



# Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

## Beaver Appeal FAQ

### Background

The Idle Valley Nature Reserve lies in the heart of the Idle Valley floodplain and is the largest site in our care – covering 357ha. The Valley was once rich in flocks of swans and waders, there were booming bitterns and a river full of fish, eels and abundant invertebrates attracting otters and water voles. Sadly, remaining habitats are hugely fragmented but as well as caring for the nature reserve we are working with partners to restore this extensive and exciting floodplain landscape.

Recognised as one of the key species to increase biodiversity, we are planning to re-introduce beavers to the Idle Valley Nature Reserve. Beavers are recognised as nature's finest 'wetland engineers', driven by instinct and the relentless desire to create ideal breeding and feeding grounds. As they dig and dam areas, the beavers will be helping restore the delicate balance of wetland life for many plant and animal species.

Reintroducing beavers will unlock the power of nature and their efforts will help free up staff time managing scrub and together with grazing livestock, they will improve habitat and biodiversity within the reserve. This in turn will be a step toward mitigating the effects of climate change that are looming ever larger.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### **Why are we re-introducing beavers in Nottinghamshire?**

Reintroducing beavers back into Nottinghamshire after a 400-year absence will unlock the power of nature. Beavers are nature's finest 'wetland engineers'. As they dig, chew through trees and create deep pools, they help create habitats that benefit other wildlife. This is why we need your help raising £250,000 to bring them back to Idle Valley Nature Reserve.

#### **Why Idle Valley Nature Reserve?**

The introduction of beavers will kick start our efforts to harness natural processes across the huge Idle Valley Nature Reserve and in addition to costs associated with the beavers, funds are also needed to support the expansion of our conservation grazing programme, other habitat work across the reserve and our work with other landowners to restore habitats across the wider Idle Valley landscape.

This project could also hopefully pave the way for further beaver reintroductions in Nottinghamshire, as well as across the UK!

#### **How are the beavers being re-introduced at Idle Valley?**

Our ambitious plan is to create one of the largest beaver enclosures in England, with space for up to three beaver families! The beavers will be re-introduced in a fenced enclosure separate from the River Idle, and will be closely monitored.

### **What will the beavers do on site?**

Beavers are a special species that can play a particularly crucial role. By digging channels and damming water courses, they create diverse wetland areas and homes for other animals like otters, water voles and water shrews. As they chew and fell trees they will help control the spread of scrub and help maintain open habitats for a range of wetland birds for which the reserve is best known.

### **Where are the beavers coming from?**

These will be sourced within the UK; most likely from relocated Scottish animals, or offspring of existing captive animals from various enclosed projects, or a combination of both.

### **Are Beavers native?**

Beavers are a native species to Britain and were lost from our wetlands a few hundred years ago. They were hunted to extinction for their fur and meat, etc.

### **How big are beavers?**

As large as a Labrador dog, Beavers are Britain's largest rodent!

### **What do they eat?**

Beavers are herbivores (they only eat plants)! Not just trees but they'll be eating brambles and other plants too. They're big fans of Himalayan balsam, which is an invasive non-native species that can spread easily and become problematic for our native wildflowers.

### **How quickly do beavers breed?**

Beavers breed once a year, and have an average of 3 kits

### **What happens if they escape?**

Due to the size of our special enclosure the beavers will have everything they need within the secure beaver zone, making it highly unlikely that they will escape, but our team will be trained how to safely trap and release the beavers back into their enclosure.

### **Will we lose our trees and will they build dams?**

No, they don't kill trees, they coppice them. These grow back and provide more spaces for wildlife. Beavers are often known as eco-engineers, they are only doing what our team of rangers would be doing, but they will be doing it far better!

Beavers build dams to create lagoons in which they can protect themselves from predators and in which they often build their family lodges which are accessed from underwater.

### **Do Beavers cause flooding?**

Beavers can make rivers less prone to flash floods, reducing flooding by holding water in 'the right place' in river headwaters, and enabling the slower release of water in drier periods. However, in our project the beavers will be separated from the River Idle and their main benefit will be in enhancing the quality of habitat for other species.

### **How will we be ensuring the health and welfare of the beavers?**

- All trapping, translocation and screening processes are undertaken by experts
- We will provide professional vets with details of beaver healthcare, and these vets can be called in in case of concerns for beaver welfare
- Key local stakeholders have been trained in beaver welfare and handling
- The size of our beaver enclosure, one of the largest in England has very limited human access so the beavers will be able to thrive in peace, particularly when breeding

### **What are the benefits and will they have adverse effects on wading birds?**

Beaver create a mosaic of habitats, from small and large ponds, channels, vegetated margins, wet meadows and areas of mud and silt trapped behind dams. They are ecosystem engineers, and experts in wetland management, creating more diverse habitat for inhabitants, from the smallest invertebrates to large mammals. At Idle Valley Nature Reserve their efforts in helping clear scrub will also directly help us maintain key habitats for waders.

### **£250,000 seems a lot to have to raise, why do you need this much funding?**

The introduction of beavers will kick start our efforts to harness natural processes across the huge Idle Valley Nature Reserve and in addition to costs directly associated with the beaver reintroduction, funds are needed to support the expansion of our conservation grazing programme, other habitat work across the huge nature reserve and our work with other landowners to restore habitats across the wider Idle Valley landscape.

Aside from the generous backing of Severn Trent Water, through the Great Big Nature Boost, we also need the public's help now more than ever to not only bring back beavers, but also help to speed up vital habitat restoration work at Idle Valley Nature Reserve.

### **Can I come and see the beavers?**

There are a number of viewing points on the tracks and paths around the periphery of the beaver enclosure so it should be possible to catch a glimpse of them but as with any wildlife watching, you'll need patience and a bit of luck on your side as they are quite elusive and once disturbed, beavers return to the lodges and hide away.