

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

PINE MARTEN REINTRODUCTION FEASIBILITY STUDY UPDATE

Purpose

To update members on the two year feasibility study into whether pine martens should be reintroduced to the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Pine martens are one of Britain's rarest mammals, and are predominantly restricted to Scotland with low numbers in Wales and South Shropshire.
- In March 2017 the JAC received a presentation by Dr Andrew Stringer, Pine Marten Project Manager, on the feasibility study into reintroducing pine martens to the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.
- The attached report updates on progress with the study
- A decision on the reintroduction of pine martens to the area will be made later in 2018.

Reasons

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, and the Forestry Commission, supported by Forest Holidays and the Woodland Trust, are leading on the collaborative project to investigate the feasibility of reintroducing pine martens to the Forest of Dean and lower Wye Valley. Pine martens are housecat-sized members of the stoat and weasel family. They are dependent on woodland habitat offering plenty of food and denning potential. They are very mobile, easily travelling 20km in a day and live at low density. Their main prey are small mammals, but they have a broad and varied diet, for instance eating large quantities of berries when in season. There are populations in Scotland and Wales but Shropshire has the only known breeding population of pine martens in England.

Implications

The feasibility study has assessed the suitability of the habitat in the Forest of Dean and lower Wye Valley for pine martens and whether a stable population of pine martens could live in this area. The research shows that the region could support nearly 200 pine martens. If a reintroduction goes ahead, 40 animals could be released. Due to geographical barriers, these pine martens would predominantly expand to the west and north, towards where pine martens are already established in Wales. The project utilises key international guidelines on reintroductions and is assessing the costs and benefits of a reintroduction within three key areas: Biological feasibility, Ecological feasibility and Socio-economic feasibility.

Background

For more information see www.GloucestershireWildlifeTrust.co.uk/PineMarten and / or contact Andrew.Stringer@GloucestershireWildlifeTrust.co.uk