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Right Honourable Owen Paterson
Secretary of State
DEFRA
By e-mail

20th May 2014

Dear Owen,

Release of European Beaver in England

We are becoming increasingly concerned over the release of European beavers in England for which no licences have been granted by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In particular we are aware of reports in the media of beavers being present on the river Otter in the South West of England.

On the 2nd of May 2012 Richard Benyon wrote to me, as the then Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, reassuring me that there are no plans for the re-introduction of Beavers in England and agreed with my letter to him of the 29th March 2012 of the dangers to public health if the UK's *E. multilocularis*-free status is put at risk. This parasite infects dogs and humans, for whom it can be fatal.

More recently evidence from North America shows the considerable risk to infrastructure including flood defence assets, highways and railways in allowing beavers to become established in high risk and populated areas.

Please could you confirm again, as Richard Benyon did to me in May 2012, that there will be no moves by DEFRA to include beavers in Schedule 2 of the Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) which might prevent free-ranging beavers being killed or captured by landowners legitimately?

Can I also have your assurance that all efforts will be utilised by your officials in DEFRA, including legal action if necessary, to remove beavers from the wild where found in England and that this will have full Ministerial support? We would welcome it warmly if the necessary action could start with the beavers on the River Otter.

Kind regards,