



## Scottish Beaver Trial

### Local Stakeholders Forum Meeting

**Achnamara Village Hall, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012, 2-3:30pm**

**Present & Apologies:** See end.

**Abbreviations:**

- ABC** – Argyll & Bute Council
- FCS** – Forestry Commission Scotland
- RZSS** – Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
- SBT** – Scottish Beaver Trial
- SG** – Scottish Government
- SNH** – Scottish Natural Heritage

#### **1. Welcome & Introduction from the chair**

Our new chair Sandy Taylor (ST) welcomed everyone and introductions were made all round.

#### **2. Minutes & action points from previous meeting.**

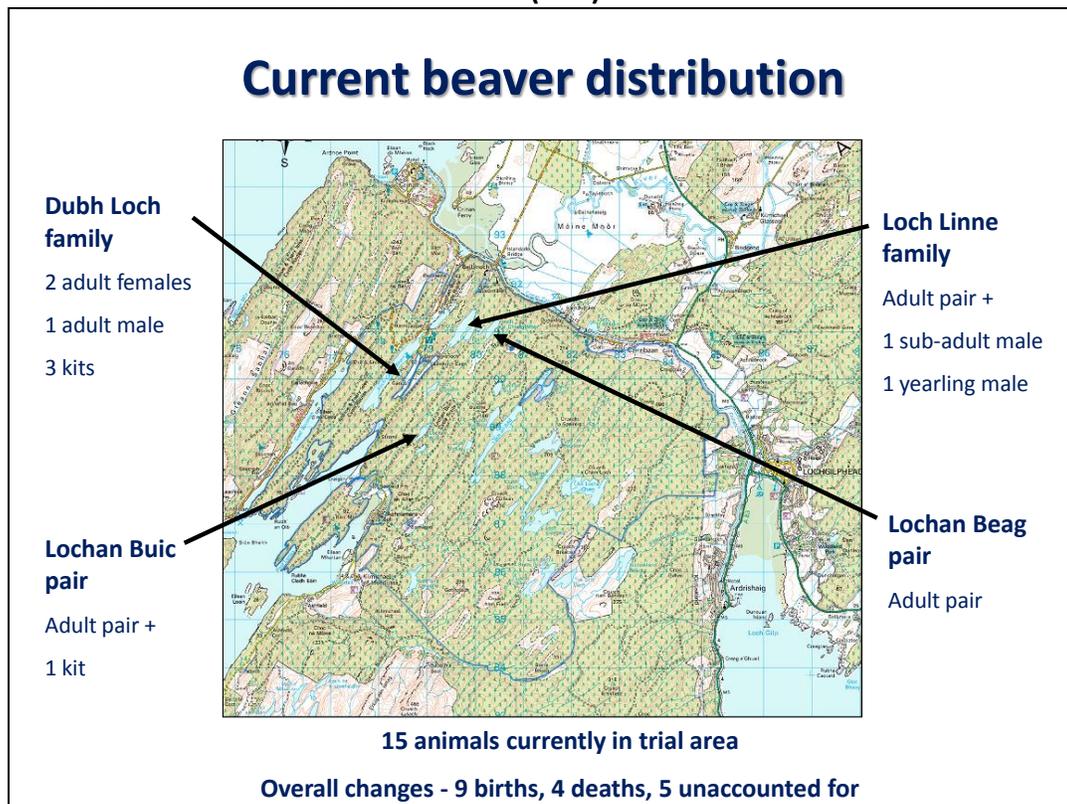
No matters arising.

Action points from previous meeting:-

- Jane Allen (JA) asked has the beaver family tree been corrected on the website – Simon Jones (SJ) answered yes, it has now been corrected.
- A site visit was offered prior to this meeting. ST thanked SJ for the visit and found it interesting and helpful.
- Accommodation links to the SBT website have been resolved. There are now links to accommodation providers in the area on the SBT website.
- **ACTION POINT 4:** SJ to liaise with local accommodation providers regarding the potential collection of SBT visitor data from guests - carry forward.

### 3. Overview of Beaver Trial actions and progress to date – RCP & SJ (SBT)

#### Beaver related fieldwork and research: (RCP)



All monitoring work progressing as planned:

- Continued use of 'Geotag' position recorders being placed on individual beavers for two week periods. Good data if can be retrieved and beavers don't damage them beyond repair.
- Mink rafts have shown mink evidence at two sites, but no mink trapped and dispatched since last meeting.
- Field sign surveys showing that three of the four families are remaining in their release territories, but Lochan Buic family seem to be increasingly venturing into the surrounding water courses as well.
- Continued active canal building at Dubh Loch site. Small dams built at Lochan Beag and Loch Linne. New lodge being built on Loch Coille Bharr.
- Five kits born this year – three at Dubh Loch, one at Loch Linne and one at Lochan Buic. Linne kit subsequently found dead with post mortem examination suggesting caused by large predator.
- Research work has shown evidence of beaver specific parasites associated with some beavers – beaver fluke and beaver beetle confirmed. More veterinary beaver research now published. Details available from RCP on request.

### **Education, Media, Marketing and Liaison update: (SJ)**

- SBT Education Ranger now in post and SBT Education Pack circulated to every school in Scotland.
- To date 253 Educational events (10,049 people) since the start of the Trial, with increases in number of events and participants each year.
- 2012 summer guided walks & events programme appear to have been well received (75% of participants were visitors to the area). Core of visitors still really want to see the beavers and this remains a challenge.
- Student placements & volunteers continue to be involved in fieldwork and events.
- Virtual guided tours & lessons being developed for teachers and group leaders.
- TV filming and coverage (The One Show, A Year in The Hebrides, Ray Mears Wild Britain, Autumnwatch).
- Print and radio coverage (focused on kits, competitions, visitor numbers and Tay beavers).
- SBT Social Media developments – Facebook and Twitter launched. Website upgraded.
- Marketing efforts have focused on good provision of SBT leaflets in and around the area during the main tourist season, children’s competitions run in conjunction with other partners, development of SBT related merchandise (mugs, notebooks, pencils, keyrings, cuddly toys, support for a membership of Heart of Argyll Tourism Alliance and the use of SBT in marketing for the recent Disney/Pixar children’s film ‘Brave’.
- Visitor Welcome Pack currently in development and Helen Jones (SBT Marketing Volunteer Coordinator) will liaise with local businesses about provision of packs for spring 2013 season.
- SJ had discovered through council that the SBT is now used as a measurable outcome on the Argyll and Bute Council’s Single Outcome Agreement with Scottish Government – funding related.

### **Summary of SBT performance to date**

- Positive achievements to date: Fieldwork & Research has been adaptive and progressing as planned; SBT is meeting all SG licence conditions, good educational & visitor engagement and sustained media interest raising profile of project and the area.
- Challenges & Lessons to date: juvenile beavers appear to be dispersing from trial area (probably as a result of the topography and very small population) rather than forming new pairs within trial area. Due to very small population then it is vulnerable due loss of key breeding animals. Ongoing fundraising efforts, project is secure but in order to fully develop all aspects (e.g. educational work and marketing of local area) then additional funds would be beneficial.

### **Planning for end of SBT and what happens next**

- Aim to successfully deliver Trial by summer 2014 when it officially ends. There is likely to be a 'Holding Phase' in 2014-15 when beavers remain on site whilst SG is considering all reports.
- Presumption that there will be a SG decision on wider beaver reintroduction in 2015.
- Depending on the outcome of this decision, then there may be an option for potential reinforcement of the Knapdale beaver population between 2016-19.
- SBT partners currently considering options for future, post SBT. More information and discussions to follow.

### **4. Update on access and recreation within trial area – Ian McKee, FCS**

- The upgrade on Loch Coille Bharr path is complete. The field path is due for an upgrade next summer/autumn. The oak wood trail is still due an upgrade. Repositioning of the interpretation panels are underway, they are being moved to concentrate more around the Dubh Loch.
- The viewing platform is due to be installed at the Dubh loch by the end of March 2013. JA asked if the FCS plan to take any trees out for a better line of site from the platform, David Jardine (DJ) answered that unless there were direct health and safety concerns associated with individual trees then there were no plans as yet to remove trees but it is worth considering. Many trees that have been submerged here for a long period of time are now dying and naturally thinning out.
- JA asked if there were any plans to upgrade the jetty at Seafield Loch (Lochan Buic). Ian McKee (IM) answered that there were no plans as such. There were several comments about the number of visitors using Buic now for beaver spotting and could the bench at the end of Buic be replaced at the rocky outcrop at the top of the loch? DJ said he would try to do something about this. SJ and Roisin Campbell-Palmer (RCP) also commented that they had previously approached the angling club re: repairs of the jetty and they had declined financial support for SBT use, but SBT partners are still happy to assist with repairs.
- Kate Moody (KM) asked about waymarking around Loch Coille Bharr – is it clearly marked all the way round? IM said he would check the marking. Also the map on the interpretation panel at the car park is due to be changed to hopefully solve the orientation problem of the map.

## 5. Update on Beaver Trial Monitoring Programme – Karen Taylor, Scottish Natural Heritage

- The final write up of trial data will happen in 2014-15 and the monitoring reports will be available on the SNH website as they are published. There are currently 12 independent monitoring reports on the website at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/safeguarding-biodiversity/reintroducing-native-species/scottish-beaver-trial/the-monitoring-programme/>
- Karen Taylor (KT) gave a presentation on Fluvial Geomorphology (how watercourses take their form and shape) Study – looking at any changes to the rivers and if the beavers have had an impact on them to quantify effects beavers are having. – Two surveys were carried out in 2008 and 2010, no significant change in woody debris found in the waterways in and around the Knapdale lochs.

## 6. Open Q & A session.

- JA asked SNH about the study into the Tay beaver numbers ? KT answered that the results of the 2012 Tay beaver survey had been completed and that the commissioned report is nearly ready to be published on the SNH website.
- JA asked what the budget of the SBT is now? SJ answered that the budget has not changed and is still in the region of £2M with £1.7m secured funding.
- JA said that she has been giving her holiday cottage guests a feedback survey and asking if they have heard about the SBT before coming to this area, their answer is mainly no. She feels that the name Knapdale is not a recognised name and she would like to see more mention of Achnamara in the literature and website.

### **ACTION POINT 1: SJ to look at this issue.**

- JA also stated her displeasure of SBT using the name Lochan Buic rather than calling it Seafield loch as she feels this is the local name. Others feel that it is important to go with the name used on the OS map which is Lochan Buic.
- KM asked what the welcome pack would consist of. SJ offered to forward a draft out for comment. **ACTION POINT 2: SJ to forward draft Visitor Welcome pack.**
- SJ also mentioned that if accommodation providers have guests wishing to pay for a private beaver watching session to get in touch.

## 7. AOCB

None

## 8. Date of next meeting.

Late March – specifics TBC

**Attendees:-**

Councillor Sandy Taylor, Argyll & Bute Council (Chair)  
Colin Galbraith, SBT Steering Group  
Simon Jones, Scottish Beaver Trial  
Karen Taylor, Scottish Natural Heritage  
Marina Curran Coulthart, Argyll & Bute Council LBAP Officer  
Michael West?, Student with Kilmartin House Museum  
Kate Moody, Kilmartin House Museum  
Kay Lindsay, Argyllshire Advertiser  
Megan Love?, Argyllshire Advertiser  
James Livingston  
Jane Allen, Seafield Farm Cottages  
Alex Howie, Scottish Canals  
Patrick Mackie, Argyll & Bute Council  
Roisin Campbell-Palmer, Scottish Beaver Trial  
Oly Hemmings, Scottish Beaver Trial (minutes)  
David Jardine, Forestry Commission Scotland  
Ian S. McKee, Forestry Commission Scotland  
Dave Batty, Natural History Antiquarian Society Mid Argyll

**Apologies:-**

Stan Phillips, Scottish Natural Heritage  
Jamie Mellor (NFUS)  
Andrew Taylor (Scottish Government)  
Gidona Goodman (Royal Dick Vet)  
Hamish Muirhead  
Nick Ball  
Annemiek Hoogenboom (People's Postcode Lottery)  
Lucy Sumsion (NFUS)  
Drew MacFarlane-Slack (Scottish Land & Estates)  
Peter Slann  
Lady Fiona Campbell Byatt  
Pauline Lynch  
Alan Hurst