

Green Party deputy leader to visit Devon beaver project



7 November 2017

Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, will visit England's first beaver reintroduction trial in east Devon on November 8.

The River Otter Beaver Trial [1] is a five-year project running until 2020. The trial is monitoring the beavers' impact on the landscape, other wildlife, water resources, water quality, local communities and infrastructure, and local farms.

Initial results reveal strong evidence for the role beavers might play in reducing flooding downstream, even during prolonged wet periods [2].

Womack said:

"I'm looking forward to visiting Devon, learning about the River Otter beavers and seeing their hard work up close. The trial is already producing promising results that indicate the role beavers can play in helping to protect our towns and cities from floods, while giving us a richer, more exciting natural world.

"Floods are devastating for communities – they destroy our homes and belongings, damage our economy and disrupt our daily lives. Without serious action to tackle climate change, the floods we face every winter are only going to get worse.

"But just a small number of beavers can have a disproportionate effect on the environment around them, influencing water flow, improving water quality and increasing biodiversity. Successful flood prevention means working with nature starting with our soils and land management which hold huge capacity to absorb intense rainfall, through to allowing more space for rivers and floodplains to behave more naturally, not covering it in concrete." "This is about working with the grain of nature and not battling against it"

The River Otter Beaver Trial is run by Devon Wildlife Trust. Peter Burgess, the Trust's, Director of Conservation and Development, said:

"I am so pleased by the overwhelming level of interest that organisations and communities from all over the country are showing in this fascinating project. Beavers are more than just charismatic animals; research we've been running with University of Exeter shows they can breathe new life into our river ecosystems, reduce flood risk and improve water quality. They can also bring great benefits to other wildlife. But there are potential challenges ahead, not least the possible impacts these industrious creatures could have on farmland. The Trial is looking at all the possible impacts, and exploring how we can maximise the positive and minimise the negative ones."

Notes:

1. <http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/river-otter-beavers>
2. [http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/sites/default/files/files/Beaver%20Project%20update%20\(LowRes\)%20.pdf](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/sites/default/files/files/Beaver%20Project%20update%20(LowRes)%20.pdf)
3. The River Otter Beaver Trial is led by Devon Wildlife Trust working in partnership with the University of Exeter, the Derek Gow Consultancy, and Clinton Devon Estates.
4. The trial is funded by the Devon Wildlife Trust and its members, Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts, Peter de Haan Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Wellcome Trust, The Tale Valley Trust, University of Exeter and public donations.

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