Wyre Forest Study Group

Beavers in Wyre - settling in!

STEWART CARTER (FORESTRY ENGLAND)



A pair of Beavers feeding in the snow. Stewart Carter (FE)



Beaver repairing damage to a dam. Stewart Carter (FE)

The Forestry England (FE) beaver residents have demonstrated a notably high level of activity over the past year, particularly in relation to dam construction. The scale and structural complexity of dam-building within the enclosure has been exceptional. Following the winter storms of 2024–2025, there was concern that the primary dam visible from the forest road might deteriorate or fail. However, while significant damage to it did occur, the structure was repaired within a matter of days and remained intact throughout the remainder of winter and into spring and summer.

The beavers subsequently expanded both the width and height of the dam over the following months. The dam now extends to over 30m in width and has significantly reduced water flow through the system. Beyond this structure, the beavers have engineered a connected network beginning at the outflow site, incorporating a secondary downstream dam. This extends upstream to the release pool, spanning approximately 250m. This network provides safe aquatic pathways for movement within the enclosure and reflects the preferred travel habits observed in beaver populations. Along the water margins, multiple feeding sites are evident, where vegetation is dragged to the water's edge, allowing the animals to feed while remaining partially submerged and protected.

Beaver activity has been concentrated primarily in the lower half of the enclosure, with only sporadic evidence of activity further upstream. Of particular interest is the lodge situated on the far bank, visible from the forest road. Substantial quantities of woody debris and mud have been deposited against the bank, indicating ongoing maintenance and reinforcement of their dwelling. Camera footage frequently records swimming and feeding behaviour in this area, suggesting that the beavers are well settled and that habitat conditions are currently favourable.

Despite these positive indicators, no breeding occurred during the past year. This absence is most likely attributable to disturbance caused by the severe flooding experienced during the winter. Based on the increased activity in this area of dam and lodge construction, it is hoped that these habitat conditions will support successful breeding in the spring.

While monitoring efforts have focused primarily on beaver activity, cameras have recorded a wide range of other species within the enclosure, highlighting its broader ecological value. Regular sightings include Otter *Lutra lutra*, Mink *Neogale vison*, Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, and Heron *Ardea cinerea*. Buzzards and herons have been frequently observed preying on Signal



Experimental pool area from forest road. Stewart Carter (FE)



Close up of the large dam. Stewart Carter (FE)

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Crayfish, with accumulations of shell remains found on logs along the water's edge.

Several management interventions were undertaken by Forestry England and Natural England staff during the year. A water gate was installed at the inflow to reduce pressure and debris accumulation against the fence during extreme weather events. Although effective in principle, post-installation monitoring indicated that the gate should be lowered to sooner engage debris and rising water levels. At the outflow, concerns were raised regarding persistent digging activity near reinforcement bars. While excavation to depths exceeding 2m is unlikely, additional netting was installed along the enclosure floor adjacent to the grill. This measure has been effective, with signs of digging in this area now largely absent.

Only one notable issue occurred involving deer access. During the rut, a buck successfully jumped the enclosure fence and subsequently caused minor damage while exhibiting heightened territorial behaviour. Damage was limited and easily repaired, demonstrating the overall robustness and effectiveness of the original fence installation.

Looking to 2026, the enclosure will be left to continue to establish, with interest focused on the new wet areas. Safety checks of the fence will continue and, possibly, further natural flood management barriers may be installed up stream of the enclosure to help slow the quantity of debris entering the site. Bird song monitors were installed within the enclosure during the winter of 2025; these will be evaluated by Natural England.



Oak tree felled by Beavers. Stewart Carter (FE)



Carrot feeding in the release pool. Stewart Carter (FE)