

Plans to reintroduce lynx and wolves to England could be put on hold

February 24 2023, by Josh Davis



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

The UK's environment secretary Thérèse Coffey has told farmers that she does not support reintroducing wolves or lynx to the English countryside.

While this was welcomed by some farmers, it has angered

conservationists who argue that wild carnivores are needed to successfully restore the [environment](#).

The UK's environment minister has poured [cold water](#) on any potential future plans to reintroduce [species](#) such as wolves and lynx to England.

Speaking at the annual National Farmers' Union conference in Birmingham this week, in reference to projects to bring back native carnivores Thérèse Coffey said that "we just don't need to and we won't."

Over recent years, plans to reintroduce species that once lived in the UK but were driven to extinction have rapidly expanded. These have already seen animals such as the white-tailed eagle, red kite, pool frog, ladybird spider, [pine marten](#) and Eurasian beaver successfully brought back.

There has been increasing interest in returning once-native carnivores to the UK as part of growing rewilding schemes. While the reintroduction of wolves is highly unlikely any time soon, the return of lynx is seen by some as much more achievable.

But in response to these plans, Coffey told farmers at the conference, "I don't want farmers to constantly have to worry about these issues. We've got plenty to do with the habitats that need improving and expanding."

"That is why I won't be supporting reintroductions of species like lynxes and wolves. We just don't need to and we won't."



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Conservationists, however, have pointed out that the reintroduction of wild species once found in the UK are critical for the improvement and expansion of habitats.

For example, the return of beavers has seen huge benefits to the local environments in which they live. They not only create thriving wetlands that increase the amount of habitat available to insects, fish, amphibians and birds, but also help to protect the environment against the worst effects of droughts and heavy rainfall.

Craig Bennet, the Chief Executive of the Wildlife Trusts, told The Guardian, "This is deeply disappointing, it suggests that sadly the secretary of state is massively out of touch with British [public opinion](#) on these issues and in fact the views of many farmers I talk to."

"The fact is, ecosystems are not functioning as they should but where we have seen the reintroductions of beavers, of pine martens, you start to see these ecosystems are functioning properly."

The UK government's 25-year Environment Plan commits ministers to facilitate the reintroduction of once-native species, with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs publishing a code for reintroduction projects in 2021.

Since the success of the beaver reintroductions that have taken place up and down the country, the Eurasian lynx is seen by many as a good next candidate to return to the wild. It is argued that they would help to control the excessive deer population that threatens the regeneration of native forests.

Lynx are medium-sized cats that typically live in woodland, where they feed on smaller deer species such as roe deer.

While some [farmers](#) are concerned that lynx will turn to killing sheep, conservationists argue that the cats don't actually stray far from forests and so would be unlikely to enter sheep fields.

While initial plans to release [lynx](#) into the Kielder Forest in Northumberland were rejected, there are hopes to revive the project.

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