

Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a-f)** on the question paper.

Text A: Beaver Dams

To understand beavers and the dams they build, we must first picture a large, thick-furred rodent living beside rivers, streams and ponds across North America, Europe and parts of Asia. Although many rodents are small, a fully grown beaver can weigh as much as a medium-sized dog. Its orange front teeth never stop growing, allowing it to gnaw through wood repeatedly, while its broad tail helps it steer in water and warn others of danger. Awkward on land but swift in water, this remarkable creature is well adapted to life on the riverbank.

These animals have long attracted human attention. For centuries, people hunted beavers for their thick, waterproof fur, and some even used scented oil from their bodies in perfumes and medicines. Yet there is a big difference between valuing an animal for what it can provide and understanding the work it performs in nature, so why do beavers build dams in the first place, and what effect do these structures have?

Scientists have identified several reasons. A beaver dam is usually built from branches, mud, stones and tree trunks placed across a narrow stretch of water. By slowing the current, the animals create a deeper pond around their lodge, the home where they raise their young. This surrounding water acts as protection, making it harder for predators to approach unnoticed. Meanwhile, the pond gives beavers easier access to bark, twigs and leaves, especially in winter, when food may be stored underwater near the lodge.

At first glance, a beaver dam can look like a rough blockage rather than an important natural structure. A walker returning after several months, however, might find the same stream strangely altered. The quick line of water that once slipped between stones has begun to hesitate, spreading into shallow pools where boots now sink into soft ground. Fine mud gathers in the slower water, and green shoots appear along the edges as if the bank itself has loosened. Soon the place is busier in quieter ways: insects skim the surface, frogs hide in the damp margins, and birds work through reeds that were not there the year before.

At a reintroduction site, the success of a beaver dam may be clearest after rain, when water lies calmly among the willows instead of racing away. For people farther downstream, that slower movement can be reassuring, but the same stillness can change ordinary routines close to the river. A farmer arriving the next morning may find that the edge of a field no longer holds the weight of a vehicle, while the shallow channel beside it has become thick with mud, leaves and broken stems. Footpaths bring another complication, because a tree chewed low and standing in softened soil is no longer just part of the scenery. None of this makes the beaver's return a failure; it means the benefits arrive with some drawbacks that must be managed. This is why the return of beavers is not uncomplicated.

Tantalisingly, scientists are still learning just how much these animals can alter an environment. With nothing more than teeth, mud and branches, beavers reshape waterways on a surprising scale, turning simple streams into living systems rich in shelter, water and life.

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 2 (a-b)** on the question paper.

Text B: Return of the Beaver

Tom Harwood was checking a stream beside a Somerset field when he heard it first: a crack of willow, then a heavy splash. He had come for a broken gate, not a wildlife encounter, yet there it was, a beaver, glossy with water, hauling a branch with the steady confidence of an animal that does not care who owns the land. Harwood is used to herons and deer at dusk, but this felt like a small rebellion. 'It was remarkable,' he said. 'As if the river itself had woken up.'

You might be surprised that beavers are being reintroduced to parts of Britain. They were hunted out long ago, and now wildlife groups are trying to undo that absence in selected places, not everywhere and certainly not in neat little boxes on a map. The animals are health-checked, transported carefully and watched after release, which sounds responsible because it is. It is also expensive. It is slow work, too, with licences, surveys, meetings and the sort of paperwork nobody posts on social media. And once they are in, the job is not over: projects rely on ongoing monitoring, because you cannot simply set a pair of beavers free and hope for the best.

Supporters talk about ponds, wetter ground and a calmer flow of water, and they are not wrong, but beavers are picky in their own blunt way. Put them somewhere without enough willow and other woody food and they will wander. Give them crumbly banks, hard stone edges or heavily engineered channels and there is little for them to dig into. Expect them to stay politely within a narrow strip of habitat and you will be disappointed, because they spread if there is room. That is why many schemes avoid the fastest, deepest stretches where water scours everything clean, and why nobody sensible starts with built-up areas where there is no space for wetlands to grow without immediately becoming a neighbour dispute.

Of course, the reshaping is the point. Beavers are often called a keystone species because their habits make habitats for other creatures. Yet the same dams that create shallow pools can push water onto nearby ground, and people notice when a field corner turns boggy. Burrows can loosen banks, especially where livestock already press the edges. On small streams, some anglers mutter about fish routes, and in farming country the older drains and ditches, designed to hurry water away, can end up running sluggishly when the landscape begins to slow down.

Still, admiration does not remove the awkward facts. Beavers can fell ornamental trees, chew through young plantings or damage commercially useful timber, and landowners do not have to be villains to mind that. Britain is not empty, and rewilding cannot pretend it is. The sensible argument is not that beavers cause no problems, but that the problems are manageable in the right places, with planning and patience. What irritates me is the idea that we must choose between tidy control and wild chaos. A river that does some work for itself might be inconvenient, yes, but it can also be exactly what an over-managed landscape needs.

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Question 3** and **Question 4** on the question paper.

Text C: The Flood

In the winter of 2026, after weeks of hard rain, Katherine and her husband, Jeremy, were living in a cottage beside a river in northern England. One evening, the river spilled over its banks and began to creep across the meadow. The following text is about what they saw when beavers started building in the floodwater.

Katherine reached the footbridge by dusk. To her surprise, people from the village were already there, huddled in waterproof coats and sweeping torches over the dark water. Had everyone really left their warm kitchens just to watch a flooded river? Some, who had been calling the beavers clever engineers, leaned over the rail; others muttered about damage, expense and the bridge road. At the same bend where dragged branches had been collecting for months, two beavers were working in the current as calmly as builders arriving for a shift. Jeremy, just behind her, let out a low whistle. The river they knew had widened into a slow, brown sheet, and yet the animals seemed neither alarmed nor hurried.

The sight brought back the first odd changes she and Jeremy had noticed months earlier. Young willows had been cut to neat points and pale wood lay scattered like peelings along the bank. At first she blamed the weather, walkers, even careless children, until a farmer upriver mentioned beavers. After that, signs seemed to multiply: muddy slides, prints like small wet hands and children from the village hunting for tracks while adults grumbled about the mess.

Now the river itself looked changed. Under the hard rain it seemed monstrous, rolling past in thick, tea-coloured folds. Whole branches spun like broken oars. Gardeners who had complained about felled saplings stood beside anglers worrying over fish, while one landowner said such creatures had no place in a managed landscape. The beavers ignored them all. They worked at the edge of the force, vanishing into the heaving water and reappearing with willow rods clenched in their orange teeth.

Katherine had not expected to find herself watching beavers in a storm, but this was not the first time they had unsettled her idea of the river. By spring there had been more ducks on the new pools, the bank had softened underfoot and saplings had seemed to vanish one by one. Jeremy had begun to feel that some people were too quick to criticise before seeing the advantages. One beaver slapped the surface with its tail, sharp as a cracked plank. The other wedged a branch into a growing barrier and packed it with mud so dark and glossy it looked like wet clay.

By dawn, a drainage officer arrived, sent by a farmer who feared the bridge road would be lost. He climbed the bank and tested the barrier with a long pole while Jeremy explained what they had watched through the night. The dam was already catching debris and pushing overflow into an older, marshy hollow, taking some of the punch out of the main current. Even some of the doubters fell quiet at that. The officer checked the bridge supports, then nodded. "Leave it," he said. "For now, it's helping more than it harms."

As neighbours drifted home for tea and sleep, Katherine stayed on the bridge with Jeremy, breathing the cold air after rain. Beyond the dam, the water lay quieter, widened into a shallow pool where weak light caught on the surface. The river no longer felt like a thing that simply passed their cottage. It was being remade, branch by branch, before their eyes, and Jeremy realised the beavers were strong, skilful natural engineers, reshaping the river for the better.

Question 1

Read **Text A**, 'Beaver Dams', and then answer questions 1(a)-(f).

- (a) According to paragraph 1, what type of animal is a beaver?

..... [1]

- (b) **Using your own words**, explain what the text means by:

- (i) 'thick-furred' (line 1)

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- [2]

- (ii) 'awkward on lands' (lines 5-6)

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- [2]

- (c) Reread paragraph 2 ('These animals have long ... structures have?').

Give **two** of the main ways in which beavers were used by humans in the past.

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- [2]

- (d) Reread paragraph 3 ('Scientists identified ... lodge.').

Identify **two** reasons why beavers build dams.

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- [2]

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Paper 1: *Beavers*

(e) Reread paragraphs 4 and 5, 'At first glance ... not uncomplicated.'

(i) What impressions does the writer give of the changes caused by a beaver dam?

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[3]

(ii) Explain why the return of beavers is described as 'not uncomplicated'.

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[3]

(f) Reread paragraph 6 ('Tantalisingly ... life.').

(i) Why does the writer use the word 'tantalisingly' (line 30) rather than the word 'interestingly' to describe what scientists are learning?

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[2]

(ii) Explain what the writer suggests about beavers in the phrase: 'With nothing more than teeth, mud and branches' (line 31).

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Question 2

Read **Text B**, *Return of the Beaver*, in the insert and then answer **Question 2(a)** and **2(b)**.

Question 2

- (a) According to Text B, what are the concerns and limitations connected with rewilding beavers in Britain?

Use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for reading and up to 5 marks for writing.

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Paper 1: *Beavers*

(b) Assess the writer’s attitude towards the rewilding of beavers in Britain.

Use **three** details from Text B to support your answer. [5]

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Question 3

Read **Text C, The Flood**, in the insert and then answer Questions 3(a) – (d) on this question paper.

- (a) **Identify** a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words in bold:

- (i) People were standing **very close together**.

..... [1]

- (ii) The river had **spread out**.

..... [1]

- (b) Use your own words to explain what the writer means by each of the words in bold:

After that, signs seemed to **multiply**: muddy slides, prints like small wet hands and children from the village **hunting** for tracks while adults **grumbled** about the mess.

- (i) Multiply [1]

- (ii) Hunting [1]

- (iii) Grumbled [1]

- (c) Use **one** example from the text below to explain how the writer uses language to describe the beavers at work in the floodwater.

Use your own words in your explanation.

‘The beavers ignored them all. They worked at the edge of the force, vanishing into the heaving water and reappearing with willow rods clenched in their orange teeth.’

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[5]

- (d) Choose **three** powerful words or phrases from the extract below to analyse how the writer uses language to describe the atmosphere.

The dam was already catching debris and pushing overflow into an older, marshy hollow, taking some of the punch out of the main current. Even some of the doubters fell quiet at that. The officer checked the bridge supports, then nodded. "Leave it," he said. "For now, it's helping more than it harms."

As neighbours drifted home for tea and sleep, Katherine stayed on the bridge with Jeremy, breathing the cold air after rain. Beyond the dam, the water lay quieter, widened into a shallow pool where weak light caught on the surface. The river no longer felt like a thing that simply passed their cottage. It was being remade, branch by branch, before their eyes, and Jeremy realised the beavers were strong, skilful natural engineers, reshaping the river for the better.

Write about 200 to 250 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

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Paper 1: *Beavers*

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Question 4

Re-read **Text C, The Flood**, in the insert and then answer Question 4 on this question paper.

- (4) You are **Jeremy**. A few days later, you are interviewed on a local radio programme about the flood and the beavers. The presenter asks the following three questions only:
- Can you describe the changes you and Katherine had noticed along the river before the flood?
 - How did people in the village react to the beavers, and what did you think about these reactions?
 - What did watching the beavers during the flood make you realise about them?

Use your own words to write **Jeremy's responses** to each of the interviewer's questions.

Write about **250 to 300 words**.

Up to **10 marks** are available for **reading** and up to **10 marks** for **writing**.

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Paper 1: *Beavers*

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Paper 1: *Beavers*

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Paper 1: *Beavers*

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Question 1(a)-(f): Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	According to paragraph 1, what type of animal is a beaver? • rodent	1
1(b)(i)	Use your own words to explain what the text means by: ‘thick-furred’ (line 1): Award 2 marks for full explanation (both strands). Award 1 mark for partial explanation. Credit alternatives explaining the whole phrase. • thick: dense / heavy / plentiful • furred: hair / coat / pelt Do not accept ‘fur’ by itself – must give a synonym.	2
1(b)(ii)	Use your own words to explain what the text means by: ‘Awkward on land’ (lines 5–6): Award 2 marks for full explanation (both strands). Award 1 mark for partial explanation. Credit alternatives explaining the whole phrase. • awkward: clumsy / ungainly / not graceful • on land: on dry ground / out of the water	2
1(c)	Reread paragraph 2 (‘These animals have long ... structures have?’). Give two of the main ways in which beavers were used by humans in the past. Award 1 mark for each idea, up to a maximum of 2. • hunted for thick, waterproof fur • used scented oil from their bodies in perfumes and/or medicines	2

Question	Answer	Marks
1(d)	Reread paragraph 3 ('Scientists identified ... lodge.'). Identify two reasons why beavers build dams. Award 1 mark for each idea, up to a maximum of 2. • to slow the current and create a deeper pond • for protection: water makes it harder for predators to approach unnoticed • to give easier access to food such as bark, twigs and leaves • to store food underwater near the lodge, especially in winter	2
1(e)(i)	What impressions does the writer give of the changes caused by a beaver dam? Award 1 mark for each idea, predominantly in own words, up to a maximum of 3. • the dam is more significant / complex / important than it first appears • the changes happen slowly / gradually / aren't immediate / take many months • the water is slowed / held back / less fast-moving • new plant life appears / new animal life appears / the area becomes more diverse with animal / plantlife Do not credit vague answers such as it changes the stream, it helps nature, or it is good for animals without further explanation. Do not credit simple copying of isolated details, such as frogs hide or birds work through reeds, unless linked to the wider idea of new wildlife or a richer habitat.	3
1(e)(ii)	Explain why the return of beavers is described as 'not uncomplicated'. Award 1 mark for each idea, predominantly in own words, up to a maximum of 3. • land near the river may become wet for vehicles / unable to hold the weight of heavy farming machinery / restricts farming access • channels may need clearing / mud, leaves and stems blocking channels / • footpaths may become unsafe / gnawed trees may fall on footpaths Do not credit: water moving more slowly downstream / the dam being successful Do not credit vague answers, such as it causes problems or people have to manage it without explaining the specific difficulty	3

Question	Answer	Marks
1(f)(i)	Reread paragraph 6 ('Tantalisingly ... life.'). Why does the writer use the word 'tantalisingly' (line 30) rather than the word 'interestingly' to describe what scientists are learning? Award 1 mark for each idea, up to a maximum of 2. • suggests the discovery is tempting or teasing, making the reader curious • implies there is still mystery: not everything is known yet • 'interestingly' sounds more neutral, whereas 'tantalisingly' is more exciting	2
1(f)(ii)	Reread paragraph 6 ('Tantalisingly ... life.'). Explain what the writer suggests about beavers in the phrase: 'With nothing more than teeth, mud and branches' (line 31). Award 1 mark for each idea, up to a maximum of 3. • beavers use simple, natural materials such as mud and branches • they rely on their own bodies, especially teeth, rather than tools or machines • despite this simplicity, they can build effectively and change waterways; they are resourceful and ingenious	3

Question 2(a)**Indicative reading content**

The relevant ideas are listed below in the order they first appear in the text:

1. rewilding can only happen in selected places / not everywhere
2. rewilding projects are expensive
3. rewilding is slow work
4. projects depend on ongoing monitoring / you cannot just release beavers and leave them
5. beavers need enough willow and other woody food or they will wander
6. Some landscapes (crumbly banks, hard stone edges or heavily engineered channels) are poor for digging / burrowing
7. beavers need room to spread ^
8. fastest, deepest stretches are unsuitable
9. built-up areas leave no space for wetlands / may cause neighbour disputes
10. dams can push water onto nearby ground / make land boggy
11. burrows can loosen banks
12. on small streams, dams may affect fish routes
13. old drains and ditches can run sluggishly / drainage can be disrupted
14. beavers can fell ornamental trees / chew through young plantings / damage commercially useful timber

Table A, Reading (10 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
5	9–10	Wide range of relevant ideas selected; consistently well-focussed on the task, with a clear overview.
4	7–8	Good range of relevant ideas selected; mainly well-focussed, with some sense of overview.
3	5–6	Some relevant ideas included, but focus may slip; may include repetition or some extra material.
2	3–4	Basic understanding shown; selection may be uneven or too general.
1	1–2	Limited understanding; little relevant selection and weak focus on the task.
0	0	No creditable content.

Table B, Writing (5 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
3	4–5	Clear, fluent expression; ideas organised effectively; concise use of suitable vocabulary with minimal copying.
2	2–3	Generally clear expression; organisation is sometimes effective; may miss chances to be concise and may lean on the text's wording.
1	1	Lacks clarity and control; weak organisation; obvious lifted sections.
0	0	No creditable content.

Mark scheme for part (b)

Question 2(b) (5 marks)

Use the Marking Criteria for Question 2(b) (Table C, Reading).

Responses might use the following

Indicative reading content
• awed / excited by the return of beavers: “It was remarkable”; “the river itself had woken up”; “small rebellion” • admiring of beavers themselves: “glossy with water”; “steady confidence”; “does not care who owns the land” • passionate about their ecological value: “a keystone species”; “their habits make habitats”; “the reshaping is the point” • regretful about past human damage: “hunted out long ago”; “undo that absence” • supports active human involvement / responsibility: “trying to undo that absence”; “health-checked, transported carefully and watched after release”; “planning and patience” • pragmatic / realistic about practical obstacles: “selected places”; “expensive”; “slow work”; “ongoing monitoring”; “cannot simply set a pair of beavers free” • cautious about limits and suitability: “not everywhere”; “without enough willow”; “little for them to dig into”; “fastest, deepest stretches”; “built-up areas” • respectful of beavers as living creatures with their own instincts, not controllable tools: “picky in their own blunt way”; “they will wander”; “they spread if there is room” • balanced / fair-minded / finds a middle ground: “Still, admiration does not remove the awkward facts”; “do not have to be villains”; “manageable”; “in the right places” • critical by simplistic thinking and false oppositions: “What irritates me”; “the idea that we must choose”; “between tidy control and wild chaos”

Table C, Reading (5 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
3	4–5	Clear understanding of the writer's attitude, supported by relevant details from the text (typically three distinct attitudes with well-chosen quotations).
2	2–3	Some understanding shown, with some supporting detail, but attitudes may be vague, repeated, or unevenly supported.
1	1	Limited understanding; may assert a view with little or no appropriate textual support.
0	0	No creditable content.

3(a)

Accept cloze responses that repeat all or some of the question stem with the correct answer.

- (i) **huddled (line 2)**
- (ii) **widened (line 7)**

3(b)

Accept any sensible equivalent phrasing; do not allow reuse of the original bold word in a “definition”.

- (i) **multiply**: increase / grew in number / became more numerous
- (ii) **hunting**: searching / looking for / trying to find
- (iii) **grumbled**: complained / muttered unhappily / spoke in an annoyed way

3(c)

Award marks for how clearly the candidate explains the effect of **one** chosen example from the given sentence and links it to floodwater movement/impact.

Indicative points candidates might make include:

at the edge of the force: working right beside the strongest part of the flood; suggests bravery, confidence, control, closeness to danger, refusal to be intimidated

vanishing into the heaving water: disappearing into violently moving floodwater; suggests fearlessness, strength, skill, determination, ease in harsh conditions

willow rods clenched in their orange teeth: gripping branches tightly in their mouths; suggests effort, purpose, physical power, concentration, hard work

Banding (holistic):

Marks	Description
4–5	Clear, well-focused understanding of how the language creates the effect
2–3	Some understanding, though general or partially developed
1	Limited understanding, brief or unclear
0	No creditable content.

Marking criteria for Question 3(d) (10 marks)

Candidates must select **three** powerful words/phrases from the extract and analyse how each choice contributes to the atmosphere on the bridge at dawn.

Reward: precise meaning in context, connotations, and effect.

Only credit comments on stylistic effect where these are explicitly linked to choices.

Responses might focus on words or phrases from the following:

Overview: *Overall, the writer creates an atmosphere that shifts from tension and scrutiny to calm reassurance, showing the beavers' dam as a powerful force for order, safety and renewal.*

- **catching debris:** trapping loose material or rubbish; suggests protection, filtering, efficiency
- **taking some of the punch:** reducing force or impact; river personified as violent, danger being softened, threat controlled
- **doubters fell quiet:** critics stopped speaking; indicates shifting opinion, reluctant acceptance, growing respect
- **checked the bridge supports:** examined carefully; caution, responsibility, tension before decision
- **Leave it:** firm instruction to not interfere; authority, decisiveness, confidence in the dam
- **drifted home:** moved away slowly; calm returning, tension easing, exhaustion after vigilance
- **cold air after rain:** sharp, fresh atmosphere; aftermath, clarity, emotional cooling, sense of renewal
- **water lay quieter:** calmer, less forceful water; peace restored, threat diminished, balance regained
- **weak light caught:** faint light reflecting; tentative hope, fragile calm, transition from danger to safety
- **remade, branch by branch:** rebuilt gradually and carefully; slow transformation, patience, constructive change
- **natural engineers:** skilled builders in nature; intelligence, capability, respect for the beavers
- **reshaping the river:** altering its course or form; long-term change, improvement, harmony between nature and environment

Banding (holistic)

Level	Marks	Description
5	9–10	Analysis adds meaning and associations to precisely selected words/phrases and demonstrates the writer's reasons for using them. Explains images with some precision and imagination. Clear understanding of the writer's use of language.
4	7–8	Some analysis of carefully selected words and phrases offers secure explanations of meanings within the context of the text. Begins to identify and explain images. Some understanding of the writer's use of language.
3	5–6	Chooses appropriate words and phrases. Mostly explains meanings of words. Attempts to suggest and explain effects are basic or general.
2	3–4	Chooses words and phrases that communicate less effectively within the context of the text. Explanations repeat the language of the original and/or are general, slight or only partially effective. Correctly identifies linguistic devices.
1	1–2	Choice of words is rarely relevant. Comments offer limited evidence of understanding.
0	0	No creditable content.

Mark scheme for Question 4**Notes on the task**

Candidates should select **ideas** from Text C and **develop** them, supporting what they write with **details** from the text. Look for an appropriate register for a radio interview, and a clear, balanced response that addresses all three bullet prompts using the candidate's own words.

Annotate:

- **A1** for references to the changes noticed before the flood
- **A2** for reactions from people in the village and Jeremy's view of them
- **A3** for what Jeremy realises after watching the beavers during the flood

Indicative reading content**A1: the changes you and Katherine had noticed along the river before the flood**

- **trees had been cut down / damaged** (det. young willows cut to neat points; felled saplings) [dev. showed clear, deliberate animal activity rather than natural damage]
- **wood was left scattered around** (det. pale wood scattered like peelings) [dev. made the riverbank look disturbed and untidy]
- **branches were being gathered in one place** (det. dragged branches collecting in the same bend) [dev. suggested the beavers were building something, not acting randomly]
- **clear signs of beavers appeared** (det. muddy slides; prints like small wet hands; a farmer mentioned beavers) [dev. confirmed what was causing the strange changes]
- **the shape and feel of the riverbank changed** (det. more ducks; new pools; softened banks; saplings vanishing one by one) [dev. the landscape was being gradually reshaped by the animals]

A2: how people in the village reacted to the beavers, and what you thought about these reactions

- **some villagers admired them** (det. called them clever engineers) [dev. these people respected the beavers' skill and usefulness]
- **some focused on the damage** (det. others saw only damage and expense; adults grumbled about the mess; gardeners complained about felled saplings) [dev. they judged the animals mainly by how they affected property]
- **some worried about wildlife and land management** (det. anglers worried about fish; a landowner said such creatures had no place in a managed landscape) [dev. they disliked losing control over the environment]
- **some became curious and excited** (det. children began hunting for tracks) [dev. the beavers made the area feel more interesting and alive]
- **opinions began to shift when benefits appeared** (det. more ducks on the new pools) [dev. Jeremy would feel some people were too quick to criticise before seeing the advantages]

A3: what watching the beavers during the flood made you realise about them

- **they stayed calm and focused** (det. worked in the current as calmly as builders arriving for a shift; neither alarmed nor hurried) [dev. they seemed confident, experienced and suited to these conditions]
- **they were strong and hardworking** (det. dragged branches; vanishing into the heaving water and reappearing with willow rods clenched in their teeth) [dev. they were determined and physically powerful]
- **they were skilful builders** (det. wedged a branch into a growing barrier and packed it with mud) [dev. the dam was carefully constructed, not just a pile of sticks]
- **their dam was actually useful** (det. catching debris; pushing overflow into an older, marshy hollow; taking some of the punch out of the main current) [dev. they were helping control the flood rather than making it worse]
- **they were changing the river for the better** (det. the water lay quieter; the river was being remade, branch by branch) [dev. Jeremy would realise the beavers were natural engineers and should be respected]

Reading mark bands (10 marks)

Use a 5-level banded judgement focusing on: range of relevant ideas, development, integration of supporting detail, and how convincingly all three bullets are covered in an appropriate voice.

Writing mark bands (10 marks)

Use a 5-level banded judgement focusing on: style and register for a radio interview, organisation and sequencing, vocabulary range and precision, and control for audience and purpose.

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Text A: Beaver Dams

To understand beavers and the dams they build, we must first picture a large, thick-furred living beside rivers, streams and ponds across North America, Europe and parts of Asia. Although many rodents are small, a fully grown beaver can weigh as much as a medium-sized dog. Its orange front teeth never stop growing, allowing it to gnaw through wood repeatedly, while its broad tail helps it steer in water and warn others of danger. Awkward on land but swift in water, this remarkable creature is well adapted to life on the riverbank.

These animals have long attracted human attention. For centuries, people valued beavers for their fur, and some even used oil from their bodies in medicines. Yet there is a big difference between valuing an animal for what it can provide and understanding the work it performs in nature, so why do beavers build dams in the first place, and what effect do these structures have?

Scientists have identified several reasons. A beaver dam is usually built from branches, mud, stones and tree trunks placed across a narrow stretch of water. By slowing the current, the animals create ponds around their lodge, the home where they live. This surrounding water acts as protection, making it harder for predators to approach unnoticed. Meanwhile, the pond gives beavers easier access to food and leaves, especially in winter, when ice may be underwater near the lodge.

At first glance, a beaver dam can look like a rough blockage rather than an important natural structure. A walker returning after several months, however, might find the same stream strangely altered. The quick line of water that once slipped between stones has disappeared, spreading into shallow pools where boots now sink into soft ground. Fine mud gathers in the slow water, and new shoots appear along the edges as if the bank itself has loosened. Soon the place is busier in quieter ways: insects to skim the surface, birds hide in the damp margins, and plants work through reeds that were gone the year before.

At a reintroduction site, the success of a beaver dam may be clearest after rain, when water lies calmly among the willows instead of racing away. For people farther downstream, that slower movement can be reassuring, but the same stillness can be ordinary routine: close to the river. After arriving the next morning may find that the edge of a road no longer holds the weight of a vehicle, while the shallow pond beside it has become filled with mud, leaves and broken stems. Food brings another complication, because a beaver low and standing in softened soil is no longer just part of the scenery. None of this makes the beaver's return a failure; it means the benefits arrive with some drawbacks that must be managed. This is why the return of beavers is not uncomplicated.

Tentatively, scientists are still learning just how much these animals can alter an environment. With nothing more than teeth, mud and branches, beavers reshape waterways on a surprising scale, turning simple streams into living systems rich in shelter, water and life.

Concerns & limitations of rewilding b in B.

IGCSE First Language English

Paper 1: Beavers

Read Text B, and then answer Question 2 (a-b) on the question paper.

10-12

Text B: Return of the Beaver

Tom Harwood was checking a stream beside a Somerset field when he heard it first: a crack of willow, then a heavy splash. He had come for a broken gate, not a wildlife encounter, yet there it was, a beaver, glossy with water, hauling a branch with the steady confidence of an animal that does not care who owns the land. Harwood is used to herons and deer at dusk, but this felt like a small rebellion. 'It was remarkable,' he said. 'As if the river itself had woken up.'

lost - regret
empathy

You might be surprised that beavers are being reintroduced to parts of Britain. They were out long ago, and now wildlife groups are trying to undo that absence in selected places, not everywhere and certainly not in neat little boxes on a map. The animals are health-checked, transported carefully and watched after release, which sounds responsible because it is. It is also expensive. It is slow work, too, with licences, surveys, meetings and the sort of paperwork nobody posts on social media. And once they are in, the job is not over: projects rely on ongoing monitoring, because you cannot simply set a pair of beavers free and hope for the best.

Supporters talk about ponds, wetter ground and a calmer flow of water, and they are not wrong, but beavers are picky in their town blunt way. Put them somewhere without enough willow and other woody food and they will wander. Give them crumbly banks, hard stone edges or heavily engineered channels and there is little for them to dig into. Expect them to stay politely within a narrow strip of habitat and you will be disappointed, because they spread if there is room. That is why many schemes avoid the fastest, deepest stretches where water scours everything clean, and why nobody sensible starts with built-up areas where there is no space for wetlands to grow without immediately becoming a neighbour dispute.

respectful, understanding

can't

passionate

limitations of types of location

limitation

Of course, the reshaping is the point. Beavers are often called a keystone species because their habits make habitats for other creatures. Yet the same dams that create shallow pools can push water onto nearby ground, and people notice when a field corner turns boggy. Burrows can loosen banks, especially where livestock already press the edges. On small streams, some anglers mutter about fish routes, and in farming country the older drains and ditches, designed to hurry water away, can end up running sluggishly when the landscape begins to slow down.

Still, admiration does not remove the awkward facts. Beavers can fell ornamental trees, chew through young plantings or damage commercially useful timber, and landowners do not have to be villains to mind that. Britain is not empty, and rewilding cannot pretend it is. The sensible argument is not that beavers cause no problems, but that the problems are manageable in the right places with planning and patience. What irritates me is the idea that we must choose between tidy control and wild chaos. A river that does some work for itself might be inconvenient, yes, but it can also be exactly what an over-managed landscape needs.

govt *
beavers to A
environ.

frustrated yet
balanced

aware
of
nuance,
fair
responsible

* changes at river before flood - 3/4
villagers' reactions & Jeremy's thoughts
Own realise about beavers
IGCSE First Language English
Paper 1: Beavers
Read Text C, and then answer Question 3 and Question 4 on the question paper.

Text C: The Flood

In the winter of 2026, after weeks of hard rain, Katherine and her husband, Jeremy, were living in a cottage beside a river in northern England. One evening, the river spilled over its banks and began to creep across the meadow. The following text is about what they saw when beavers started building in the floodwater.

Katherine reached the footbridge by dusk. To her surprise, people from the village were early there, impressed in waterproof coats and sweeping torches over the dark water. Had everyone really left their warm kitchens just to watch a flooded river? Some, who had been calling the beavers clever engineers, leaned over the rail; others deliberate muttered about damage, expense and the bridge road. At the same bend where dragged branches building materials had been collecting for months, two beavers were working in the current as intelligent busy as builders arriving for a shift. Jeremy, just behind her, let out a low whistle. The river they knew had methodical widened into a slow, brown sheet, and yet the animals seemed neither alarmed nor hurried. skilled, build complex structures architects

The sight brought back the first odd changes she and Jeremy had noticed months earlier. changes There had been cut to neat, tidy beaver arrived prepared paths and pale exotic - new animals willow scattered like peelings along the bank. At first she blamed the weather, walkers, even careless children, until a farmer upriver mentioned beavers. After that, signs seemed to multiply: muddy slides, prond aesthetics like small wet hands and children from the village hunting for selfish while adults grumbled about the loss of control now the river itself looked changed. Under the hard rain it seemed monstrous, rolling past in thick, tea-coloured folds. Whole branches spun like broken oars. Gardeners who had complained about felled saplings stood beside anglers worrying over fish, while one landowner said such creatures had no place in a managed landscape. The beavers benefit more wildlife ignored them all. They worked at the force, vanishing into the heaving water and reappearing with willow rods magical, strong indifferent to humans polished in their orange teeth.

Katherine had not expected to find herself watching beavers in a storm, but this was not the first time they had unsettled her idea of the river. By spring there had been managing landscape rather people pools, the gradually see benefit resistant bank had softened underfoot and saplings had respect skill usefulness been cut to vanish one by one. Jeremy had begun to feel that some people were too quick to criticise before seeing the advantages. One beaver fed up negativity shaped the surface with its tail, sharp as a cracked plank. The other wedged a branch into a growing barrier and packed it with mud river is calmer useful so slick and glossy it looked like wet clay.

By dawn, a drainage officer arrived, sent by a farmer who feared the bridge road would be lost. He climbed the bank and tested the barrier with a long pole while Jeremy explained what they had watched through the night. The dam was already catching debris and pushing overflow into an older, marshy hollow, taking some of the gradually see benefit resistant punch out of the main current. Even some of the doubters fell quiet at that. The officer checked the bridge supports, then nodded. "Leave it," he said. "For now, it's helping more than it harms."

As neighbours drifted home for tea and sleep, Katherine stayed on the bridge with Jeremy, breathing the cold air after rain. Beyond the dam, the water lay quieter, widened into a shallow pool where weak light caught on the surface. The river no longer felt like a thing that simply passed their cottage. It was being respect skill usefulness reshaped, branch by branch, before their eyes, and Jeremy realised the beavers were magical, strong indifferent to humans long, skilful natural engineers, reshaping the river for the better.

Question 1

Read **Text A**, 'Beaver Dams', and then answer questions 1(a)-(f).

(a) According to paragraph 1, what kind of animal is a beaver?

rodent

[1] ✓

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:

Synonyms

(i) 'thick-furred' (line 1)

• its body hair is dense

[2] ✓

(ii) 'awkward on lands' (lines 5-6)

• clumsy on ground/out of water

[2] ✓

(c) Reread paragraph 2 ('These animals have long ... structures have?').

Give two of the main uses in which beaver products are used by humans in the past.

• hunted for their thick waterproof fur
• oils used for medicine and perfume

[2] ✓

(d) Reread paragraph 3 ('Scientists identified ... lodge.').

Identify two reasons why beavers build dams.

• deeper pond to raise young
• protection from predators

[2] ✓

(e) Reread paragraphs 4 and 5, 'At first glance ... not uncomplicated.'

(i) What impressions does the writer give of the changes caused by a beaver dam?

- Change isn't immediate; gradual process ^{3x adj.}
- new animal and plant life
- river is slowed and calmer

3

[3]

(ii) Explain why the work of beavers is described as 'not uncomplicated'.

- Fields may no longer hold weight of farming vehicles
- Channels need clearing of blockages
- footpaths more dangerous with falling trees

[3]

(f) Reread paragraph 6 ('Tantalisingly ... life.').

(i) Why does the writer use the word 'tantalisingly' (line 30) rather than the word 'interestingly' to describe what scientists are learning?

- It suggests greater discoveries on the horizon
- excitement/thrill - like they can't wait.

[2]

(ii) Explain what the writer suggests about beavers in the phrase: 'With nothing more than teeth, mud and branches' (line 31).

- It shows the scale of change beavers can make with such small tools, demonstrating their genius and architectural feats with only nature's gifts. They are building complex structures with only primal instinct and their bodies.

[3]

Question 2

Read **Text B**, *Return of the Beaver*, in the insert and then answer **Question 2(a)** and **2(b)**.

Question 2

- (a) According to Text B, what are the concerns and limitations connected with rewilding beavers in Britain?

full sentences & paragraphs

Use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for reading and up to 5 marks for writing.

vocab.

[15]

10 points

8.5

2

9

3

5

Synonyms

Clear fluent

Sentences, punct.

There are many challenges to the organisation of rewilding beavers in Britain, particularly as
 2 it is ~~expensive~~ costly. Logistically, ~~this~~ more
 3 it's sluggish due to tedious ~~and~~ administration
 4 and continuous monitoring being needed. Not
 only this, but beavers rarely stay where placed,
 7 having a tendency to roam — so it is wise
 to avoid highly populated areas, which cause
 9 troubles with the locals.

Beavers can be destructive forces too;
 particularly, they can cause fields to become
 12 10 waterlogged, disrupt fishing routes, ~~and~~
 13 causing drains to run more slowly. Finally,

they chew on inconvenient objects,
such as ornamental trees, saplings, and beaver's
timber. specific adj.

(b) Assess the writer's attitude towards the rewilding of beavers in Britain.

Use three details from Text B to support your answer.

[5]

3x attitude adj + supporting quotes

5/5

The writer is regretful about the beavers' "absence" after being "hunted". They are also passionate about rewilding this "keystone species" as they believe "reshaping is the point" of rewilding. Ultimately, they are frustrated yet balanced about this issue, admitting they are "irritated" but seeing the need for a middle ground between "tidy control and wild chaos".

3x attitudes	3 details
regretful	"absence"
passionate	"keystone" / "reshaping"
balanced / mid. ground	"tidy control..."

Question 3

Read **Text C, The Flood**, in the insert and then answer Questions 3(a) – (d) on this question paper.

- (a) **Identify** a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words in bold:

- (i) People were standing **very close together**.

huddled

[1] ✓

- (ii) The river had **spread out**.

widened

[1] ✓

(2)

- (b) Use your own words to explain what the writer means by each of the words in bold:

After that, signs seemed to **multiply**: muddy slides, prints like small wet hands and children from the village **hunting** for tracks while adults **grumbled** about the mess.

- (i) Multiply **increase** ✓ [1]

- (ii) Hunting **trying to find** ✓ [1]

- (iii) Grumbled **complained** ✓ [1]

one word / phrase

(3)

quote: 1-6 words long

- (c) Choose a quote from the text below to explain how the writer uses language to describe the beavers at work in the floodwater.

Use your own words in your explanation.

The beavers ignored them all. They worked at the edge of the flood, diving into the heaving water and working with willow rods clenched in their orange teeth.

"Vanishing into heaving water" suggests the bravery of the beavers, their strength, and skill as they can work even under challenging conditions. They work like magic, disappearing and reappearing. Overall the beavers work with determination to build their dam.

[5]

5/5

3 quotes
atmosphere
language
imagery

- (d) Choose powerful words or phrases from the extract below to analyse how the writer uses language to describe the scene on the bridge at dawn.

The dam was already catching debris and pushing overflow into an older, marshy hollow, taking some of the punch out of the main current. Even some of the doubters fell quiet at that. The officer checked the bridge supports, then nodded. "Leave it," he said. "For now, it's helping more than it harms."

As neighbours drifted home for tea and sleep, Katherine stayed on the bridge with Jeremy, watching the sun rise over the river. Beyond the dam, the water lay quieter, widened into a shallow pool where light caught on the surface. The river no longer felt like a thing that simply passed their cottage. It was being reshaped, branch by branch, before their eyes, and Jeremy realised the beavers were serious about their work as engineers, reshaping the river for the better.

Write about 200 to 250 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

[10]

Overall effect Sentence:

The overall effect is to create an atmosphere of relief, calm and optimism on the bridge after the beavers' dam has reshaped the river.

Firstly, the image of "taking some of the punch out of the current" means that the flow of river has been reduced. The noun "punch" has connotations of violence, destruction and a battle, which suggests that the beavers have defeated an enemy, quietening the dangerous river.

Q The image of "breathing the cold air after
M the rain" means the atmosphere is now cool
and fresh. The word "breathing" has connotations
C of relaxation, freedom and nature, suggesting
the characters are having a moment of renewal
E and clarity after the tension has passed.

Finally, the image of the river "being
Q remade branch by branch" means that
M it was rebuilt gradually, one step at a time.
The word "remade" has connotations of
C transformation, patience and improvement. This
suggests that the beavers have intelligently
and deliberately improved the river with
E perseverance and skill.

10/10

Question 4

voice audience

V.A.R.P.T

register purpose format

interview
local residents
listeners

Re-read **Text C, The Flood**, in the insert and then answer Question 4 on this question paper.

- (4) You are **Jeremy**. A few days later, you are interviewed on a local radio programme about the flood and the beavers. The presenter asks the following three questions only:

informing
reflecting

- Can you describe the changes you and Katherine had noticed along the river before the flood?
- How did people in the village react to the beavers, and what did you think about these reactions?
- What did watching the beavers during the flood make you realise about them?

3-4

implicit

Use your own words to write **Jeremy's responses** to each of the interviewer's questions.

Write about **250 to 300 words**.

↑ Spoken
language
Semiformal
[20]

Up to **10 marks** are available for **reading** and up to **10 marks** for **writing**.

Interviewer: Can you describe the changes you and Katherine had noticed along the river before the flood?

- Jeremy: Yeah, so, even before the flood, changes had begun. we noticed some damaged trees, felled saplings - that kind of thing. It was obvious that beavers were the culprits! Take the wood scattered around, as though they'd been collecting their building materials ahead of time. There were also peeling; it was quite untidy. But when the beavers made an entrance, it explained everything, from

④ the muddy slides to the pawprints.

Interviewer: How did the people in the village react to the beavers, and what did you think about these reactions?

Jeremy: It was a real mixed bag. The children
① were excited, of course, and were hunting beaver tracks. They seemed suddenly interested in nature, which I'm all for. Better than staring at an iPad!
② Then, you have your complainers, who just moaned about damage, the mess, and the clean up costs. They were only bothered about their property and hobbies, not the animals or ecosystem. Some, like
③ me, were impressed and admired these intelligent engineers. We respected their skill — plus they helped to slow the flow of water in a flood. Surely that's only a good thing?

Interviewer: what did watching the beavers during the flood make you realise about them?

① Jeremy: Oh, just how skilled they are. The dam they built was quite a feat, and benefitting humans and nature alike. They are nature's
② architects (minus the tools and uni education). Can you imagine such a complex structure built only from sticks? I mean, the dam was really
③ useful; it caught rubbish and calmed the flood water. The beavers ~~really~~^{truly} did change the landscape for the better. I ~~truly~~ have nothing but admiration for them... Shame they are so
④ indifferent to us!