



## Appendix 6

### Record of site visit to area around Nethy Bridge and the meeting held at Laggan Village Hall

Sarah Henshall, Head of Conservation, 18 October 2023

#### Record of visit with Nethy Bridge farmers

**27 September 2023**

Following on from concerns raised by [REDACTED] ([REDACTED], Nethy Bridge) a meeting was held between the Park Authority, [REDACTED] and three other local farmers on 23 August 2023. Subsequent discussions at the Nethy Bridge public and fisheries beaver engagement event led to the organisation of a site visit to [REDACTED], Nethy Bridge to discuss concerns and view the land and flood banks. The site visit was attended by:

- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

John Kirk - [REDACTED], Nethy Bridge and Park Authority Board Member

Ali McKnight - Agroecology farm advisor

Kirsten Brewster - NatureScot

Roisin Cambell - Palmer- Beaver Trust

Jonathan Willet - CNPA Beaver Project Manager

Sarah Henshall - CNPA Head of Conservation

Lewis Pate - CNPA Farm Conservation Advisor

This note captures the substantive concerns raised by this group of six landowners and farmers at the meeting and action points, so that they can be incorporated into the beaver translocation engagement report and licence submission. The note does not provide responses or solutions to the concerns raised. When the 'group' is referred to in this document it relates to the views of the six landowners and farmers listed above.



1. The level of concern from this group of landowners regarding the re-introduction of the beavers is very high. This concern specifically relates to the potential damage to the flood banks, damming of drainage ditches and subsequent risk of flooding to productive agricultural land. Concern was also raised regarding the potential impact of beavers on grant funded riparian planting schemes.
2. Greatest concern was voiced in relation to the potential for beaver burrowing activities to compromise flood bank integrity and function especially during flood events. If flood banks are 'blown', productive agricultural land on the floodplain will be inundated, fences could be damaged, and the land strewn with flood debris. Livelihoods could be significantly impacted, and subsequent costs being laid with the landowner
3. The flood banks in this area are constructed of soil, they are routinely checked and maintained by landowners and tenant farmers. This involves checking for rabbit, mole and badger burrows, keeping it free from trees and repairing damage or erosion where required.
4. The flood banks have been breached and over topped in the past (most recently on 8 October 2023, resulting in considerable damage to land and livelihoods in this area. The flood banks, drainage system and flap valves are critical to protecting this land and reducing the impacts of flood events.
5. The cost of maintaining and repairing the flood banks is currently the responsibility of the landowner or tenant (example of [REDACTED] agreement tenancy provided by [REDACTED]). This can be very costly; it is strongly felt that if the banks are damaged by beaver the cost of repair should not be borne the landowner / tenant.
6. The group felt that the current NatureScot beaver mitigation is reactive rather than proactive and that scheme is not adequately funded. It does not cover the costs associated with major flood bank failure nor does it cover landowner management time or costs incurred to carry out other mitigation measures such as dam removal.
7. NatureScot explained the current beaver mitigation scheme, how it works and what it covers. The Park Authority confirmed that the Beaver Project Manager will provide additional support for landowners in terms of advice, help with licensing administration and delivery of mitigation measures.
8. The Park Authority's support was welcomed however it was highlighted they would like to see a long-term commitment ie 20-30 years plus to provide reassurance that future farming generations will be supported.



9. There were unanimous calls from the group for the development of a compensation scheme for damage to productive agricultural land and remuneration for repair of flood banks – by either an uplifted NatureScot beaver mitigation scheme or a bespoke fund provided by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. With regards to any potential additional resources, they have asked NatureScot and the Park Authority to pose this question to senior representatives at Scottish Government, asking them to clarify more detail on the resources are being committed and on what timescale?

*Action: NatureScot and the Park Authority to relay concerns raised by the group to senior management within their organisations and for them to seek an opportunity to raise with Scottish Government. Specifically asking if additional resource will be made available if the flood bank is damaged by beaver?*

10. Examples of damage to flood banks and breaches in the Tay catchment were discussed, NatureScot confirmed that they had only been made aware of two cases of suspected beaver related damage. Given the size of the population and presence of beavers for over a decade in the catchment, the impact on flood banks was low, but perception of potential damage is high.
11. The likelihood of beavers burrowing into flood banks along the Spey was discussed, the Beaver Trust explained that it will be dependent on the proximity of flood banks to the Spey along with quality and quantity of riparian habitat.
12. Beaver burrowing activity may not be detected as the burrow entrances can be below the water surface. Making it difficult to determine if flood bank damage or breach is due to beaver activity.

*Action: The Park Authority to map the location of flood banks and their proximity to the Spey, this data to be overlaid with beaver habitat to identify areas of higher potential risk.*

*Action: The Park Authority will commission walk over survey of the flood banks to establish current condition.*

13. Concern was raised about the potential of beaver damming ditches and blocking the flaps valves. All agreed that if a dam was built in front of a flap valve that it would need to be removed promptly as per the mitigation scheme with the support of the Park Authority Beaver Project Manager.



14. Monitoring of beaver activity and sharing information when beavers arrive in this area. The Park Authority, working with partners, will be responsible for closely monitoring beaver activity. Monitoring results will be shared publicly at an appropriate resolution. In areas where beaver impacts are potentially high risk, such as here, information will be shared with landowners directly, promptly and additional monitoring put in place to establish the level of impact, if any.
15. Uncertainty over future farming subsidies was raised and call for future schemes to include payments for riparian margin management and beavers. The group felt landowners and farmers should be incentivised to farm alongside beavers.
16. Concern that riparian planting schemes could be damaged or fail due to beaver browsing. An option could be increasing the planting density, change the species mix and/or consider planting sacrificial willow between the river and planting scheme. The Park Authority could potentially provide top-up funding.
17. The group acknowledged that beavers could bring benefits in some areas in the National Park. However, in areas with productive agricultural land and flood banks they feel the risk and potential impacts are unacceptably high. The group asked for a beaver exclusion zone to be considered, where beavers removed and translocated elsewhere. The proposed zone would include low-lying farmland adjacent to the Spey between Nethy Bridge and Boat of Garten and the flood plain of the Dulnain between Carrbridge and Dulnain Bridge.
18. There was broad support and interest in the establishment of a Cairngorms Farmers Forum to share information and provide a forum for discussion about beaver and other conservation related farming topics.

*Action: Lewis Pate and Ali McKnight to explore what a farmer led forum could look like and how the Park Authority could support and facilitate it.*

19. The Park Authority is arranging two further visits to South Clunes in November, this will provide an opportunity to visit a farm with beavers and speak with a farmer living and working alongside beavers since 2008. John Kirk has already visited the farm and found it hugely informative and encouraged the rest of the group to do so too.

*Action: The Park Authority to confirm dates of visit and extend invite to members of this group.*

Ends.



## Record of meeting with Laggan farmers, crofters and residents

12 October 2023

[REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) raised concerns about potential beaver impacts on farmland in Laggan via discussion with Cairngorms National Park Authority, NatureScot and Beaver Trust staff at the informal beaver blether at Kincaig on the 1 March and the formal public engagement event at Kingussie on 30 August. The Park Authority offered to follow up discussions with a site visit, [REDACTED] arranged a meeting at Laggan Village Hall on 12 October 12-2pm and invited local landowners, farmers/crofters and interested parties to attend. This meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the Park Authorities plans to bring beavers back to the Cairngorms and hear concerns. The meeting was attended by:

- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

- John Kirk - [REDACTED], Nethy Bridge and CNPA Board Member
- Ian Wilson - NFUS
- Jonathan Willet – Park Authority Beaver Project Manager
- Sarah Henshall – Park Authority Head of Conservation
- Lewis Pate – Park Authority Farm Conservation Advisor

This note captures the substantive concerns raised by this group of landowners, farmers / crofters and residents at the meeting. The note does not provide responses or



solutions, it captures the nature of the concerns and action points so that they can be incorporated into the engagement report and licence submission. When the 'group' is referred to in this document it relates to the views of the 17 farmers / crofters and residents listed above.

1. The level of concern from this group of landowners, farmers / crofters and residents regarding the re-introduction of the beavers is very high. They were disappointed that a formal engagement event was not held in Laggan as per in Kingussie and Kincaig.
2. Their concerns specifically relate to the potential impacts on low-lying productive agricultural land in Laggan, through damage to the flood bank, damming of ditches and burns and subsequent blow outs and debris, flooding and fence damage. Concern was also raised regarding the potential impact of beavers on grant funded riparian planting schemes and other conservation initiatives and priorities including soil health.
3. Video footage taken after floods at the weekend (7/8 October) by Martin Kennedy (NFUS) showing a flood bank breach in Tayside was shown to the group by [REDACTED]. Martin's opinion is that it was due to beaver burrowing, although this has not been confirmed. NatureScot has confirmed that up until the end of September 2023 they had only been made aware of two cases of suspected beaver related damage to flood banks in the Tay catchment. Given the size of the population and presence of beavers for over a decade in the catchment, the impact on the flood bank was low, but perception of potential damage is high.
4. The group felt that the current NatureScot beaver mitigation scheme is reactive rather than proactive and that scheme is not adequately funded. It does not cover the costs associated with major flood bank failure. The cost of repairing flood banks, fencing or other potential beaver damage could be prohibitive and could be beyond the capability of the farmers to cover. This has the potential to negatively affect livelihoods.
5. It was acknowledged by the group that the mitigation scheme does provide measures to address some beaver impacts, however a significant concern is the potential financial (and time) burden to be borne by the farmers/ crofters. The Park Authority confirmed that the Beaver Project Manager will provide additional support for landowners in terms of advice, help with licensing administration and delivery of mitigation measures.



*Action: The Park Authority to confirm what would their response times be in relation to initial enquiries and then mitigation action?*

6. The Park Authorities' support was welcomed however it was highlighted the need for a long-term commitment and plan for beaver management in the Park ie 10-20-30 years plus to provide reassurance that future farming generations will be supported. Scotland's Beaver Strategy covers the 2022-2045.
7. Uncertainty over future farming subsidies was raised and call for future schemes to include payments for riparian margin management and beavers. Landowners and farmers should be incentivised to farm alongside beavers.
8. The scale of beaver impacts will be geographically and temporally variable depending on beaver habitat suitability, damming capacity, land use and beaver distribution.

*Action: Park Authority to send beaver habitat and dam maps to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for distribution to those attending the meeting.*

9. Concerns were aired regarding beaver impacts and RPID grants and subsidies, also Scottish Forestry grants for riparian tree planting.

*Action: The Park Authority to ask Scottish Forestry the question about riparian trees that have been planted and payment if they have been beaver-felled.*

10. The group asked about SEPA's role in mitigation – what would their position and role be in relation to mechanical removal of dams? Concern over SEPA being prohibitive on protected sites. The Park Authority confirmed that SEPA are a supporting organisation of Scotland's Beaver Strategy 2022-45, but do not have a role in the implementation of the beaver mitigation scheme.

*Action: The Park Authority to ask SEPA what would their position and role is in relation to mechanical removal of beaver dams?*

11. The group suggested zoning of beavers on a risk-based approach. An exclusion zone in Laggan was unanimously supported by those attending the meeting. This was to ensure the protection of flood banks, fencing and productive agricultural land. Ian Wilson, NFUS cautioned for a fuzzy boundary and hard lines on map would not be helpful in the long term.
12. The group called for Park Authority to be transparent and the need to build trust with farmers and crofters in Laggan. A clear timeline was given regarding the timescale for the licence submission and the subsequent process should the licence application be granted.



13. There was interest in visiting a site with beavers and speaking to farmers living with beavers. Tayside was discussed but it was agreed that visiting a site more akin to the Cairngorms would be more useful. The Park Authority is arranging two further visits to South Clune in November, this will provide an opportunity to visit a farm with beavers and speak with a farmer living and working alongside beavers for more than ten years. John Kirk has already visited the farm and found it hugely informative and encouraged the rest of the group to do so too when the opportunity arises.

*Action: The Park Authority to confirm dates and circulate invite to the group.*

Ends.