

Beavers in Scotland: An Update

August 2017



This newsletter is designed to update key stakeholders on recent work- mainly focussing on Tayside- in support of the ministerial announcement that beavers are to remain in Scotland, and will receive European Protected Species status.

Background

The Scottish Government is minded to allow beavers to remain in Scotland, Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham has announced. Ms Cunningham has said the species will have to be actively managed, in line with practices in other European countries.

Work has now begun to ensure beavers can be added to Scotland's list of protected species as soon as possible. It will be the first time a mammal has been officially reintroduced to the UK.

Scottish Ministers have agreed that:

- 1) Beaver populations in Argyll and Tayside can remain;**
- 2) The species will receive legal protection, in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive;**
- 3) Beavers will be allowed to expand their range naturally;**
- 4) Beavers should be actively managed to minimise adverse impacts on farmers and other land owners;**
- 5) It will remain an offence for beavers to be released without a licence, punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment and an unlimited fine.**

The benefits of beavers as 'ecosystem engineers' are well known, however, their activities can also create conflicts in some areas. In order to manage these potential conflicts, SNH is developing guidance and support for land, infrastructure and fisheries managers.

To support and advise on this work, the Scottish Beaver Forum was established earlier in 2017. The Forum consists of a wide range of members, representing land use, fisheries and environmental interests. This provides a platform for discussion between interested groups, as well as helping to build confidence in management practices.

Beavers in Scotland: A Recent Timeline

1995: Possibility of reintroducing beavers to Scotland starts to be explored



2006: Reports circulate of possible beaver presence in the River Earn



2009: The Scottish Beaver Trial (SBT) commences in Knapdale; the Beaver Salmonid Working Group (BSWG) is established



2012: Tayside Beaver Study Group (TBSG) is established



2015: 'Beavers in Scotland' report is published



2016: Environment Minister announces beavers are to be allowed to remain in Scotland



2017: Beavers expected to become European Protected Species (EPS) in Scotland



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

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Ongoing Work

In response to the ministerial announcement, SNH and partners have advanced a number of key projects including:

1) Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): The Scottish Government's decision that they are minded to let beavers remain in Scotland is subject to confirmation through the HRA and SEA processes. These processes need to be completed before Parliament can be asked to approve European Protected Species status for beavers.

2) Guidance and policies relating to EPS: Species licensing and management protocols are currently being drafted.

3) Tayside Beaver Research:

Stirling University have recently published a report, part-funded by SNH, which highlights the role of beavers in wetland habitat restoration. The report can be found [here](#). A further survey of beavers in the Tay catchment was carried out in spring 2017 by the University of Exeter. The final report will be available in November 2017 and we will give an update on this in a later newsletter.

4) Management

- We continue to provide advice when requested, most recently relating to the impacts of damming and tree felling on woodland and farmland;
- We are currently working with the Pow of Inchafray Commission towards a possible trial of exclusion fencing and water-gates;
- We have received advice from the River Restoration Centre about techniques to reduce river bank erosion at a farm on the River Isla and look to work with the landowner to find means to implement recommendations where possible.

Left: Evidence of beaver activity at the Knapdale release site; **Right:** Beaver dam in Tayside



While beavers are not currently European Protected Species, land and fishery managers are advised to use SNH's dedicated webpage and advisory service to seek advice. If you have questions about beavers that you have seen on land you manage, there is a great deal of useful information available through the SNH 'Beavers in Scotland' Report to Scottish Government at: www.snh.gov.uk/beavers-in-scotland.

We can also provide specialist advice on a case by case basis should the need arise. If you feel there may be issues developing that are not covered in the reports, or that some elaboration on techniques is needed, then we can provide an advisory site visit. Please contact 01738 458597 or beavers@snh.gov.uk where queries can be answered.

Contact Details

If you have any questions or queries relating to the information in this newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact beavers@snh.gov.uk.

More Information

You can find out more about the reintroduction of beavers in Scotland at: www.snh.gov.uk/beavers-in-scotland.

