



Appendix 2.1

This document was produced by RSPB Scotland for the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Beaver release strategy RSPB Insh Marshes

Under the condition that Cairngorms National Park Authority acquires all required licenses, and based on The Beaver Trust's advice, RSPB Scotland agrees to facilitate the release of up to three Beaver families on RSPB Scotland Insh Marshes Nature Reserve in February-April 2024. A less preferred window of opportunity for beaver releases, due to more likely flooding events, is identified in September-October 2024. This release strategy is subject to changes due to unpredictable weather conditions and the availability of trapped beavers. The strategy will need a review following any release, informed by the monitoring of the released animals. Revised strategies may include the release of more beaver families within the 5-year scope of the Park Authority's anticipated license to establish a self-sustaining population.

Site selection

The Beaver Trust identified the most ecologically suitable release sites on RSPB Scotland's Insh Marshes Nature Reserve (Site Selection Report). Following conversations with neighbouring landowners and taking into account any concerns raised, RSPB Scotland agreed on an initial release of beaver families at three of the suitable release locations (See figure 1). These locations were selected to encourage release site fidelity as that would simplify follow up monitoring and planning mitigation efforts. RSPB Scotland only wants to release beaver families on sites most suitable to support a beaver territory, while it is accepted that the released animals will explore a large area and may settle anywhere, with varying likelihood, within or even outwith the reserve boundary. This was also communicated to neighbouring landowners during initial conversations

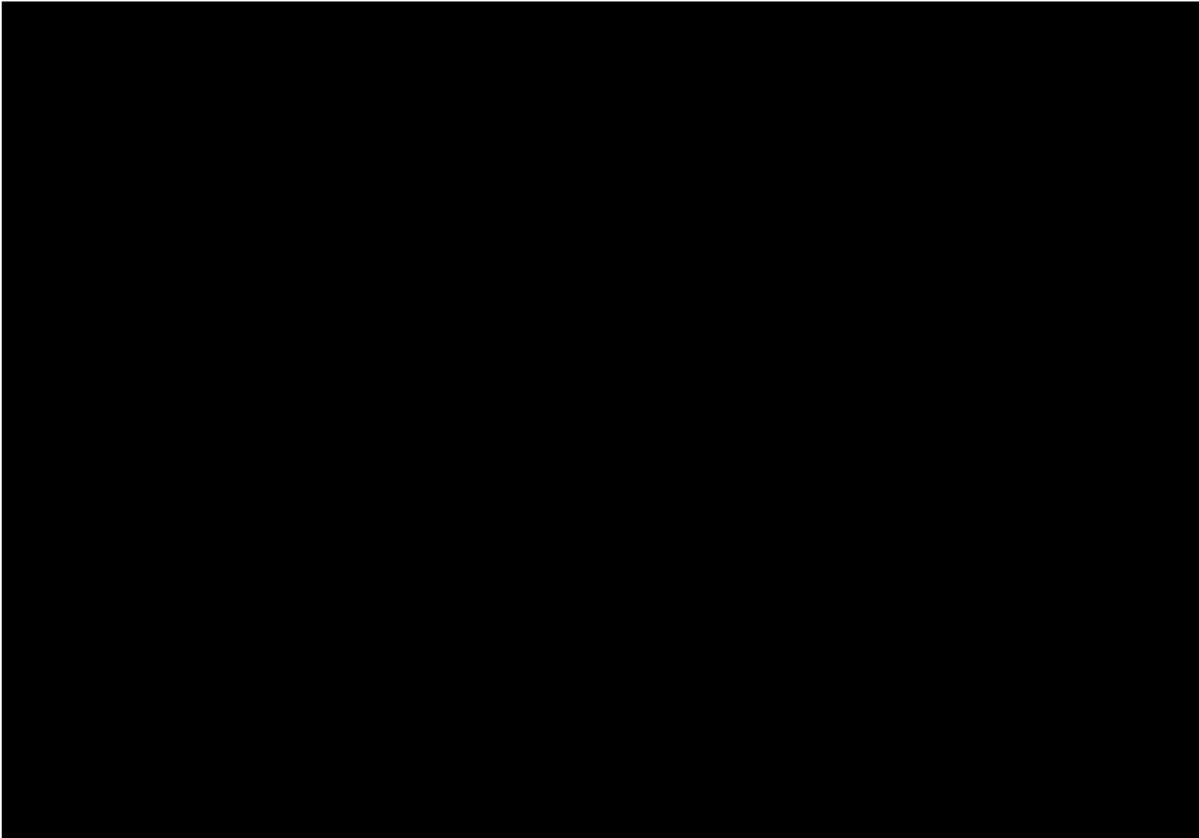


Figure 1. Map of selected beaver release locations [redacted]

Table 1. Overview of release locations

Release location	Name	Grid reference	Preferred for families with dependent young	Impact by flooding
1	[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]	[redacted]	Yes	Medium
2	[redacted] [redacted]	[redacted]	No	High
3	[redacted] [redacted]	[redacted]	Yes	High



Dependent young

[REDACTED] (release site 2) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. RSPB Scotland does therefore not prioritise this site for a beaver pair with dependent young based on The Beaver Trust's advice. The other two sites will preferably see the release of pairs with dependent young to the benefit of the establishing a self-sustaining beaver population. This will be subject to the available beaver pairs however, and pairs without dependent young can also be considered for these release sites.

Timing of releases

By determining the timing of the releases, RSPB Scotland wants to increase the likelihood of successful establishment in the system, preferably on the reserve. RSPB Scotland wants to avoid releases to occur before a lengthy period of harsh weather and a high risk of consecutive flood events. November to January is often characterised by consecutive floods and/or unpredictable weather changes. This period has therefore been excluded from the release period (See table 2). Even if a good spell of weather is predicted in this period, RSPB Scotland determines the risk of a sudden change of the conditions too high. This is based on an assessment of historic flooding patterns. Beaver releases should therefore ideally happen as late as possible within the trapping season, with the added benefit that young are more developed. Releases outwith the excluded period will still be dependent on the forecasted weather conditions and advice from The Beaver Trust. If all three beaver families cannot be caught and released in the shorter window available in spring, then a further release early in the trapping season in Autumn (September-October) could be considered. The need to evaluate weather conditions is higher in this period, but beavers could have enough time to establish before harsh weather conditions and floods become more predictable. Postponing releases until early spring also provides the RSPB and their neighbouring landowners with the opportunity to prepare for the arrival of beavers with the right level of advice and support from the Park Authority and NatureScot.



Table 2. Time schedule for beaver releases.

Flood risk: red = high, orange = medium, yellow = low, green = unlikely

Beaver release period: green = preferred, orange = optional (weather dependent), red = excluded

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Trapping season	Grey	Grey	Grey	White	White	White	White	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
Flood risk	Red	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red
Beaver release period	Red	Orange	Green	Green	White	White	White	White	Orange	Orange	Red	Red

Prioritisation

RSPB Scotland would prefer releases on all sites to happen within a brief time frame to maximise the chances of territory establishment on the reserve. This is especially important for release location 2 and 3 because both release sites are likely be included in a territory established at either location. If this is not possible due to the availability of animals, release site 1 should be prioritised, increasing the likelihood for the other two release sites to stay available for a later release. Release site 2 should be prioritised if a pair without dependent young is available for release. RSPB Scotland is aware that the time constraints will mean logistical challenges for the translocations. In any case, RSPB would prefer to reduce the initial number of beaver pairs released to increase the chance of a successful translocation.

Planning

RSPB Scotland needs to be informed about a release promptly to accommodate the preparation of release sites, in particular when a temporary shelter and additional food supply are needed on advice from The Beaver Trust. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. A formal pre-release site visit will have to be made to evaluate the release including the exact location.

*Dependent young: Less than a year old.