

## **Press release**

### **Historic moment as Pensthorpe records the first beaver living wild in Norfolk for centuries**

**The appearance of this iconic species reflects the continued recovery of Britain's wetlands.**

Pensthorpe Natural Park has confirmed the presence of a wild beaver on its reserve, following several weeks of monitoring.

Beavers became extinct in Britain in the 16th century due to over-hunting, and until now no free-living beaver has been recorded in Norfolk in modern times.

Although its origin is unknown, the discovery marks a significant new arrival to our local river network, demonstrating the ongoing return of a species once extinct in Britain-

Beavers - often described as "nature's engineers" - play a vital role in restoring wetland landscapes. Their activity creates ponds, channels and wet woodland habitats that benefit amphibians, insects, fish and countless bird species.

Richard Spowage, Reserve Manager at Pensthorpe, said:

This discovery is an exciting moment for Pensthorpe. The fact that it has chosen our land to establish a territory reflects the ongoing work we have been doing to improve our river and surrounding land for nature.

Beavers are returning to river systems and wetland landscapes across parts of the UK, and it's encouraging to see individuals moving through Norfolk too. We're monitoring the situation carefully, but for now this is fantastic news for nature recovery."

### **A natural return, not an introduction**

Beavers are increasingly being recorded in new areas of the country as individuals naturally disperse along rivers and waterways.

Pensthorpe has made no releases, and the animal discovered appears to be a free-living individual moving through the landscape.

### **Responsible monitoring underway**

Pensthorpe's conservation and species management team is working closely with ecological partners to monitor the beaver's movements and ensure that habitats, visitor areas and wildlife collections remain safe across the reserve.

“Our priority is to balance the needs of nature with responsible site management,” Richard added.

“We’re observing the animal quietly and carefully, and will continue to assess any impacts on the wider reserve. At this stage, its presence is extremely low-impact and an encouraging indicator of ecological recovery.”

### **A wider story of habitat restoration**

Beavers became extinct in Britain in the 16th century due to over-hunting, but recent recoveries elsewhere in the UK have shown how their return can:

- improve water quality
- slow water flow and reduce flood risk
- increase biodiversity
- create vital wetland refuges for wildlife

Pensthorpe’s long-term work on landscape-scale wetland restoration, along with its rivers, lakes, reedbeds and wet meadows - makes it an ideal the type of habitat for a dispersing beaver to explore.

### **What visitors can expect**

The beaver is nocturnal and secretive, so sightings are extremely rare. Pensthorpe is not promoting it as a visitor attraction, but is celebrating what the discovery represents: a thriving, resilient landscape.

### **A hopeful sign for Norfolk’s wild future**

“Wetlands are some of the most threatened habitats in the UK,” said Richard.

“To have a beaver recorded here is a reminder of what’s possible when you restore nature at scale. It’s a moment of hope, not just for Pensthorpe but for wildlife across Norfolk”

### **Notes to Editors**

Pensthorpe is a 700-acre family-friendly nature reserve located 11 miles inland from the North Norfolk coast.

Interactive trails, seven bird hides and several charming boardwalks weave through the wilderness of the reserve and present an opportunity to get closer to native and migrating wildlife. To date, more than 1,560 different species have been recorded across the site, reflecting the richness and diversity of its restored habitats.

A hidden gem for garden lovers, Pensthorpe is home to six spectacular gardens, including the Millennium Garden designed by world-renowned plantsman Piet Oudolf. Families enjoy wildlife-inspired eco play areas, including WildRootz, which are often hailed as some of the best in Norfolk. The reserve's serene environment offers unrivalled birdwatching opportunities and a unique way to connect with the natural world.

With over 110,000 visitors a year and a recent Best Rural Attraction award, Pensthorpe has become a standout destination for all ages.

The reserve is on the A1067, one mile from Fakenham and just over 20 miles from the city of Norwich.

Entry prices fluctuate through the year. Adult tickets start from £10.95 and children from £9.95. Under 3s go free. Annual members receive free entry. Parking is free.

For more information about opening times for the reserve, shop and café, please visit:  
[www.pensthorpe.com](http://www.pensthorpe.com)