



Scottish Beaver Trial Local Stakeholders Forum meeting

**Room 4, Lochgilphead Community Centre, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ.
Tuesday 8th October 2013, 2pm start.**

Present and apologies: See end.

Abbreviations: **ABC** – Argyll and Bute Council
 FCS – Forestry Commission Scotland
 RZSS – Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
 SBT – Scottish Beaver Trial
 SG – Scottish Government
 SEPA – Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
 SNH – Scottish Natural Heritage

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair.

Chaired by Councillor Sandy Taylor who welcomed everyone and introductions were made all round.

2. Minutes and Action points from previous meeting.

No Comments were made

- All Parties agree that the minutes are a true and accurate account of the last meeting.

3. Overview of Scottish Beaver Trial actions and progress to date – SBT partners

Presentation prepared by Roisin Campbell-Palmer (SBT) - given by Simon Jones SJ

- Current distribution is 15 animals in the trial area
- Dubh loch, Lochan Buic and Loch Linne beaver families had kits this year
- Lochan Beag adult female is missing, so only one solitary male who may disperse next spring if no new female appears. No breeding at this site
- Loch Linne may have one or two sub adults, unsure at this time
- Time of year now makes it harder to see the animals
- By next spring (2014) will be able to determine whether or not this years' kits have survived or not
- Dubh Loch family – evidence of in-breeding (father-daughter)
- Dubh loch new pair relocated to Loch Coille-Bharr lodge again this autumn

Jane Allan **JA** – What animals are left on Dubh Loch?

SJ It is not entirely sure whether the kits have followed the parents up to the Loch Coille-Bharr winter lodge or if they have remained at the Dubh Loch. But the breeding pair did this last year (2012) also.

Body Condition (pictures shown)

- Frid (Loch Linne breeding adult female) is an older breeding female and although is a healthy weight she is getting older and less good body condition than younger adult females. Compared to Trude (Lochan Buic breeding adult female), smaller body weight but better body condition as younger animal in prime.

Field Work

- Water chemistry sampling gap – SBT field team haven't been able to carry out some monthly testing due to SEPA lab being closed but it has now returned to normal.
- Field sign surveys done quarterly, currently large sweep of water courses being done by SWT trainees
- Baited mink rafts have had shown no prints recently
- Camera traps key for observations over the winter to monitor the beavers when visual observation work is harder

Land Use Impacts recorded

- At Lochan Buic there has been a few trees felled along the loch edge that have partially blocked the forestry track. Now tidied up and incidences logged

Current Associated Research

- Various pieces of research work looking at beaver health and veterinary studies ongoing
- More work to published in coming months

Andrew Taylor **AT** What parasites are they looking for?

SJ Nematode and fluke species which are specific to the beavers.

Tagging

- Along with the GPS tags, Temperature and Depth Recorders are attached on some key beavers which mean these attributes can be measured and recorded.

Publications

- Main Publication of the year so far has been Captive management guidelines for Eurasian Beavers (Castor fiber) – edited by Roisin Campbell Palmer

Education, liaison, and final year presentation - Simon Jones SJ

Education summary for April-Sept 2013 period:

- 99 Events with 13,620 participants which included some large events such as Best of the West and Glasgow and Inverness Science fairs, as well as Crinan Festival and Mid Argyll Show.
- 33 schools and colleges with 890 students (13 Argyll schools involved)
- 14 student placements

Liaison

- Environment and Climate Change Minister (Paul Wheelhouse MSP) visited in April
- Repeated visits to some local schools including Ashfield Primary which have adopted Millie (Dubh Loch breeding female)

New Dubh Loch Viewing Platform

- Now open at one end after adjustments were made to the legs of the platform. Will be fully open by mid November 2013.

Fiona Campbell Byatt **FCB** Is the viewing platform wheelchair friendly?

SJ The structure itself is wheelchair friendly but the track down to may not be. FCS have talked about potentially improving disabled access. Not sure of final outcome of these considerations

ACTION POINT 1: SJ to discuss wheelchair /disabled user access with FCS

Final year Plans

- Public and stakeholder consultation exercise occurred in 2007 prior to initial licence application to SG. Final year consultation will take place in early 2014
- Local and Central belt final year 'celebration' events to be held Spring –May 2014
- Education Ranger post ends in September 2014 but guided walks to continue in 2014 over the spring and summer months

- “Holding phase” with beavers remaining in place after completion of scientific monitoring in May 2014 and until SG decision (expected mid 2015).
- Still plans for a SBT presence on site to keep a watch on beavers and their impacts during this, but at scaled down level. Discussions about the details of this currently occurring between SWT, RZSS, FCS, SNH and SG.

Questions

- I. **FCB** Missing adult female on Buic have an effect on the kits?
SJ The missing female is at Lochan Beag, this pair has never bred together on that loch so no kits effected.
 Marina Curran Coulthart **MCC** Effect of predators?
SJ Two kits from previous years appear been killed by predators but which species is not known (could be fox, badger, dog etc). Adults there has so far been no predation that is known on them, kits seem to be more susceptible.
- II. Mike Macintyre **MM** Belfast Mammal Conference in which SBT presentation was made, possible to get a link or a copy to a paper by Prof. Bryony Coles?
ACTION POINT 2: SJ to look for link to Bryony Coles paper for MM
- III. **JA** Staff remaining after May 2014?
SJ There are plans to continue with 1 part-time staff member along with the SBT Education Ranger (until September 2014) with help from local FCS staff, SBT volunteers and SWT/RZSS staff when required.
- IV. **JA** Communication to public/stakeholders?
SJ Would be continued in some way but nothing fully confirmed yet.
- V. Robin Malcolm **RM (in absence, via SJ/Chair)**: The mortality levels of the trial beaver population in Knapdale seem to indicate that this population is unlikely to successfully establish itself.
- VI. **SJ** It is 50/50 to whether the Knapdale population would survive long term without any new immigration or reinforcement as there are only 3 breeding pairs at present. Estimated 75-150 beavers at Tayside but cannot work back to what was the founder population (captive escapes and/or illegal releases?). The habitats at Tayside and Knapdale are very different.
- VII. **RM**: The larger unlicensed population on Tayside seems to be establishing itself. Can the SG answer the following questions: (i) are there plans to carry out a damage assessment forecast for a much larger population in the future?, (ii) how is it decided whether larger levels of damage are acceptable or not?, and (iii) who will pay for damage caused by beavers?
AT Future of beavers will be based on the findings of Scottish Beaver Trial, Beaver Salmonid Working Group, Tayside Beaver Study Group, abroad study groups (mainly in Europe), SNH work (including Socio-economic studies). Political decision will look at the benefits of reintroduction compared to the costs
 Still not established who will pay for any damaged caused by the beavers, sea eagle scheme is a possible example.
 If problems were to occur they would be an aim to deal with them through some form of management as quickly as possible to keep costs down.
MM They are other native species such as Red deer and when they cause damage there isn't compensation. Management instead of compensation.
JA Compensation is relevant for beavers as they are a species that would not have made it here by themselves.
- VIII. **JA** What is current SBT budget?
SJ Little change in budget -approx. £2 million over 7 years with approx.£1.8M already secured.

4. Update on access and recreation within the trail area – Forestry Commission Scotland
No FCS representatives were present at the meeting but verbal update from Helen Watt (FCS) given by SJ.

- New viewing platform to be fully open on 9th of November 2013
- Field path across from Barnluasgan information centre and entrance to car park to be improved soon.
- Some of the signage in Barnluasgan car park to be replaced soon

5. Update on Beaver Trail Monitoring Programme - Scottish Natural Heritage
Stan Phillips SP.

- Only two independent monitoring programme reports published so far in 2013
- Only one of them is on the SNH website just now which is Woodland monitoring 2011 (James Hutton Institute) which has received local and national press attention
- Second report not on website yet but was published in September 2013 – Beaver Ecological report (Oxford University)
- Currently looking at beavers taking hazel stems which are rich in lichens. It has been recorded at patches around Loch Linne. So far there has been two site visits and data collected by SNH staff to determine the extent of damage to designated feature done.

6. Open Q and A session – Chair

- I. **JA** People are not coming just for the beavers. Is there any new media planned?
SJ No new media stuff planned just now
Tony Hammock **TH** tourists are adding on extra days to their trip to see the wildlife.
FCB Increase in my holiday cottage take up this season. Visitors go to see the beavers
JA B&Bs seem to have benefited more from beavers than self-catering accommodation
SJ Final year independent socio-economic report may show the effect on tourism

7. AOCB – Chair

None

- The Chair thanked all for the attendance and input and closed the meeting

8. Date of next meeting

Next meeting **3rd of April 2014**

Attendees:-

Councillor Sandy Taylor – Argyll and Bute Council (Chair)
Katie Murphy – SBT student intern (MINUTES)
Marina Curran Coulthart – Argyll and Bute LBAP Officer
Andrew Taylor – Scottish Government
Simon Jones - Scottish Beaver Trial
Mike MacIntyre – Neighbour
Dave Batty – Natural History and Antiquarian Society Mid Argyll
Jane Allan – Seafield Farm Cottages
Stan Phillips – Scottish Natural Heritage
Ndurie Abah – Scottish Natural Heritage
Lady Fiona Campbell Byatt
Tony Hammock – Seafreedom Kayak
Helena Letailleur – SBT student intern

Apologies:-

Roisin Campbell-Palmer - SBT/RZSS
Robin Malcolm – Neighbouring Farmer
Peter Slann – neighbour
Helen Watt – FCS
Patrick Mackie – Argyll & Bute Council