



**SCOTTISH BEAVER TRIAL**

**LOCAL STAKEHOLDER FORUM MEETING**

**CAIRNBAAN HOTEL, WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2009, 14:00-16:00**

**Present:** See attached sheet

**Apologies:** Jamie Farquhar (CONFOR), Olivia Lassiere (British Waterways),  
Councillor Donnie McMillan (Argyll and Bute Council),  
Peter Slann (Landowner).

**Abbreviations:** British Waterways – **BW**  
Forestry Commission Scotland - **FCS**  
Scottish Beaver Trial – **SBT**  
Scottish Natural Heritage – **SNH**  
Scottish Wildlife Trust – **SWT**  
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland – **RZSS**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**Councillor Douglas Philand as Chair** welcomed the participants to the Forum. A round table introduction took place.

**2. Minutes and Action Points from Meeting of 29 August 2008**

The Minutes were approved subject to a correction regarding the role of Historic Scotland in the trial, and the addition of Olivia Lassiere and Nicola Christie, both of BW, to the attendees list.

**AP1: *Stakeholder Forum to discuss License Condition 8 at next meeting:***

- The Scottish Government License granted to SBT stipulated in license consideration 8 that any beaver dispersing from the trial area should be retrieved should the landowners request this;
- SBT stated that scenarios such as this would be dealt with on a case by case basis, but there would be a presumption of retrieval;
- SBT staff would endeavour to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the affected landowner. All options would be considered including the last resort of humane destruction;
- SBT reserved the right to sub-contract capture.

**AP2: *SBT/SNH to make papers on beaver tracking methodologies available on website:***

**AND**

**AP3: *SBT/SNH to ensure that monitoring and research proposals for trial are available to stakeholder forum members via website:***

- See Item 4;

- The SBT website developers had recently gone into liquidation and therefore the current website was experiencing some problems; a new website would be launched in May 2009 and beaver tracking methodologies would be uploaded onto it.

**AP4: *SBT to develop mink trapping proposal associated with trial:***

- Plans were underway and would proceed on a catchment basis;
- Mink rafts (as used by the Game Conservancy Trust) would be used to monitor activity on the beaver release lochs; if mink were detected they would be trapped following nationally recognised methodology.

**AP5: *SBT to follow up invitations to SEPA and local Community Councils regarding Local Stakeholder Forum:*** Actioned.

**3. Overview of Beaver Trial Actions and Progress to Date**

- Simon Jones gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on the background, organisational structure and current status of SBT;
- Jenny Holden introduced herself as the new Beaver Trial Field Officer. She has extensive experience in animal tracking and husbandry and had been involved in water vole reintroduction with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust; Jenny is the first port of call 'on the ground';
- Each beaver released would be fitted with a long-lasting radio tag and one adult from each family group of beavers (who would naturally remain together for the next couple of years) would have a different tag which was designed to be constantly tracked by satellite technology;
- Baseline surveys of the ecology of the area were more or less complete, allowing for deeper understanding of the ecological parameters pre-release;
- FCS, owners of the vast majority of the trial area, would provide interpretation at visitor honey pot sites such as Barnlusgan, as well as refitting the hut and upgrading trails. The car park capacity would be increased and the path surfaces would be improved. Visitor numbers would be recorded. The trial was primarily scientific, and whilst recognising the public interest the project would make efforts to keep pressure on the site down, in particular immediately post-release to allow the animals to settle in. The effects on the local economy would be monitored over the course of the five years of the trial and reviewed at its end;
- The budget for the seven years total of the trial was now around £2million. This had been raised primarily by SWT and RZSS;
- The beavers had been screened pre-departure from Norway and on arrival to Britain for an extensive list of parasites and diseases, in accordance with DEFRA requirements; all individuals had tested negative for all listed conditions. Exit from quarantine would not be approved unless they were cleared by DEFRA. The source area was free from *Gyrodactylus salaris*, a freshwater parasite, and the beavers had tested negative for this; as an extra precaution the animals would be soaked with salt water, which kills the parasite. IV was in contact with an expert group on this parasite in Telemark, Norway and would pass information to them.

**4. Update on Beaver Trial Monitoring Programme**

- Independent monitoring of the trial, which would be submitted to the Scottish Government, was a requirement of the licence. SNH were to lead on this and

the monitoring programme was being finalised. An annual monitoring report would be produced for the duration of the trial, followed by a final overall report. All would be available on the SNH website, with links to the SBT website;

- The two main elements of the project to be monitored were the beavers themselves and their effects on their surroundings;
- SNH had entered a partnership agreement with WildCRU from Oxford University whereby WildCRU would undertake the ecological monitoring; this partnership would serve to improve information gathering and reduce costs;
- WildCRU were drafting a protocol in liaison with SWT and RZSS (the partners were to provide the equipment). They would also set up details of the tracking methodology. A summary of this would be available in a month. A representative from WildCRU would be available for questions at the evening's drop-in session;
- A Memorandum of Agreement between RZSS, SWT and SNH would clarify roles and responsibilities. SWT and RZSS would undertake some of the data collection, while SNH would collate, analyse and report;
- A PhD student working with SNH would be studying the socio-economic impact of the beaver reintroduction on the local area. The student had already obtained baseline data from VisitScotland. Stakeholders could be assured the monitoring and assessment of any economic development would be overseen by a trained socioeconomist, acting as the student's supervisor. At the end of the trial an independent consultant would be taken on to determine the influence of beavers in the area;
- SNH were concerned with monitoring of the core aspects of the trial; other non-essential areas of research could be explored provided doing so was not burdensome to both staff and the animals;
- A number of projects studying the effects of the beavers had either been started or were being considered, both for pre- and post-release. These included studies on the local fish ecology, geomorphology of the water habitats, otter, dragonfly and mink, public health, water chemistry and aquatic plants.

## 5. Proposed Site Visit & Beaver Training Day for Stakeholders

- Jenny Holden would facilitate a visit for stakeholders to the release site;
- It was agreed that a visit would take place after the beavers were released, in June or July;
- Jenny explained it was no problem for external groups to arrange a visit;
- There would also be two stakeholder and volunteer training days – on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May. They would comprise of an indoors session in the morning (venue tbc), with a site visit in the afternoon.

**Action Point 1: Those wishing to attend the training day and/or site visit should provide Jenny Holden with their contact details ([jholden@swt.org.uk](mailto:jholden@swt.org.uk)/077390 428 215).**

## 6. AOCB

- SBT was covered by insurance for any damage to property made by the beavers during the trial, and a process for pursuing compensation claims was being drafted. The draft would be circulated with the minutes from this meeting;

**Action Point 2: Forward any comments on draft compensation procedure to Simon Jones ([sjones@swt.org.uk](mailto:sjones@swt.org.uk)/07920 468 556).**

- If the trial was a success and beavers became part of Scotland's ecology, it was not envisaged that damage compensation would be paid for by The Scottish Government, but the animals and their effects would be managed. The Government would prefer to see, through the trial, what sort of impacts the beavers may have before making a clear commitment about how best to handle those. However, if the beavers were afforded species protection, this would not necessarily preclude the ability to manage them or for landowners to receive payments as part of a management scheme, such as that of the sea eagles on Mull;
- The Scottish Government had formed a National Species Reintroduction Forum, with the first meeting to take place before summer, with all relevant sectors represented. The stakeholder forum and vested interests of landowners was an important factor to be considered by the Scottish Government, and they would need to consider the longer term impact on society. The success of the sea eagle reintroduction to Mull demonstrated the potential for huge benefits for the local community through increased tourism, with management of any damage caused by the eagles;
- The Scottish Government had been made aware that the trial would not test the effect of beavers on migratory fish, SBT was only an initial trial; determining that effect would require another trial on an open river system. The project partners had no current plans to undertake another trial. The Scottish Government were in touch with the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards on a regular basis, to explore how to allay their concerns;
- The trial had clear success and failure criteria, and the final decision would rest with the Scottish Government. If successful the Government could request the trial be extended, or moved on to the next phase. There were a variety of options for exit strategy (including capture, repatriation, and humane destruction);
- Argyll & Bute Council's Environmental Health Department did not consider the beavers to be a hazard to water safety or quality. Parasites such as *Giardia* were already present in the trial area, and when screened the beavers had been found clear of such organisms;
- The project partners were working closely with British Waterways;
- SBT was happy to place links to local accommodation on the website in the near future

**Action Point 3: Take this proposal to relevant Working Group (SM).**

- The educational aspect of the project was considered to be critical, with RZSS leading in this area. They were producing national packs for the schoolchildren of Scotland. The aim was to increase understanding of beavers and their ecosystems, even if people were unable to travel to Argyll.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

- The Forum agreed to meet again post-release, in June or July, along with the site visit. Thereafter they would meet quarterly.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

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**In Attendance**

Councillor Douglas Philand, Ward 3 – Mid Argyll, Argyll and Bute Council (Chair)

Jane Allan, Landowner

Dave Batty, Scottish Natural Heritage

Steve Benham, The Stables B & B

David Clarkson, British Waterways Scotland

Marina Curran-Colthart, Argyll & Bute Council

Hugh Dignon, Scottish Government

Martin Gaywood, Scottish Natural Heritage

Jenny Holden, Beaver Trial Field Officer

Simon Jones, Scottish Beaver Trial Project Manager

Tina Jordan, Volunteer

Karen Judd, Scottish Natural Heritage

John Keith, Volunteer

Mike Macintyre, Landowner

Drew McFarlane-Slack, Scottish Rural Property and Business Association

Ian McKee, Forestry Commission Scotland

Richard McKenzie, Chairman, Argyll Fisheries Trust

Robin Malcolm, National Farmers Union

Jamie Mellor, National Farmers Union Scotland

Simon Milne, Chief Executive, Scottish Wildlife Trust

Tracey Peddie, Dalriada Project

Harry Powell, Lorn and Mid Argyll SWT Members Centre

Philippa Revill, Forestry Commission Scotland

Charlie Self, Argyll Green Woodworkers Association

Will Self, Dalriada Project

Hugh Semple, North Knapdale Community Council

Rob Thomas, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland

Iain Valentine, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland

D Wright, Resident

Jane Wright, Argyll DSFB, Argyll Fisheries Trust