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Sent by email to: Beaver.consultation@defra.gov.uk

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Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Approach to beaver reintroduction and management in England

Anglian Water serves the largest water company region in England, covering 20% of England's landmass, and one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Our area faces several unique challenges such as flooding exacerbated by our flat, low-lying landscape while also receiving the least rainfall in the country. Our purpose as a water company, enshrined in our Articles of Association, is *to bring environmental and social prosperity to the region we serve through our commitment to Love Every Drop*. A carefully planned and managed reintroduction of beavers to catchments across the east of England could be an enormously powerful way to help restore the ecological health of our river systems and adapt landscapes to counter the effects of climate change.

We therefore warmly welcome this consultation, and the potential that beavers could play as a nature-based solution to both flooding and drought risks, as well as contributing to nature's recovery. Climate change is intensifying patterns of rainfall, leading to heavier, flashy downpours and deeper and longer periods without rain. To tackle both we need to improve the way in which land is managed, to alleviate the risk of flooding whilst storing more water in the landscape to protect against water scarcity and drought.

Reintroduction projects are important because of the way beavers instinctively re-engineer the landscapes around them. My team visited Spains Hall Estate in Essex last month to see for ourselves a beaver reintroduction project led by keen environmentalist and landowner Archie Ruggles-Brise. Since their release into the enclosure in 2019, the pair of beavers have transformed the ten acre site into a water abundant eco system with the capacity to absorb flashy rainfall events and in doing so reduce the risk of flooding downstream in the village of Finchingfield. Storing much more water upstream also helps maintain river flows for longer during dry summers when water levels might otherwise fall away, important both for nature and downstream water resources.



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With this in mind, we strongly support reintroduction projects in managed enclosures, and in principle, carefully planned release into the wild. However, we would support further trials and monitoring to explore and understand the benefits of wild reintroduction before this takes place.

In any event, having seen the scale of change beavers can make to a landscape in a relatively short period of time, there would need to be close consultation and coordination with local landowners and asset managers such as water companies before beavers could become commonplace. For example, we have concerns that in some locations, beaver activity may impact water company assets and our ability to abstract water for the public water supply.

As proposed in the consultation, we see huge potential for Beaver Management Groups to provide the first port of call for anyone with questions or issues and, in some cases, needing physical assistance to resolve conflicts such as bypassing dams and trapping and translocation. However, the proposed method of having some government-backed and some local groups, funded and governed differently, could result in a patchwork of inconsistently effective groups. Ideally, we would like to see a consistent approach backed by the government across the entire Anglian Water region and beyond.

The class licencing approach mentioned in the consultation seems, to our understanding, a sensible way to manage beaver activity in catchments. That is because it allows for certain activities (such as construction of bypasses and dam removals at certain times of the year) rather than a requirement for individual licences or even worse a blanket ban on management activity. A class licencing approach would enable operational staff and asset managers to quickly, cost-effectively and yet sensitively deal with any issues that arise.

Finally, it may be of interest to note that Anglian Water is the only water company to have a dedicated Partnership Funding programme which makes money available for flood alleviation projects in the community. There is the potential for our fund to be accessed for beaver reintroduction projects in the future if there would be demonstrable flood risk management benefits downstream for our assets and networks.

I would be very happy to discuss this in more detail if that would be helpful.

Yours faithfully,



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Head of Public Affairs

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