

Debating The Issues



In this section you will find a teacher's introduction to the issues which have been brought up before and during the Scottish Beaver Trial and information to help your students.

This information is based on the Stakeholder surveys which were carried out before the Scottish Beaver Trial could go ahead and will hopefully help your students to understand some of the issues which are still being debated and thought about for future trials in different places.

Debating The Issues Teacher Introduction

Useful Websites List

Stakeholder Information—For

- Local Landowners
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions
- Wild Scotland
- Ramblers Association
- Local Bird Clubs

Stakeholder Information—Against

- Local Fisheries Groups
- Scottish Water
- National Union For Farmers Scotland
- British Waterways
- Confederation Of Forest Industries
- Scottish Rural Properties and Businesses Association

Stakeholder Information—Neutral

- Scientists
- Scottish Government

Debating the Issues



The Scottish Beaver Trial is a contentious issue, and has been for a long time. There are many people who are 100% behind the Trial while there are others who are equally against it, some are just on the fence. There are many arguments both for and against the Trial happening so it is a perfect topic for a debate.

There are lots of stakeholders (people who would be affected) involved in the Trial. Some of the arguments made by some of the stakeholder groups have been included in this pack to give the students some background to build their arguments on, these are by no means the entire argument and each stakeholder group should research the views of the opposition to ensure they can give a good argument and defend it from others.

Suggested session:

- The Scottish Beaver Trial introduction powerpoint can be shown to the groups to give them an understanding of the project, where it is and what a beaver is.
- The students can work in groups or alone to research the argument for one of the stakeholder groups and then present the argument in the form of a debate.
- To 'judge' the debate you can select a small group of students to act as the Government or this can be done by the teacher.

Additional activities:

- Students can create a presentation or poster to explain the different views.
- Students can write an essay showing both sides of the argument and the students own opinion.
- Students can design a questionnaire to find out local opinion and analyse the results (writing a report with graphs etc.).

Resources:

- Introduction presentation and film
- Stakeholder information
- Research material

Debating the Issues - Useful Websites



To be able to give a convincing argument it is important that each stakeholder is aware of the opinions of the opposition so that they can answer any questions which may be thrown at them. Here is a list of websites each of the stakeholder groups may find useful to build their arguments and defence.

www.scottishbeavers.org.uk - Official Beaver Trial

www.rzss.org.uk - Royal Zoological Society of Scotland

www.swt.org.uk - Scottish Wildlife Trust

www.nfus.org.uk - National Union for Farmers Scotland

www.srpba.com - Scottish Rural Properties and
Businesses Association

www.wild-scotland.org.uk - Wild Scotland

www.sfcc.co.uk - Scottish Fisheries Co-ordination Centre

www.asva.co.uk - Association of Scottish Visitor
Attractions

www.ramblers.org.uk - Ramblers Association

www.forestry.gov.uk - Forestry Commission

www.argyllbirdclub.org - Argyll Bird Club

www.scottishwater.co.uk - Scottish Water

www.britishwaterways.co.uk - British Waterways

www.confor.org.uk - Confederation of Forest Industries

www.scotsbeavers.org - Scottish Beavers Network

www.snh.org.uk - Scottish Natural Heritage



Local Land Owners

Many of the local landowners are for the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- It will be good for bringing people to the area, it will be unique to our area.
- By bringing people in it will bring more money and jobs to the area.
- If more people start coming to the area, the government will begin to spend more money around here improving roads etc.



Forestry Commission Scotland

Forestry Commission Scotland is for the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- The knapdale forest is already managed by us so we think it is a perfect place to find out the impact on forestry industries.
- In our changing role we are trying to return some of the areas once managed to their natural states. As beavers are natural engineers we believe that they can be a useful tool in reaching our objectives.
- We believe that the beaver is a missing part of Scotland's natural heritage and it is about time that something was done to redress the balance between ourselves and nature.



Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions

The Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions is for the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- We recognise the potential benefit to rural economies by bringing jobs and tourists to the area as well as benefiting local and national biodiversity.
- After seeing what has happened in other countries around the world we think that beavers can only enhance Scotland's wildlife tourism product. They will help to put us on a global map for wildlife watching.
- In many other countries tours can charge more money for the chance to see a beaver, this is an opportunity not to be missed.



Wild Scotland

Wild Scotland is for the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- Watching wildlife is important to the visitor experience in Scotland and we actively encourage positive developments that provide wildlife viewing opportunities to visitors.
- We caused the extinction of the beaver and therefore believe we have a moral obligation to return this amazing animal to where it belongs.
- Beavers are natural engineers and will help to return Scotland to a more natural state with increases in wetland habitat.
- Any developments will provide opportunities for local businesses.
- Having a 'flagship species' will help to advertise how people can minimise the disturbance to wildlife, and demonstrate and promote responsible wildlife watching.



Ramblers Association

The Ramblers Association is for the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- In principle, we support the concept of reintroduction of species to the Scottish countryside provided that this does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural heritage or public enjoyment of the outdoors.
- It must be carried out in accordance with IUCN guidelines, with the aim of establishing a viable self-sustaining population of beavers.



Local Bird Groups

The local bird clubs are for the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- By increasing wetlands the beavers increase the breeding and feeding grounds for many species of bird and other animal. This can only be positive for the wildlife of Scotland.
- The beavers will be another amazing species which we can look for while out and about.
- RSPB Scotland has been involved with successful and popular reintroduction projects for red kites and sea eagles and believes reintroductions can be a valuable conservation tool. They believe the beaver is a clear candidate species for a Scottish reintroduction project and are fully supportive of a well-mounted and controlled trial.



Local Fisheries Groups

Some of the local fisheries groups are against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- We have concerns in relation to fish passage issues, habitat modification, environmental impact assessment (how the affects of beavers are tested) and exit strategy (what will happen at the end of the Trial if it is unsuccessful).
- Other concerns relate to changes to habitat characteristics and distribution of salmonid (the family of fish which salmon belongs to) and other native fish that could in the long term change the distribution and productivity of a number of native fish species.



National Water Companies

Some national water companies are against the reintroduction of Beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- Any controlled re-introduction of beavers needs to consider the potential impacts on public health and in particular the quality of drinking water sources.
- We also have concerns over the activity of beavers in affecting natural water flows in upland waters which may have a detrimental effect on water availability. These issues would be of particular concern if the trial was deemed a success and resulted in the proliferation of beavers across suitable habitats in Scotland.



National Union for Farmers Scotland

Some members of the National Union for Farmers Scotland are against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- We are concerned about the economic interests of land managers who may be affected by the proposal (eg. Flooding of land, impact on crops by feeding) and compensation must be made available to support these claims should the proposal go ahead.
- We feel that the beaver would be reintroduced to a “changed” environment after a 400-year absence. The proposal may have an adverse impact on other species, habitat and water environment.
- Rodents can carry many diseases and we feel that this may just increase the risk that animal collection managers already face.



British Waterways

British Waterways is against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- Our main concerns are with assessments of the risks to all potentially affected parties, proposed mitigation measures and residual risks following their implementation.
- We also have concerns about the impact on canal structural integrity as the Crinan canal is a major thoroughfare.

Debating the Issues -

The stakeholders

SCOTTISH
BEAVER
TRIAL



Confederation of Forest Industries

Some members of the Confederation of Forest Industries are against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- We believe that the consultation , purely conducted on a local level, is a national issue and therefore should be put to the entire Scottish public.
- Trial site is not a closed catchment, we have concerns about the containment of the animals and their affects on the water systems.
- Application turned down previously on a number of grounds and not aware that any of these reasons have changed.
- Just look at the Impact of other “introductions”! We believe a precautionary principle should be applied.

Debating the Issues -

The stakeholders

SCOTTISH
BEAVER
TRIAL



Scottish Rural Properties and Businesses Association

Some members of The Scottish Rural Properties and Businesses Association are against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland some of their main points are:

- Introductions into the modern environment will necessarily impact negatively on a range of current land uses and practices. The area is managed in many different ways and we feel having the beaver back will cause many management issues.
- There will be potential negative effects on Knapdale Woods, which is a Special Area of Conservation. The protection afforded to *Castor fiber* under the EU law would render the SNH “Exit Strategy” either illegal or unenforceable.
- We believe that the period of the trial is inadequate to validate any of the results.



Scientists

Scientists are neither for or against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland. They view the subject from an outside perspective. Some of their main points are:

- Looking at evidence from other countries we can't see that there would be any major issues linked to the reintroduction of the beaver to Scotland, though it is important that we have a trial period to scientifically test this idea before any final decisions are made.
- Due to the amount of testing that has to go on the costs may be quite high and many people will feel that the time and effort should be spent on something else, especially in the current financial climate.
- We believe that the beavers will enhance the species diversity and wetland creation, aiding the biodiversity of Scotland.



Scottish Government

The Scottish government is neither for or against the reintroduction of beavers to Scotland. They view the subject from an outside perspective. Some of their main points are:

- The potential benefits of introducing the beaver to Scotland as an agent of biological diversification through, for example, storage of sediments, removal of nutrients and the introduction of woody debris.
- There are a number of uncertainties over the potential effects which we believe it would be wise to address before any decision is made about whether to re-introduce the species to an area of Scotland.
- We do not oppose the principle of reintroducing the beaver provided that the effects are closely monitored and that appropriate control measures would be implemented where evidence becomes apparent of significant undesirable impacts on, for example, hydrology, natural heritage interests or riparian woodlands.