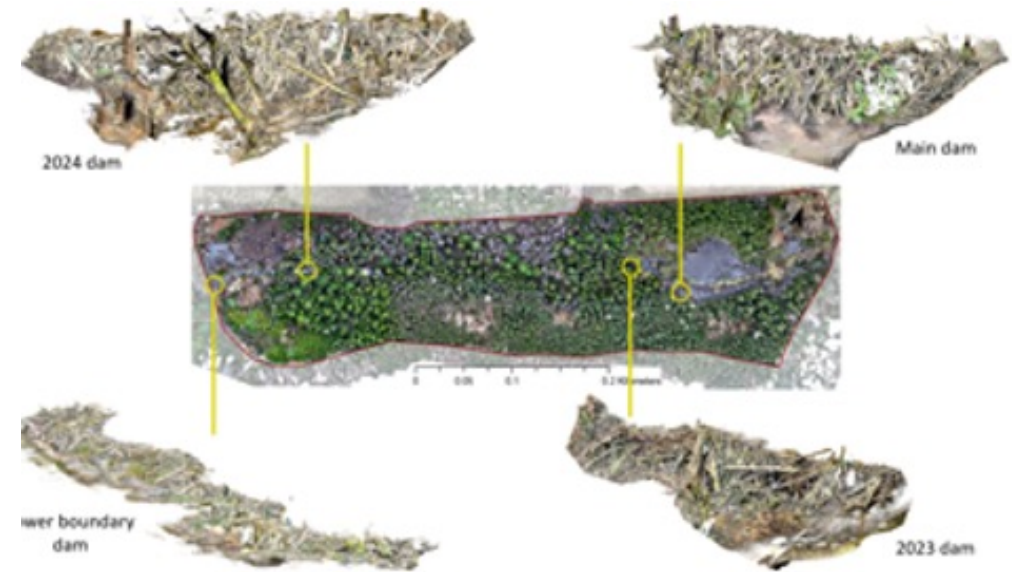
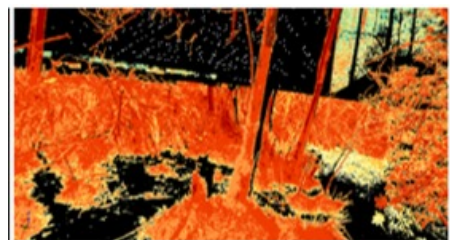
Cropton, North York Moors



Site map showing location of surveyed cross sections, timber storage guards, large woody debris dams, beaver dams, surveyed cross sections, and beaver dam ponds.

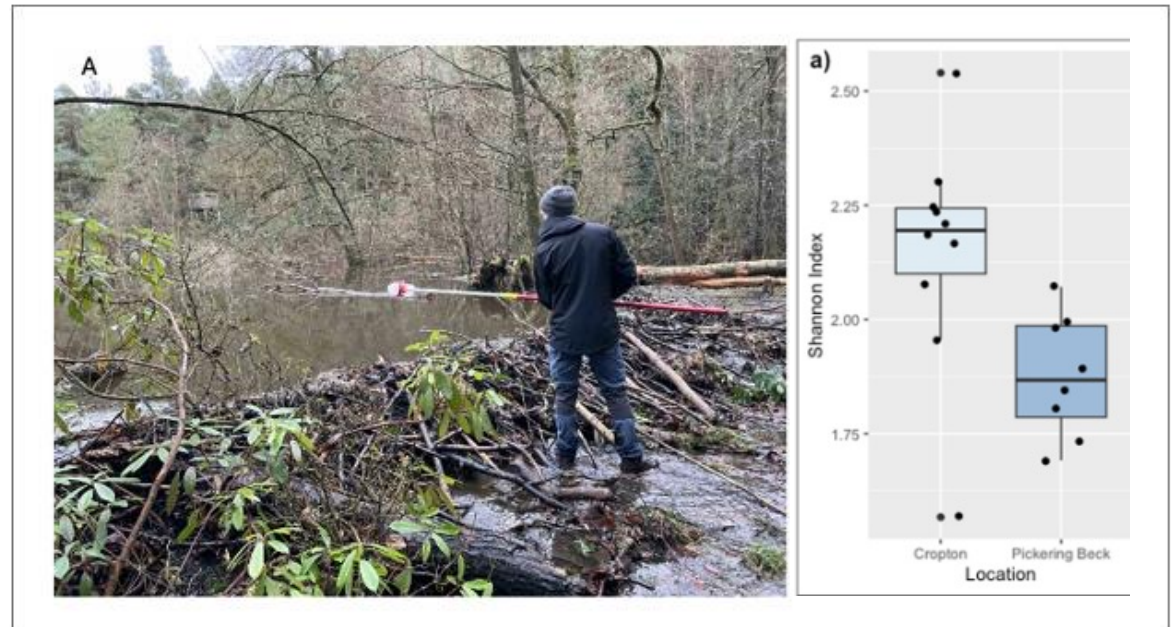
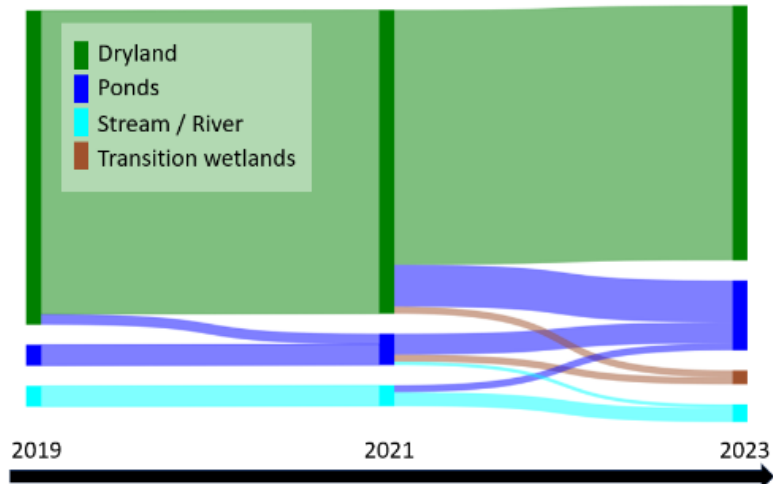


Cropton, North York Moors



Cropton, North York Moors

Aquatic plants	2019	2021	2023
Yellow waterlily	●	●	●
Duckweed	●	●	●
White waterlily	●	●	●
Starworts	●	●	●
Thin-leaved pondweed		●	●
Floating pondweed			●
Filamentous algae			●
Diversity	●	●	●



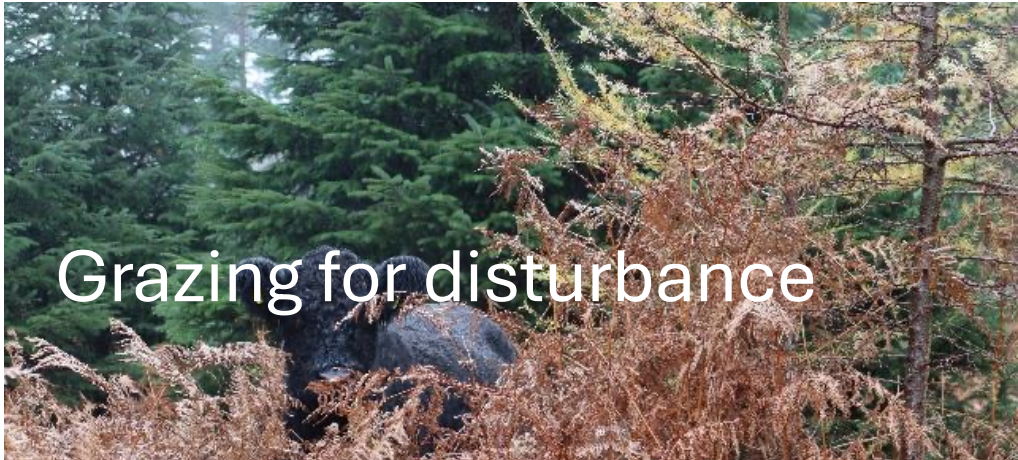


Wild release projects

Wild Ennerdale



Wild Ennerdale



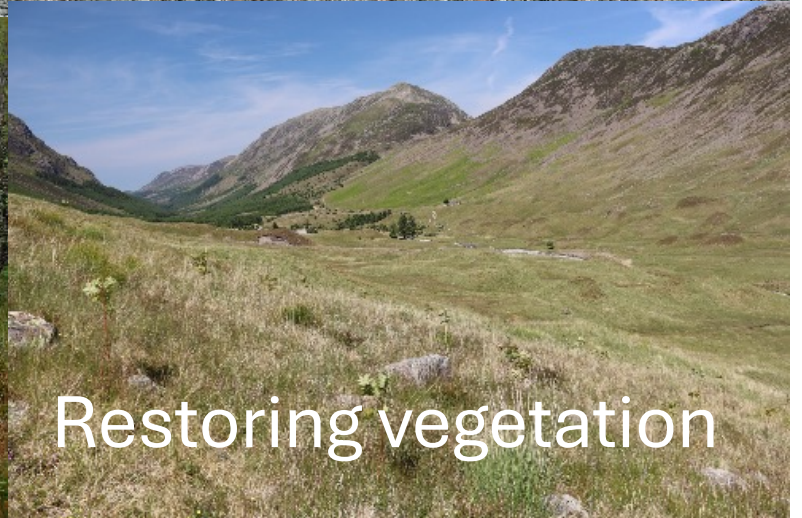
Grazing for disturbance



Natural hydrology



Re-wetting mire systems

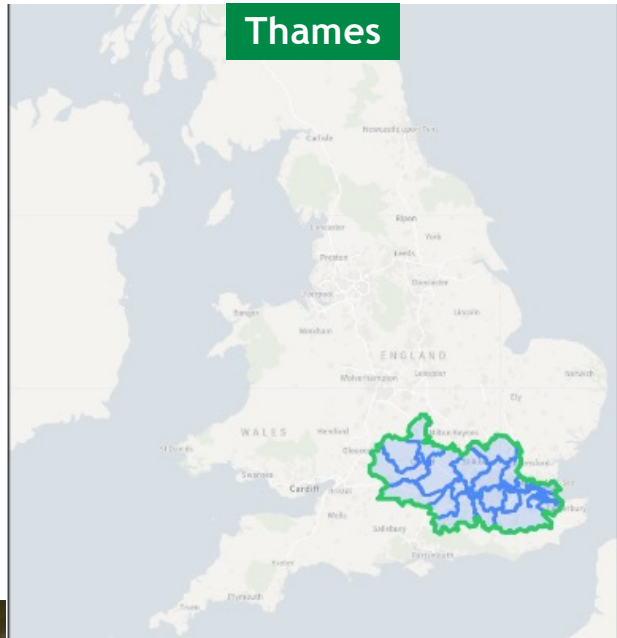
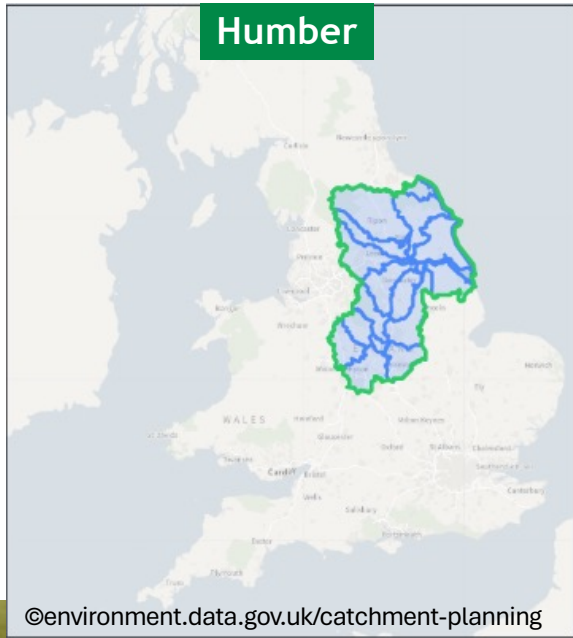
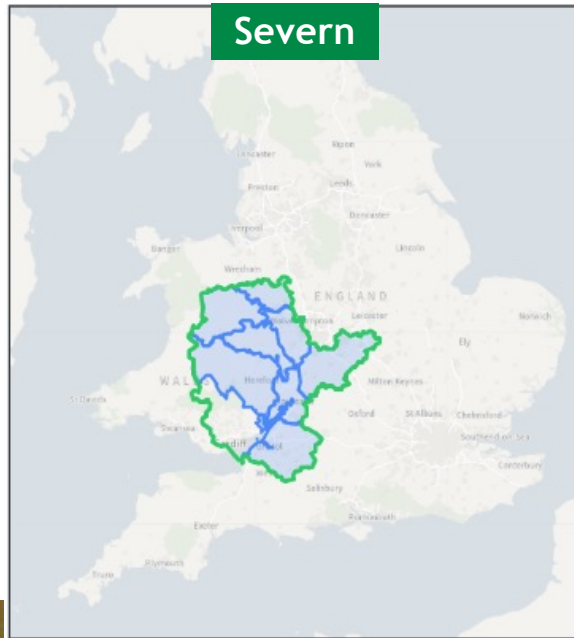


Restoring vegetation

Releasing ecosystem engineers - 2025



Catchment Beaver Partnerships



[©environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning](https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning)



Catchment Beaver Partnerships

Humber



March 2025: Notts WT convened HBP including: NE, EA, FE, CLA, NFU, 7 Wildlife Trusts, Trent Rivers Trust, Internal Drainage Board, RSPB, and all current private beaver enclosure owners (Trentham Gardens, Wild Wrendale, Boothby Wildlands).

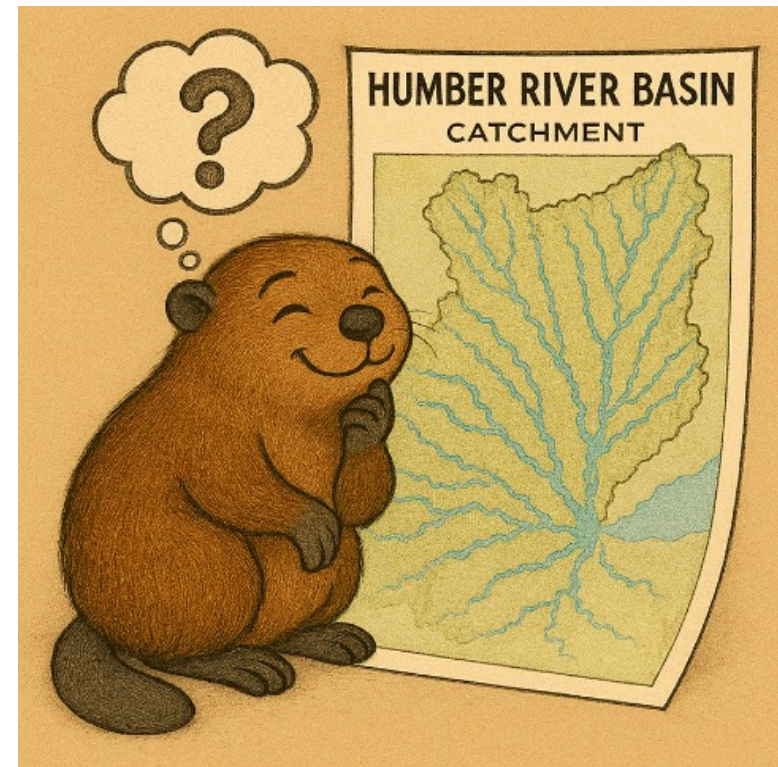
May 2025: EOIs submitted

- Nottinghamshire
- Derbyshire
- Staffordshire
- Warwickshire
- Yorkshire



Our mission – working version!

The Humber Beaver Partnership believe that beavers should be reintroduced throughout the Humber river basin so that their benefits as keystone species and wetland engineers can bring about a step change in increasing the abundance and diversity of wetland species, and benefitting local communities through storing water, reducing flooding, improving water quality and sequestering Carbon. We will work collaboratively in this wide partnership to support the return of beavers across the catchment and their coexistence with local communities and landowners.



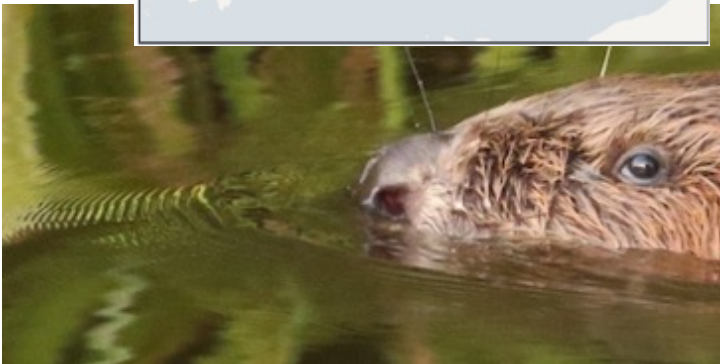
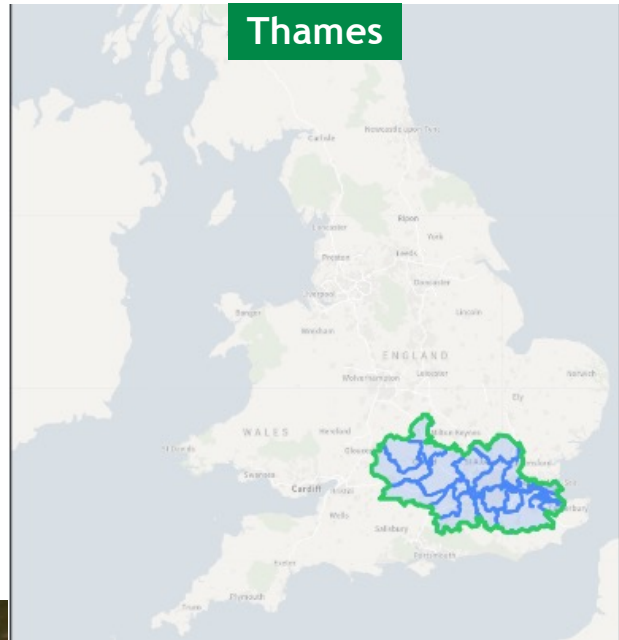
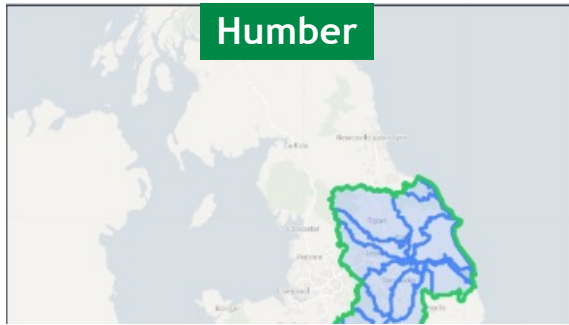
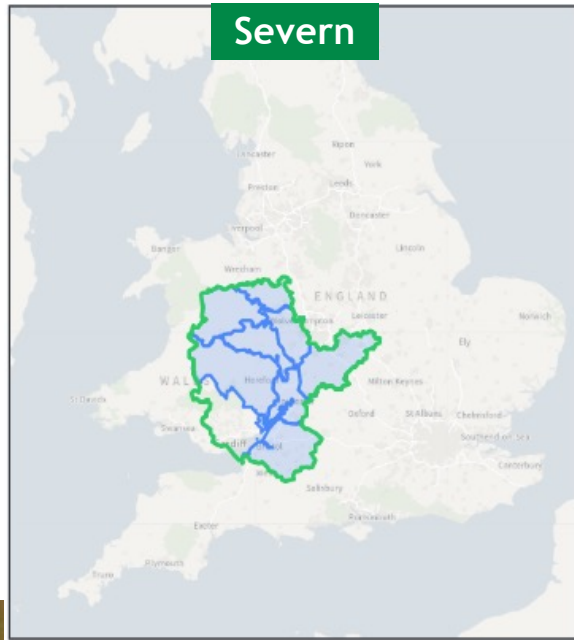
Catchment Beaver Partnerships

- 130 members so far
- Workshops held with fantastic speakers
- Agreed we will establish an overarching Beaver Management/Coexistence group to ensure good communication
- Class licence training for over 70 members
- Submitted funding bid to support delivery
- Upcoming workshop to co-develop framework

Humber



Catchment Beaver Partnerships



Thank you!

