



Scottish Beaver Trial

Local Stakeholders Forum Meeting

Cairnbaan Hotel, Friday 15 January 2010

Present: See end.

Apologies: PC Kenny Brack (Wildlife Crime Officer), Olivia Lassiere (BW), James Livingston (Seafield Farm), Patrick Mackie (ABC), Councillor Dougie Philand (ABC) John Raven (Historic Scotland).

Abbreviations: Argyll and Bute Council - **ABC**
British Waterways - **BW**
Forestry Commission Scotland - **FCS**
Scottish Beaver Trial - **SBT**
Scottish Natural Heritage – **SNH**
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland - **RZSS**

1. Welcome and introductions.

Councillor Donald Macmillan as Chair welcomed those attending.

2. Minutes and Action Points from Meeting of 21 August 2009.

The Minutes were approved. All action points from the previous meeting had been completed.

3. Matters Arising.

In response to a request from Jane Wright it was agreed that the number of released beavers would be highlighted on the SBT website.

Action Point 1: Ensure the total numbers of beavers released for the trial is specified on the website (SJ).

4. Overview of progress with the Trial since the previous meeting.

- Three families, 11 animals released in May 2009. One juvenile male died within 24 hours, although post mortem was inconclusive;
- Family on Loch Coille Bharr has relocated to neighbouring Dubh Loch, having built a dam and a lodge. Much evidence of tree felling and some regeneration in this area. Dam has flooded footpath and therefore FCS are leading approach to re-route footpath around the new beaver pond;
- Family on Loch Linne/Fidhle have settled in and built lodge. Three dams constructed on inflows & outflows; two of these removed by SBT staff, following instruction by SNH, as the rise in water level may have resulted in an adverse impact upon aquatic plants of the loch;
- Loch Creag Mhor family dispersed from site and outwith Trial area soon after release;

- Beavers have become an attraction to some locals and visitors. FCS have noted that visitor numbers are up substantially, which may be related to presence of beavers;
- Continued use of radio and satellite tags to track animals, but issues regarding the terrain and attachment methods mean that these methods are constantly being reviewed and improved;
- Currently six animals remaining within the Trial area, three missing (searches ongoing by SBT staff and volunteers) and one has been taken back into captivity due to poor health and condition;
- A fourth pair is to be released into the un-named loch south of Loch Buic in spring 2010;
- SBT are approaching SNH and Scottish Government about the potential use of replacement animals before May 2011, should the Trial lose further breeding adults. Aim is to create a minimum of four breeding pairs in order for Trial to fulfil its purpose;
- Research and education projects associated with the Trial are ongoing;
- See www.scottishbeavers.org.uk for more detail.

Questions Arising. In response to questions it was briefed that:

- There had been differing survival rates between the two batches of beavers gathered in Norway; with those being released straight from quarantine having had an apparently lower survival rate. Whilst there were no firm scientific conclusions it was believed that the condition of the animals for release benefited from a period in captivity post-quarantine;
- It remained SBT's aim to trap and return animals that had moved out of the Trial area, and that any impact on land-use resulting from beaver activity outside of the Trial area would, wherever possible, be recorded;
- Monitoring of trees felled by beavers was being undertaken, and therefore it would be possible to define areas of significant tree felling and associated regeneration. The results of this monitoring had yet to be audited, but the aim was to include the data in the interim Trial report;
- The release of reinforcement animals over and above the fourth family would be undertaken on a case by case basis subject to approval by the Scottish Government. The release of the fourth family was likely to take place this spring, with any subsequent releases of reinforcement beavers, subject to approval, taking place in summer 2010 at the earliest;
- The number of animals currently within the Trial area was providing sufficient data for much of the monitoring programme, but some aspects of the Trial, such as assessment of population expansion, required four viable families, and a cut-off for reinforcement after two years was being considered;
- It was not known if any of the animals were pregnant;
- The current location of stock Trial animals in captivity:
 - 1 pair at Highland Wildlife Park (one male and one female);
 - 2 juveniles (male) at Edinburgh Zoo;
 - One adult (male) and one juvenile (female) in Devon awaiting relocation to RZSS facilities.

5. Update on Beaver Trial Monitoring Programme.

Dave Batty (SNH) provided an overview of progress with the monitoring programme:

- Woodland tree monitoring was being conducted by the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute. Monitoring by SBT had started as soon as the beavers had been released;
- Monitoring work was being processed and would be made available through the SNH website when it was in a digestible format;
- Formal partnerships with all the monitoring bodies had been established ensuring long term commitment, consistency and additional in-kind resources;
- Contractors' work was being monitored and coordinated, ensuring that synergy would be achieved between the various work strands;
- The Native Species Re-introduction Forum had been established; its work included the setting up of the Beaver and Salmon Group that would look at the potential interaction between beavers and salmonids in Scotland;
- SNH had commissioned Southampton University to conduct a review of the paper written by the Tweed Foundation on the interaction between salmonids (in particular salmon) and beavers. The report would be reviewed and published in due course;
- All planned monitoring work was underway and available reports were being posted on the SNH web-site;
- Lichens were being included in the monitoring programme; bryophytes would be addressed as part of the general monitoring programme.

Questions Arising. In response to questions it was briefed that:

- The beaver dam on Loch Linne had been removed due to the statutory requirement under European law to take precautionary action on SACs; in this case relating to freshwater plants;
- The Dubh Loch did not have SAC freshwater plant interests; therefore there was no need for dam-management on that loch.

6. Open Q and A Session. In response to questions the following information was provided:

- FCS would look at the Forestry Plan to identify any areas around Loch Linne where further conifer removal might be planned, permitting regeneration of native broad leaf trees;
- The removal of beaver dams was only carried out where there was a need to comply with EU regulations concerning the "precautionary" approach on SACs. It was hoped that there would be sufficient data from other lochs unaffected by the EU regulations;
- The Trial involved looking at the development of management plans for beaver sites, including the removal of dams, to help inform the decision on the future of beavers in Scotland. The purpose of the Trial was considerably more widespread than simply looking at the survivability of beavers in the Scottish Environment;
- Lessons from continental Europe on beaver management also provided a useful source of information.

Action Point 2: FCS to provide information at the next Stakeholders Forum of any further felling plans in the vicinity of Loch Linne (NP).

7. AOCB

It was confirmed that copies of Simon Jones' update on progress with the Trial would be available (on a CD) on request from Simon Jones (sjones@swt.org.uk).

8. Closing Item.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and SBT staff for their excellent and informative presentations. He stressed that it was important that the meetings continued to be well attended in order to ensure that any concerns could be raised and discussed with SBT, and for keeping the community informed about progress with the Trial.

Date of the next meeting.

TBC, but likely to be sometime in the summer.

Action Point 3: To set and promulgate a date for the next meeting of the Stakeholders Forum (SJ).

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Local Stakeholders Forum Meeting
Cairnbaan Hotel, Friday 15 January 2010

Councillor Donnie MacMillan - Ward 3: Mid Argyll, ABC (Chair)

Jane Allan – Landowner

Dave Batty – SNH

Leif Brag – Tilhill Forestry

Roisin Campbell-Palmer – RZSS

David Clarkson – BW Scotland

David Croucher – SWT Lorn & Mid Argyll Members Centre

Marina Curran-Colthart – Biodiversity Officer, ABC

Hugh Dignon – Scottish Government

Jenny Holden – SBT

Simon Jones – SBT

Margaret MacCallum - FCS

Craig Macintyre – Argyll Fisheries Trust

Mike Macintyre – neighbour and project volunteer

Jamie Mellor – NFUS

Simon Milne –SWT

Nick Purdy - FCS

Charlie Self – local resident & project volunteer

Helen Watt – FCS

Chris Wilde – local resident & project volunteer

Jane Wright – Association of District Salmon & Fisheries Boards