

## Badger cull fears for Bristol: Avon Wildlife Trust takes a stand...



Avon Wildlife Trust has today taken a public stand against the extended badger cull planned by the UK Government, and urged land owners to do the same – with new fears the extermination will hit the Bristol area.

Last week it was announced that the cull would be expanded into more, lower risk areas, in a controversial bid to reduce bovine TB. Opponents say the scientific evidence does not support the cull, as well criticising the resulting cruelty to this British protected species, raising concerns about conservation and the cost to the public purse.

In a newsletter published today to the Trust's 17,000 members, the charity warned: "Even though the details are unclear, we're concerned that these cull zones may include parts of our Avon area for the first time, destroying a much-loved and important wildlife species right on our doorstep.

"We're trying to find out where badgers may be at risk, though a lot of detail about the cull zones is kept secret. The location may be close to some of our nature reserves, many of which have thriving badger populations.

"We will not allow culling to take place on our land and urge other landowners to take a stand on this with us. We're joining The Wildlife Trusts nationally in continuing to speak out against this flawed policy of killing thousands of badgers when it's inhumane, costly to the taxpayer and is not effective in eradicating TB.

"We fully recognise the devastation and financial hardship bovine TB causes for farmers and support their need to find a solution to this serious problem. But we know that there are better alternatives to culling including badger vaccination, cattle vaccination and improved cattle controls. We're calling on the Government to halt the cull and invest in these."



Badger vaccination – which several Wildlife Trusts have been carrying out – costs on average £82 per badger compared to £496.51 per badger culled and has been shown to reduce the likelihood of badgers passing on the infection.

Ian Barrett, Chief Executive, Avon Wildlife Trust added: "The badger cull is an indefensible policy that puts native wildlife in the firing line for political reasons. I do not believe that there can be any justification for attempting to eradicate a native species from large areas of the country. The cull continues a long history of war on wildlife in the countryside,

which has left us with only a fraction of what was once there.”

He added: “Bovine TB is a serious issue that needs to be tackled. But the answer is in better cattle controls and vaccination, not the extermination of one of our iconic mammals, which the Government’s own scientific advisers have said will not work.

“We are facing the desperate prospect of badgers here in Avon being killed alongside more than 34,000 already slaughtered since the Government began this mistaken strategy. The public are overwhelmingly against killing badgers in this cruel way and it’s time the Government realised how strongly people feel about this issue. Killing thousands more badgers is not the solution.”

Avon Wildlife Trust has urged those concerned to contact their MPs and provided contact links, as well as sharing the scientific evidence showing why the Trust believes badger culling is the wrong policy.

The link to contact your MP is here: [www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-your-mp/](http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-your-mp/)

The Wildlife Trusts have published more information and a FAQ page on the badger cull here: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-and-wild-places/saving-species/badgers/faqs](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-and-wild-places/saving-species/badgers/faqs)

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