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Bringing beavers back to the Cairngorms National Park

Engagement report

20 October 2023



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



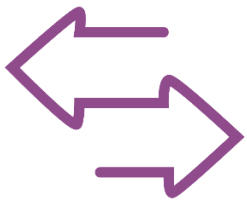
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Summary of formal engagement activity

14 August to 25 September 2023



42

days of formal
engagement



515

online survey
respondents



393

comments
received, online
or at events



104

attendees at
events



84,833

people reached
on social media



2,537

likes, reacts and
shares



33,688

video views



18

site visits with
landowners and
managers



Introduction

Background to bringing beavers back to the Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is working closely with a range of partners and land managers on a carefully considered proposal to reintroduce beavers to the upper Spey catchment to establish a founder population to create a self-sustaining population of beavers in the Spey catchment.

Through the Cairngorms Beaver Group, the Cairngorms National Park Authority has been working with key stakeholders to take this proposal forward. The group was established in 2017 to advise and plan for the arrival of beavers to the National Park. It includes representatives from a wide range of backgrounds and sectors, including land management, conservation bodies, fisheries and farmers. Members include the Cairngorms National Park Authority, National Farmers Union of Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, Spey Fishery Board, Spey Catchment Initiative, Dee Catchment Partnership, River Dee Trust, Forest and Land Scotland, RSPB Scotland and NatureScot.

Over the last 12 months the Park Authority has been listening and learning about the opportunities and issues beavers can create. Speaking to land managers and farmers living alongside beavers, and those who have gone through the process of translocating beavers. The Park Authority has been undertaking site visits in the upper Spey catchment, having conversations with private landowners, businesses, community interests and have had extensive engagement with potential release site owners. As part of ongoing farm visits our Farm Conservation Advisor has also been speaking with farmers in Badenoch and Strathspey about beavers.

Overview of the engagement

As part of the proposal to return beavers to the Cairngorms National Park, the Park Authority wanted to hear the thoughts and opinions from as broad a cross-section of our communities as possible. This includes people working on or managing the land, people accessing our rivers and lochs for recreation, people living and working in our towns and villages, people owning or working for local businesses, and much more. The Park Authority has not only engaged with people living or working in the immediate vicinity of potential release sites, but throughout the Spey catchment and beyond.

The Park Authority has used a variety of formats from online and printed materials, drop-in events held in locations throughout the Spey catchment, visits with land managers to an area with beavers, site visits to hear concerns on the ground and talks to local interest groups.

This report provides a summary of our engagement activities and presents those views both in support of bringing back beavers but also those that have concerns and / or don't support the proposal.

Informal engagement

The Park Authority undertook a period of informal engagement which had four main aims:

- To test our engagement strategy methods.
- To outline our proposals to return beaver to the National Park and engage people in the process.
- To gauge the level of understanding about beavers.
- To gain more understanding about the opportunities but also the concerns people might have.

The Park Authority ran four drop-in events – or 'beaver blethers' – which were attended by 80 people in total. All were open to everyone, but one was aimed specifically at land managers. Representatives from the Park Authority, NatureScot local area staff and mitigation team, National Farmers' Union Scotland, The Beaver Trust and Argaty Red Kites Centre were present. These events aimed to provide information in an informal and open way and were held in Kincaig, Aviemore and Kingussie. These locations were chosen as areas where the most suitable beaver habitat was identified and so potential release areas.

- Wednesday 1 March 2023 – Community Hall, Kincaig.
- Thursday 9 March 2023 – Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie.
- Thursday 16 March 2023 – Community Hall, Kincaig.
- Wednesday 22 March 2023 – Aviemore Youth Hostel, Aviemore.

The learnings from these early events informed the formal engagement process, which commenced in summer 2023. A report on this engagement process is available in appendix 9.

Website

The beaver project page on the Park Authority website went live on Thursday 16 February 2023 and served as a hub for all information relating to the project. Updated regularly, the website contains an overview of the proposed plans, the history behind the project, links to publications and reports, frequently asked questions, information about beavers, information about the beaver mitigation scheme and contact details should people want to get in touch.

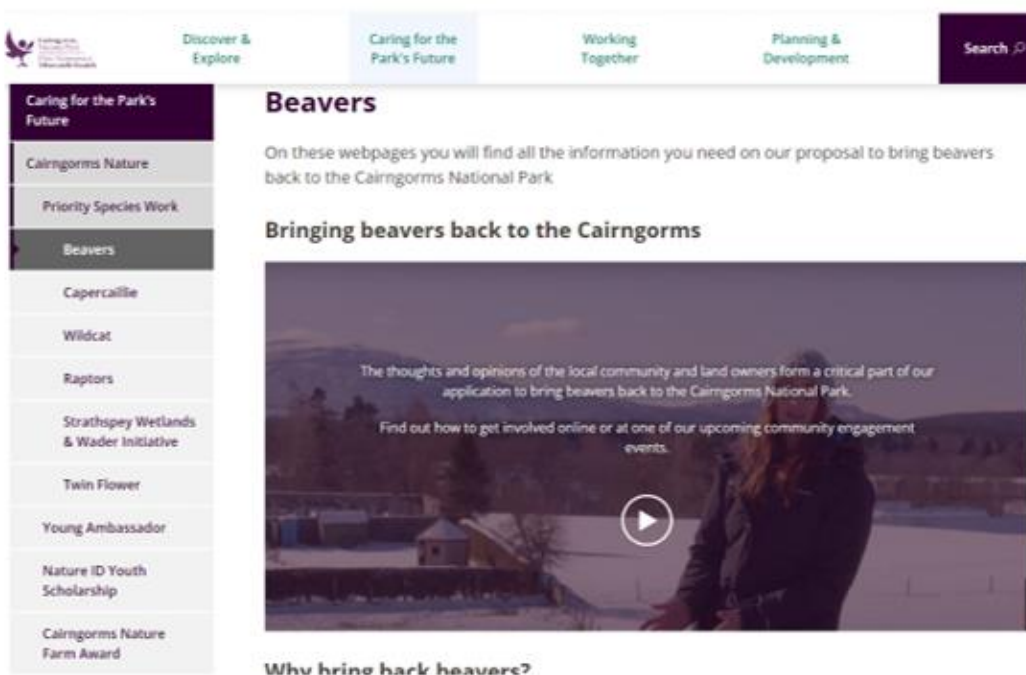


Image 1 - Screenshot of beaver website, which served as a hub for all information relating to the project.

All engagement directed people to the website page and, during the formal engagement period, a link to the stakeholder survey was hosted here. People were encouraged to read more about the project before filling out the survey and asked if they had done so in the survey itself. For anyone who arrived at the SurveyMonkey webpage without having visited the project page first, there was a link in the survey introduction and a section encouraging people to read more first, to ensure that people were as informed as possible in advance of completing the survey.

Google Analytics has collected information from 3 March 2023. All values are lower than reality as only users who accept cookies are recorded, but can be used as an indication



of trends, demonstrating that traffic increased significantly with promotion relating to the engagement period.

Views	Users	Views per user	Returning users	Average engagement time
1,665	953	1.75	283	1m 40s

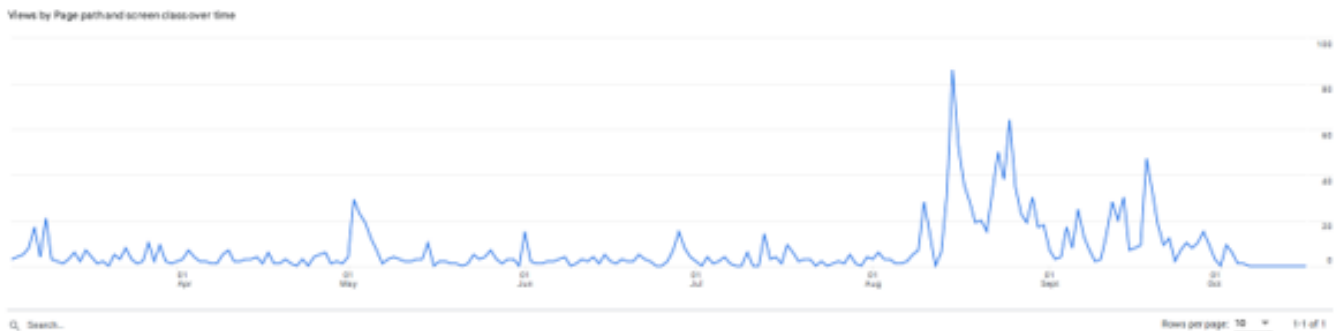


Image 2 - Table and graph showing number of website page views and data between 3 March 2023 - 16 October 2023

How the engagement was promoted

The engagement period was promoted across a range of media and outlets to ensure as many people as possible were aware and able to participate. This included social media, posters, local and national press, website highlights, direct emails, leaflets, partner support, our residents' magazine *Cairn* and more.

To ensure that the engagement was promoted offline as well as digitally, posters, leaflets, local press and articles in the National Park's residents' magazine were all taken forward during the engagement period.

All promotion, digital and offline, was created to specific accessibility standards through implementing measures such as captions on videos, alt-text on images, and print size and contrast in printed media.

Social media

To support the communication of the project's progress and the formal engagement, a coordinated social media plan was developed. Utilising Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, this included a [suite of videos](#) featuring a range of perspectives from key partners and experts, regular updates and prompts to get involved. This proved hugely successful at engaging with people, and the videos in particular reached thousands of



people, over 33,000 views in total. Part of this success was down to the active approach taken towards community management, where comments were flagged by the team, responses coordinated and then posted quickly.

Table 1 - Showing engagement data for social media posts across both Cairngorms National Park and Cairngorms Nature channels.

	Informal engagement	Formal engagement
Posts	47	64
Impressions (the number of times our content was seen, including multiple views from individual users)	159,550	155,024
Reach (the number of unique people who saw our content)	70,944	84,833
Engagements (the number of times that people engaged with our content through reactions, comments, shares and clicks etc)	6,201	6,310
Video views	5,971	33,688
Likes / reactions	2,056	2,252
Shares	286	285
Comments	47	46
Link clicks (cairngorms.co.uk/beavers)	987	770

Posters and leaflets

Posters outlining the event details were put up across the region, from Dalwhinnie through Laggan and Newtonmore into Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Carrbridge, Dulnain Bridge, Cromdale and as far as Tomintoul and Glenlivet.

Leaflets were also printed and distributed to local outlets to support the engagement, outlining the key elements of the project, frequently asked questions and how to contact us for more information or if people had concerns. You can see one side of the first edition leaflet design below.



Frequently asked questions

Where are beavers located in Scotland?

There are two main beaver populations at present. The first, smaller population is in mid-Argyll, the result of the Scottish Beaver Trial which ran from 2009 to 2014.

A second, larger population exists further east in the Tay and Earn catchments, derived from accidental or illegal releases in the early 2000s. NatureScot has approved two further applications to move beavers in Perthshire and Loch Lomond.

Will beavers damage trees?

Beavers have strong incisors which enable them to gnaw and fell trees, providing a natural coppicing service. Beaver impacts tend to be restricted to within 20-30m of a water course but a variety of mitigation measures can be applied to protect trees.

Will my land be flooded?

Beavers depend upon water to live and create dams on shallow, low-energy waterways which can cause localised flooding. NatureScot can give advice on a range of mitigation options.

Email beavers@nature.scot or call 01463 725 364 for more information.

Will they affect fish populations?

Contrary to popular belief, beavers do not eat fish – they're vegetarian. The species has lived side-by-side with freshwater fish for millions of years and studies show that fish can benefit, with an increase in food and shelter in beaver wetlands. We're working with the Spey Fishery Board to explore any impacts on Atlantic salmon.



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To find out more about the project
and for all the latest news:

🌐 cairngorms.co.uk/beavers
✉ nature@cairngorms.co.uk
☎ 01479 873 535



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Beavers in the
Cairngorms
National Park

Image 3 - Image showing beaver leaflet produced to support engagement activities.

Press releases

A series of press releases were issued to ensure the press were informed of the project and process. These received a good amount of attention, resulting in a television interview as well as coverage in print both locally and nationally.

- 16 February 2023 – Park Talk: Bringing back beavers – CEO's column on project rationale and announcing informal engagement and beaver blether dates.
- 17 February 2023 – Come for a blether about beavers – promoting project and informal engagement beaver blether event and dates.
- 9 August 2023 – Bringing beavers back to the Cairngorms National Park - announcing formal engagement events and potential release sites.
- 18 September 2023 – Final call for views on bringing back beavers – engagement closing soon, directing people to website and survey.
- 27 September 2023 – Next steps for beavers in the Cairngorms National Park - marking the end of formal engagement and headline statistics.



Press coverage

The project has received widespread interest across local and national news platforms, including an interview with STV News at the start of the formal engagement which aired on 10 August 2023 on the 6pm news. This featured our Head of Conservation encouraging people to engage in the process and highlighted the importance of hearing the thoughts and opinions of land managers, communities and businesses.

The local paper for Badenoch and Strathspey is the Strathspey Herald which has substantial reach locally, with a circulation of 2,296 and readership of 5,344. This paper played a helpful role in communicating the engagement to local residents. Key articles included:

- 25 November 2023 – Move to return beavers to Badenoch and Strathspey continues – Board announcement of our leadership on the project.
- 20 February 2023 – Beavers nearing return to Cairngorms after absence of 400 years – introducing the project and details of informal blethers.
- 10 July 2023 – Plans moving forward for reintroduction of beavers - informal engagement ended.
- 10 August 2023 – Next steps could see beavers return by this autumn - sites named and details of blethers.
- 17 August 2023 – Kincaig is beavering away – first engagement event launched.
- 25 August 2023 – Badenoch and Strathspey beavering away for return of lost species – coverage of first engagement event and promoting the rest.
- 22 September 2023 – Log your thoughts on reintroduction of beavers in Badenoch and Strathspey – last call for engagement in survey.
- 28 September 2023 – Lost species takes step nearer to return to wild in the Cairngorms National Park - formal engagement ended and summary of key findings.

Cairn residents' magazine

Cairn is a magazine for the residents of the Cairngorms National Park produced by the Park Authority. It is distributed three times a year and goes out to all 11,702 households within the National Park boundary. The beaver project was covered in a full-page feature in the March edition (delivered from 27 March 2023), which introduced the project, covered the informal beaver blethers and explained the upcoming formal engagement process. It also included an interview with Roisin Campbell-Palmer of The



Beaver Trust on reintroducing beavers and her experiences with the Scottish Beaver Trial.

Beavers

Bringing back beavers

Beavers have been missing from the Cairngorms – and much of Scotland – since the 16th century but all that is about to change with a new reintroduction project on the upper Spey.

They are often called 'nature's engineers' – a species with a unique ability to shape the landscape around them. To restore and create new wetlands, to naturally coppice trees to regenerate woodland and to improve habitats for a wide range of species. Beavers may have been missing from the Cairngorms National Park for 400 years but soon they will be back at work.

Last year Scottish Government announced its support for moving beavers outside of their current range to help the species re-establish across

Scotland. Here in the Cairngorms, the Park Authority board decided in June that we should coordinate the reintroduction of beavers to the area, informed by research and feedback from partners in the Cairngorms Beaver Group. The project will initially focus on the upper Spey catchment, an area that has been identified by independent experts as being highly suitable for beavers.

Across the UK around 90% of wetlands have been lost in the past century. These are places which store and clean our water, capture carbon and provide a habitat for young fish, insects, amphibians, mammals and birds. They are hugely important both for nature and for the fight against climate change, and beavers create them instinctively, without the need for major intervention by people.

It's important to recognise, though, that much has changed in our landscape since beavers were last here and we need to be mindful of their potential impacts. Over the past month we have held a series of 'Beaver Blethers' across Badenoch and Strathspey to give residents and land managers a chance to hear about our plans and to find out more about mitigation measures that are available via our partners NatureScot. These sessions will be followed by a six-week formal engagement programme starting in May.

We will also continue discussions with Cairngorms Beaver Group partners including the Spey Fishery Board, farming and other land management bodies to help inform a final licence application to NatureScot to move beavers to the National Park, likely later on this year.



Image 4 – Showing full page story in spring 2023 edition of Cairn magazine introducing the project.

The July edition of *Cairn*, which landed from 31 July 2023, announced the formal engagement was to be starting in August.



Nature news



Beaver blethers

A six-week formal engagement on beavers starts in early August, giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts on the return of the species to the upper Spey. The drop-in sessions will give residents and land managers a chance to hear about our proposals, ask any questions and explore any issues that need to be addressed.

Quite the catch

Feargal Sharkey, former Undertones frontman and passionate angler, has lent his support to the Spey Catchment Initiative. Newly launched as a charity, the initiative works closely with communities and land managers to deliver vital river restoration projects. They plan to restore large stretches of the river over the coming years and we are proud to partner with such a proactive organisation, addressing key environmental issues on the Spey. Find out more at speycatchment.org



Peatland progress

The Park Authority's Peatland Action team have helped deliver over 1,000 hectares of peatland restoration in a single year for the first time. Working closely with landowners and land managers across the National Park, the team completed 15 projects across 10 different estates. Activity focused on blocking man-made drains, re-vegetating and re-wetting actively eroding areas.



Image 5 - Showing short story in summer 2023 edition of Cairn magazine announcing the start of the formal engagement process.

The winter edition of *Cairn* summarised the formal engagement period, and described the next steps of the project.

Beaver away

Beavers could be a step closer to returning after an absence of over 400 years, with the Park Authority about to submit a licence application to relocate beavers from Tayside to three locations in the upper River Spey catchment.

The first sites identified for potential releases are Rothiemurchus, Wildland Cairngorms and RSPB Scotland Insh Marshes. A six-week formal engagement period with residents, farmers, land managers and other stakeholders finished at the end of September. Over 100 people attended

six public events and 500 people responded to our online survey. Just under three quarters of survey respondents were supportive of the species returning to the National Park; however, the need for clear mitigation measures was also raised by a number of land managers.

We are currently compiling a report on the public engagement process and this will form a critical part of the licence application to NatureScot. We hope to have a decision in November and, if approved, the process of bringing beavers back could begin before the end of this year. For more information on the project go to cairngorms.co.uk/beaver

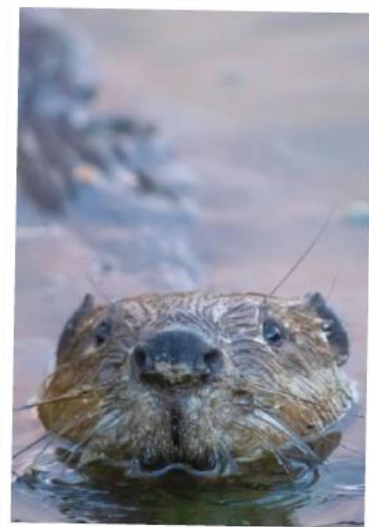


Image 6 - Showing half page story in winter 2023 edition of Cairn magazine announcing the imminent licence submission to NatureScot.



Formal engagement

Engagement events

Just before the launch of the formal engagement, the Granttown Agricultural Show was attended on 10 August 2023. This was a dry run for the six formal engagement events. The stand was shared with other staff from the Park Authority and a couple of partners. Over the course of the event, the Beaver Project Manager and Farm Conservation Advisor had 20 direct interactions and discussions about beavers with farmers and members of the public.

Six drop-in engagement events were undertaken during the formal engagement process. In order to ensure that key stakeholder groups were covered, some events were tailored to a specific audience, while still being open to the general public. The exception was the event at the Tipi in Inverdrue on 7 September 2023, which was coordinated by the Cairngorms Business Partnership and specifically targeted business owners within Badenoch and Strathspey. Businesses were communicated with about the proposals and the opportunity to engage through the promotion of this event, whether or not they were able to attend.

Table 2 - Showing attendance numbers at each formal engagement events.

Date	Location	Focus audience	Attendance
17 August	Kincraig Community Hall		15
23 August	Nethybridge Hotel	Fisheries	6
30 August	Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie	Land managers and farmers	25
7 September	The Tipi, Inverdrue	Businesses	7
13 September	Grant Arms Hotel, Granttown on Spey		22
19 September	Aberlour Hotel		29

Representatives from the Park Authority including conservation, land management and ranger staff, NatureScot local operations officers and mitigation team, The Beaver Trust and National Farmers' Union Scotland were present at all events. Representatives from RSPB Scotland, Argaty Red Kites Centre and Argyll Wildlife Centre joined for select events. Members of the Park Authority board, including John Kirk, joined the events at Kingussie, Nethy Bridge and Granttown on Spey. Sandy Bremner (Convener) and Grant



Moir (CEO) were both present at the Nethy Bridge event. Andy Ford (Director of Nature and Climate Change) attended the Aberlour and Nethy Bridge events.



Image 4 - Showing Dr Roisin Campbell-Palmer of The Beaver Trust speaking to attendees at the Granttown on Spey engagement event.

Similar to the beaver blethers, the formal engagement events involved substantive discussions and high-quality engagement, with attendees staying for half an hour and sometimes much longer. Having multiple experts available allowed different viewpoints and opinions to be shared. The welcoming nature of the events with tea, coffee and biscuits available and a member of staff to greet those attending helped put people at ease and create an atmosphere that facilitated high-quality discussions. The fact that staff were there to hear people's thoughts and opinions rather than simply give out information was welcomed by those attending.

Not everyone attending was in favour of the proposal; however, in spite of this the tone of the discussions was robust but respectful throughout. All except a tiny minority of the attendees were polite and respectful in their interactions with staff.



There was a variety of materials available to read or interact with, including display boards, beaver exhibits (pelts, skulls, chewed sticks, beaver-chewed wood chips etc) and videos, providing a variety of media to allow people to engage in a way that suited them. The large beaver dam capacity and beaver habitat index maps proved to be an excellent engagement tool that acted as a springboard for further discussions about how and where beavers would spread within the catchment, or to highlight issues that may occur due to damming. As a result of these discussions, further site visits have been planned to discuss these issues in situ.



Image 5 - Showing map identifying beaver dam capacity, display and interpretive materials including 'Bryony' the beaver kit at the Granttown Show.

People's opinions on the project were gathered at these events through paper forms, allowing those who were unable to use the digital survey to give their thoughts. These responses were collated and summarised into table 3 below and detailed in appendix 10. It is important to note that some of these people commented they may also fill out



the online survey, so a number of responses listed below could be duplicated with those in the online survey results. Some attendees chose not to record their attendance by completing a form and will not be counted below.

Table 3 - Showing people's opinions on the project by completing paper forms at events and who may have been unable to complete the digital survey.

Very positive	38
No concerns	11
Some concerns	11
Against	1
No comment	31
School group	12
Total attendees	104

Other engagement

Arising from discussions at the formal engagement events themselves or from publicity around them, one meeting in Granttown on Spey and three site visits were arranged with farming and / or crofting groups in Nethy Bridge, Kingussie and Laggan.

A list of questions was sent to the Beaver Project Manager after the meeting in Granttown on Spey from [REDACTED] of [REDACTED]. These were answered in a formal response (see appendices 4 and 5) and another set of follow up questions was sent through which are in the process of being answered at the time of writing.

Nethy Bridge farmers

Following concerns raised with the Park Authority's Farm Conservation Advisor by the farming community in Nethy Bridge, a meeting was held on 23 September 2023 at the Grant Arms Hotel, Granttown on Spey, to discuss potential issues around beaver impacts, the mitigation scheme and the Park Authority's plans to bring beavers back to the Cairngorms. This meeting was attended by four farmers and two Park Authority staff members (the Beaver Project Manager and Director of Nature and Climate Change), John Kirk (farmer and Park Authority board member) and Ali McKnight (of AgroEcology, an independent local agricultural advisor). The action points from this meeting can be found in appendix 4. Further questions were sent to the Park Authority by [REDACTED] and the answers to these can be found in appendix 5.



Following on from this meeting, a site visit took place on 27 September 2023 at [REDACTED], [REDACTED] with five local farmers. Representatives from NatureScot, The Beaver Trust, Ali McKnight, Park Authority board member and local farmer John Kirk, Beaver Project Manager, Head of Conservation and Farm Conservation Advisor also attended. The meeting was arranged to see the land in situ and discuss flood banks and potential negative beaver impacts on productive agricultural land. Following the meeting the Park Authority agreed to map the proximity of the flood banks to the Spey in this area and lower Dulnain alongside suitable beaver habitat, identifying areas of high risk, and to commission a survey of the current condition of the flood bank. Please note: this has been delayed due to unprecedented flooding over the weekend 7 and 8 October 2023 and anticipated flooding due to storm Babet, this will be taken forward when flood water recedes and conditions are safe. A note of the meeting is also provided in appendix 6.

Kingussie farmers / crofters

Following social media interaction and subsequent email correspondence with a concerned local crofter in Kingussie, they attended the formal engagement event at Kingussie, staying for a number of hours and having substantive discussions with representatives from multiple organisations. This led to a request for a group site visit to look at the low-lying areas of Kingussie. A site visit took place on 14 September, five farmers / crofters along with the Park Authority's Beaver Project Manager and Director of Nature and Climate Change, RSPB Scotland and Ali McKnight. There was much discussions of risk to the 'main drain' being dammed and identified high risk areas where impacts would be acceptable and unacceptable and discussing potential monitoring and mitigation. It appeared a consensus on the approach to take should beavers colonise the area had been reached by the end of the meeting. There was no note taken of this informal and rather discursive meeting. An email sent on behalf of the crofters attending the meeting was received on 17 October 2023, overturning the views expressed at the site meeting and asking for a beaver exclusion zone in the area. See appendix 6.1.

Laggan farmers / crofters

Following attendance at the informal and formal engagement events at Kincaig and Kingussie, a meeting was arranged with farmers, crofters and landowners in the Laggan area at Laggan Village Hall on 12 October 2023. Seventeen members of the local farming and crofting community attended, along with the Park Authority's Beaver Project Manager, Head of Conservation, Farm Conservation Advisor, National Farmers' Union Scotland and Park Authority board member John Kirk. This was an opportunity to

hear the concerns of land managers and residents in this area. Specifically in relation to flood bank and impacts on farming (as above). A note of this meeting is provided in appendix 6.

Kingussie Shinty Club

Councillor and Park Authority board member Russell Jones requested a meeting at The Dell to discuss the potential beaver impacts on the riverbank. Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change, attended a meeting held at The Dell on 20 September 2023. A note of this meeting was not taken but the key agreed outcomes were:

1. Make sure the site is included in the 'hotspot' mapping that picks up areas to keep a very close eye should beavers be prospecting in the area.
2. Work with the Spey Catchment Initiative to look at options for planting and / or willow spiling and / or fencing to reinforce the bank and discourage burrowing as a precaution. There may be an opportunity here to involve rangers and volunteers.

The response sent by the Beaver Project Manager on 21 September 2023 to Andy Ford and Russell Jones is as follows:

3. I can confirm that the riverbank at The Dell will be a 'hotspot' area and will be monitored regularly for signs of beavers and if it seems that they are resident in the immediate area then monitoring will be undertaken weekly. The upper part of the 'main drain' which is nearby has 'hotspot' similar status, as does the outflow burn from the waste water treatment works.
4. I will speak to my line manager, who has been very involved with the Spey Catchment Initiative and we will investigate options to reinforce the bank and how that could be delivered. Once we have some possible options, I will let you know what they are.

(Note: A meeting with Spey Catchment Initiative staff is being organised in November 2023).



Image 6 - Dr Rob Needham talking about his research on brown trout and beavers with a group of stakeholders at South Clunes 22 August 2023.

Land manager and fisheries visit to a site with beavers

The Park Authority organised a visit on 22 August 2023 to South Clunes, a family-run, regenerative livestock farm that lies to the south of the Beaully Firth. The farm has had beavers within a 100-acre enclosure for over a decade. Fifteen attended out of the 16 invited, with representation from, landowners, farmers and the fisheries sector.

NatureScot beaver management staff and Dr Rob Needham from The Beaver Trust also attended. This visit gave attendees the opportunity to see first-hand the effects of beavers on the land, ask the farmers directly about their experience of living and farming alongside beaver, and discuss the research undertaken on beaver impacts on brown trout at the site.



One-to-one site visits with landowners and managers

Since coming into post in mid-March 2023, the Beaver Project Manager has undertaken 18 site visits to discuss potential beaver impacts with various landowners and organisations. [REDACTED]

These site visits allowed a much better understanding of the very local issue that may arise and also allowed discussion of how best to deal with these, should they arise. The two key desired outcomes of these visits were to build a relationship and trust between the site owner and the Beaver Project Officer so that lines of communication would be open and readily used, and that a plan for proactive or reactive mitigation was agreed on before there was any release of beavers. These site visits will be a key ongoing part of the monitoring programme that is being finalised by the Park Authority and NatureScot.

Table 4 - Showing dates for one-to-one site visits between the Beaver Project Officer and landowners and land managers.

Date	Location	Type of organisation
7 April	Loch Insh Watersports	Businesses
11 April	River Spey	NGO
14 April	Coull Wood	Government
28 April	RSPB Insh Marshes	NGO
24 May	Alvie and Dalraddy Estates	Businesses
13 June	South Clunes	Businesses
27 June	Alvie and Dalraddy Estates	Businesses
12 July	Easter Duthil	Farmers
13 July	Anagach Woods	Charity
21 July	Rothiemoon	Farmers
4 August	Rothiemurchus	Businesses
4 August	Alvie and Dalraddy Estates	Businesses
15 August	Rothiemurchus	Landowner
12 September	Old Milton	Businesses
14 September	Kingussie	Farmers
27 September	Balliefurth	Farmers
28 September	Old Milton	Businesses
11 October	Rothiemurchus	Businesses

RSPB Scotland engagement

RSPB Scotland staff at Insh Marshes nature reserve also engaged with local landowners, land managers and communities.

A record of this engagement can be found in appendix 6.4

Species-specific engagement

Aspen

The Park Authority have had ongoing dialogue with the Cairngorms Aspen Group throughout this process and have been working with them to establish the location of potentially vulnerable stands of aspen. There is overlap in the membership of the Cairngorms Beaver Group and the Aspen Group, which has further ensured any concerns regarding aspen and its associated species are fully understood and taken into account.

The Park Authority has undertaken site visits with members of the group to look at important aspen sites close to the proposed release sites and discuss potential mitigation and proactive conservation measures to reduce beaver impacts. In addition, development of a long-term spatial plan has begun to enhance the existing aspen resource and develop an aspen network across the National Park. Aspen forms a key part of the monitoring plan.

Lichens and bryophytes

A meeting was held with Plantlife's Head of Conservation, their species specialist and local project officer on 5 September 2023. Concerns were raised over localised potential impacts on threatened species largely associated with mature aspen, hazel and willow.

It was agreed that Plantlife would collate data on nationally and internationally threatened species on and close to the potential release sites and provide details of specific trees that may require protection. The Park Authority will support further survey and monitoring work at key sites and work with Plantlife and land managers to explore how to address tree age-gap and habitat continuity at key sites. Lichen translocation was discussed but it was emphasised that this is not a mitigation measure; it is potentially a safety net and short-term measure. The focus should be habitat retention and enhancement to secure long-term continuity for lichen and bryophyte habitats in a landscape with beavers.



Freshwater pearl mussel

The Park Authority liaised with national expert Dr Peter Cosgrove regarding potential impacts, sensitive sites and wider freshwater pearl mussel conservation within the Spey catchment, and with Professor Yurgen Geist (University of Munich) for a European perspective on the interactions between beaver and freshwater pearl mussel.

Beaver presence can improve water quality by reducing siltation and nutrients and lowering water temperature, creating clean, well oxygenated substrates on which mussels depend. The introduction of woody debris into the water course by beaver creates stable substrate and refuge for mussels against the impacts of high flow, and deeper water areas to enable survival during periods of low flow.

A potential concern was if beavers were present in a dammable watercourse and constructed a dam either on top of a mussel bed or immediately downstream, which could 'smother' mussels in the vicinity. Mussels within the Spey catchment are predominantly in the main stem which cannot be dammed by beavers. We have recently undertaken a comprehensive survey of potentially suitable tributaries and know of fewer than 10 where mussels are present, and even in these cases only in very small numbers.

We will undertake to monitor these locations for the presence of beaver dams as described in our monitoring and management plan agreed as part of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal Assessment undertaken by NatureScot for designated features of the River Spey Special Area of Conservation.

Atlantic salmon

The Spey Fishery Board have been represented by their Director, Roger Knight, on the Cairngorms Beaver Group since 2017 and are recognised as a key stakeholder in this proposal. They have provided key data on fish spawning locations and those tributaries with high salmon parr numbers, which have been included within the report undertaken by The Beaver Trust and the University of Exeter on beaver habitat suitability.

The Park Authority have support from Spey Fishery Board that they will monitor fish passage across dams and fish habitat suitability above and below dams in key spawning tributaries, as described in our monitoring and management plan agreed as part of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal Assessment undertaken by NatureScot for



designated features of the River Spey Special Area of Conservation if successful in our proposal to bring beavers back.

Organisational group responses

The only formal responses that were received outwith the online survey were from [REDACTED] on behalf of the Kingussie crofters, [REDACTED] of [REDACTED], Laggan, National Farmers Union, Scotland, and Nethy Bridge and Vicinity Community Council. See appendices 6.1, 6.2, 11 and 12.

In the online survey, respondents were asked 'Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a business / organisation?'. The breakdown of 48 responses is as follows:

- 21 farmers and crofters
- 5 environmental consultants
- 4 estates
- 3 non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- 3 other businesses / organisations
- 2 artists / creatives
- 2 government agencies
- 2 research organisations
- 1 community council
- 1 community woodland
- 1 hotel
- 1 local conservation group
- 1 regional council
- 1 tour operator

The following businesses / organisations were named:

[REDACTED]



Organisations asked for responses but only responded informally were: the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Historic Environment Scotland, Transport Scotland, Scottish Water and The Highland Council (Planning, Roads, Flooding and Environmental Health).

Nine national and local organisations are represented on the Cairngorms Beaver Group. The group members have played an active role in shaping our approach to this project to bring beavers back to the Cairngorms and support the Park Authority taking a leadership role in bringing beavers back to the Cairngorms.

Over 40 organisations (six represented on the Cairngorms Beaver Group) are listed as supporting organisations of Scotland's Beaver Strategy 2022-45. Many of these organisations have policies or position statements on beavers and may have chosen not to respond to a local proposal delivering a national strategy.

Engagement survey

Overview

The survey was open from 14 August to 25 September 2023 and was accessible through the beaver project page on the National Park website, direct social media links, and shared via National Park social media channels. It was also promoted at face-to-face events. The survey received 515 responses over this period.

Questions asked in the survey

The questions were chosen carefully to not only establish whether there was widespread public support for the reintroduction of beavers, but also to build up a picture of the respondents and their levels of engagement with the project and positions as stakeholders. All questions were optional and, after the main body of eight questions, respondents were asked if they would be happy to complete additional equalities questions. If they responded yes, then a second set of questions were asked; if they responded no, the survey ended.

The questions asked were as follows:

- Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a business / organisation?
- I live in: outwith the Park, Badenoch and Strathspey, elsewhere in the Park
- Have you read the support materials at cairngorms.co.uk/beavers/?



- Have you met / engaged with any Park Authority staff on this issue or attended one of our beaver public engagement events?
- I am a (please select all that apply to you): Farmer, forester, land manager, landowner, non-land management business owner, angler / fisher, wildlife watcher, water sports user (commercial or recreational), walker, visitor, local resident, ecologist, none of the above.
- Are you aware that NatureScot provide advice and support for land managers to help address specific issues caused by beavers?
- How supportive are you of the proposed plan by the Park Authority for the translocation and release of beavers into the upper Spey catchment on a scale of 1 – 5 (with 1 being not at all supportive and 5 being very supportive)?
- Do you have anything else to say about our plans to bring beavers back to the Cairngorms National Park? Please detail any positives, concerns or queries. (250 words max).
- The Park Authority has dedicated resource to provide advice, support, and information relating to bringing beavers back to the Cairngorms. If you want to hear more about this, or the project in general, please leave your email address in the box below.
- Would you be happy to answer some equalities questions? (followed by equalities questions).

Responses

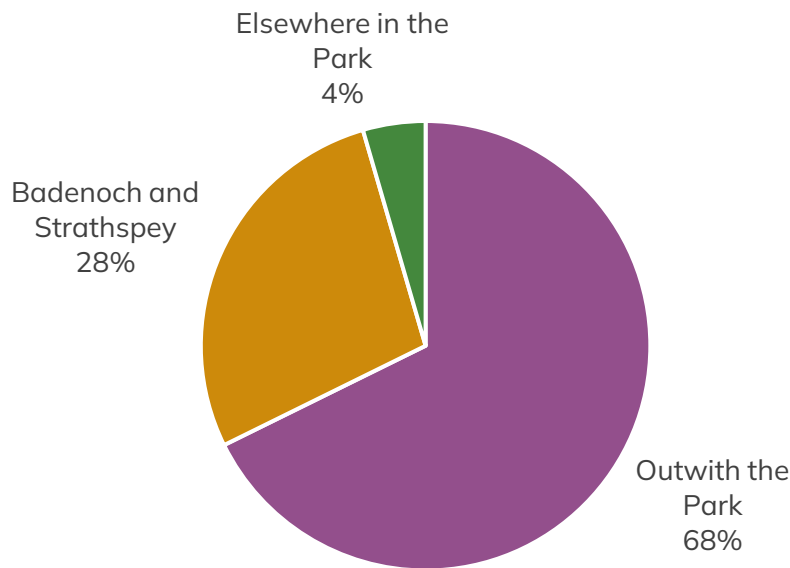
Individuals or businesses and organisations

90% respondents were individuals, 9.8% (50) from businesses or organisations.

Where people live

32.3% respondents live within the National Park and the remaining 67.7% live outside of the National Park. Of those living within the National Park, 27.8% live within Badenoch and Strathspey and 4.5% elsewhere in the National Park.

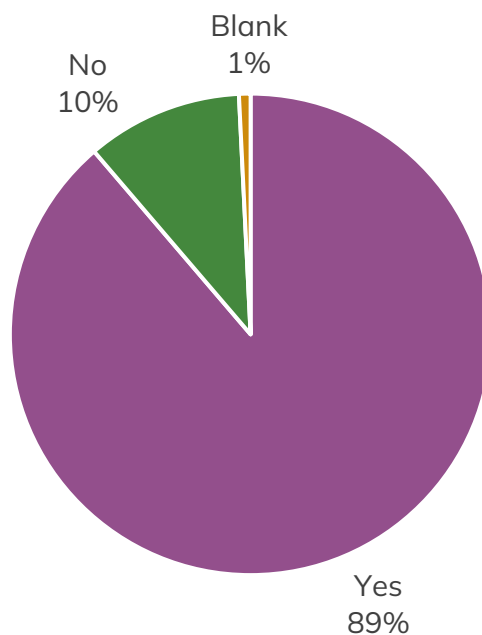
This relatively low engagement from outside of Badenoch and Strathspey is worth noting when interpreting the analyses below, particularly when considering further beaver reintroduction projects elsewhere in the National Park in the future.



Pie Chart 1 - Showing where people reside who completed the online survey.

Support materials

The vast majority of respondents had read the support materials on the webpage – 88.7% 'yes' and 10.5% 'no'.

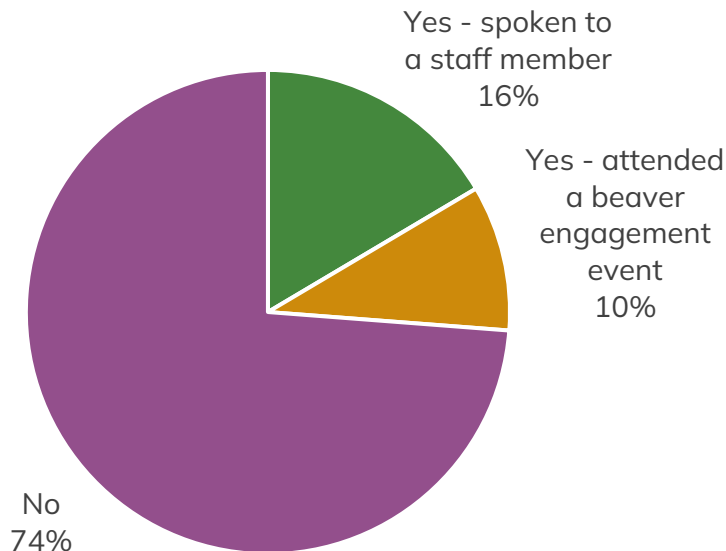


Pie Chart 2 - Showing whether respondents read the support materials on the webpage ahead of completing the online survey.



In person engagement

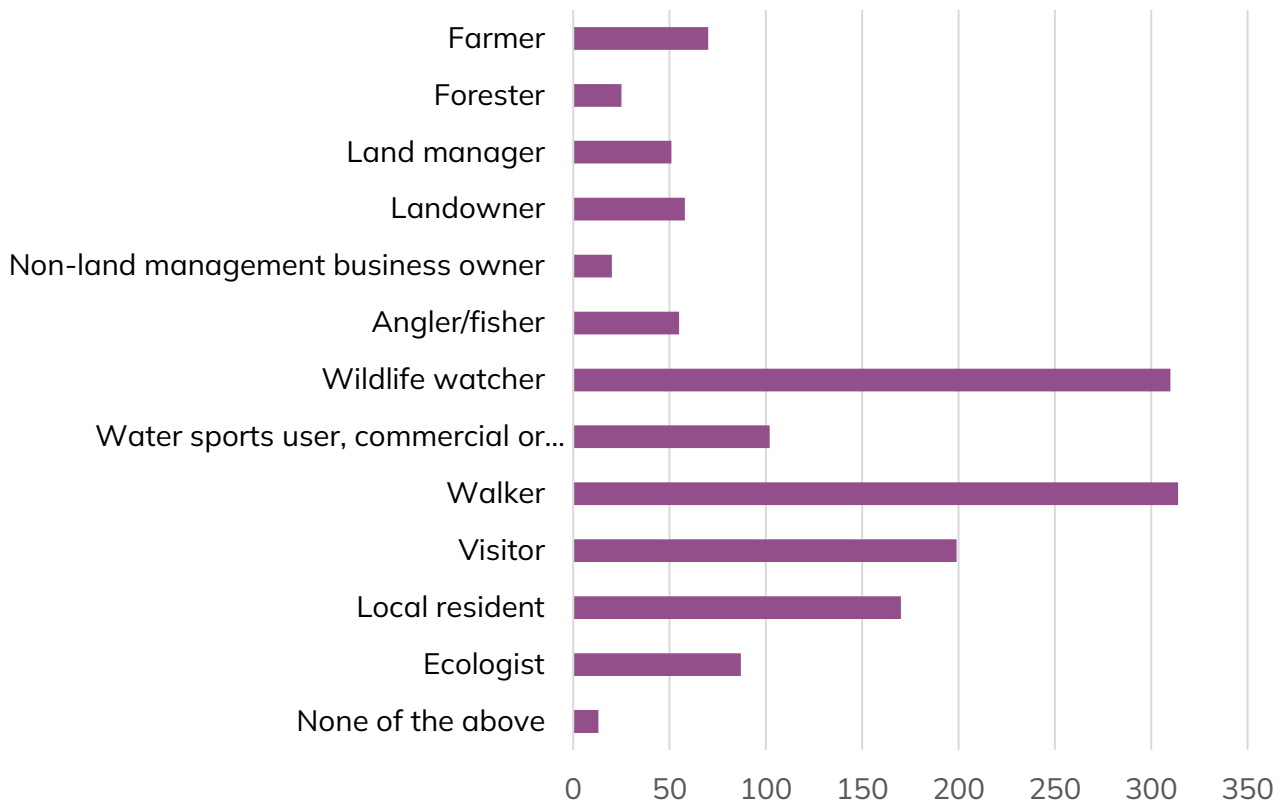
Only 26.2% had met or engaged with any Park Authority staff on the issue, with 16.6% (88) saying they had spoken to a staff member and 9.7% (52) saying they attended an event.



Pie Chart 3 - Showing whether respondents had met or engaged with any National Park Authority staff regarding the project.

Roles and interests

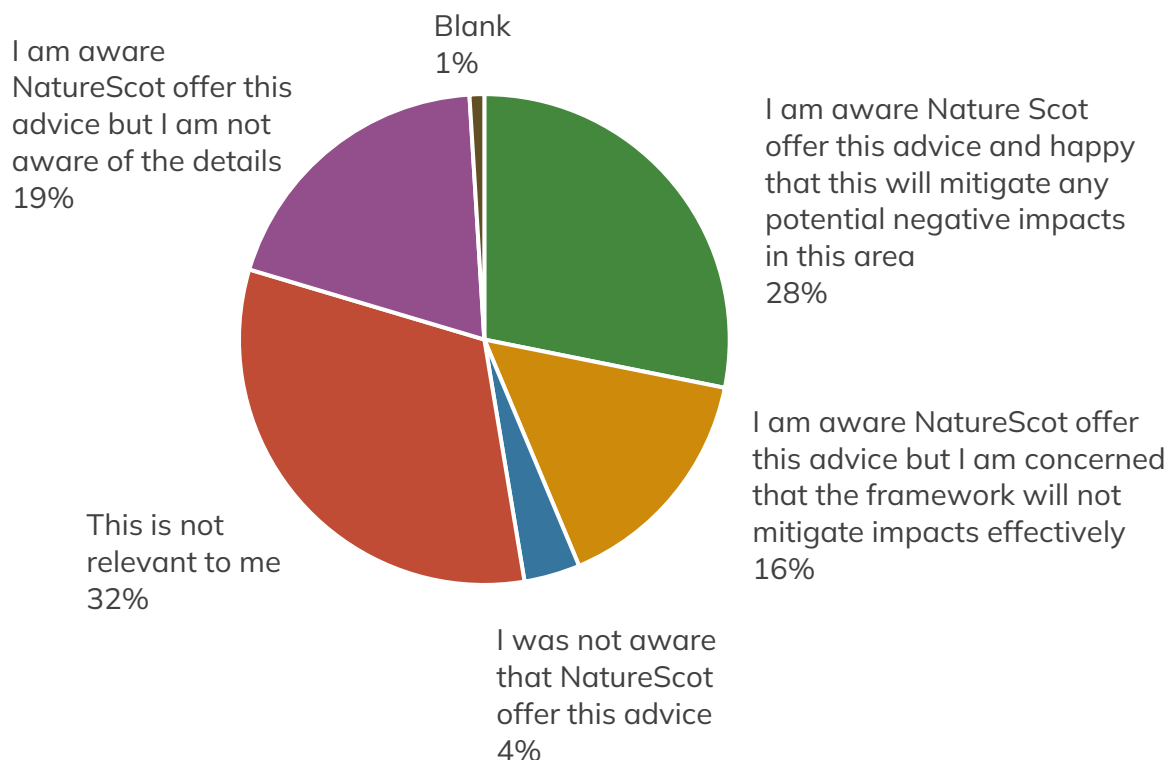
Respondents were asked to select all options from the following list that applied to them: farmer, forester, land manager, landowner, non-land management business owner, angler / fisher, wildlife watcher, water sports user (commercial or recreational), walker, visitor, local resident, ecologist, none of the above. This resulted in walker (314) and wildlife watcher (310) being the highest reported interests, with the visitor (199) – local resident (170) split being the next highest scoring, followed by water sports user (102) and ecologist (87). Traditional land interests came in next: farmer (70), landowner (58), angler / fisher (55), land manager (51), forester (25) and finally non-land management business owners (20).



Graph 1 - Showing what roles / interests applied to individuals when completing the online survey. Respondents could select more than one option.

Awareness of mitigation framework

The survey then asked: 'Are you aware that NatureScot provide advice and support for land managers to help address specific issues caused by beavers?'. The most selected response was 'This is not relevant to me' (166, 32.2%). After that, the most popular answer was 'I am aware NatureScot offer this advice and happy that this will mitigate any potential negative impacts in this area' (145, 28.2%), followed by 'I am aware NatureScot offer this advice but I am not aware of the details' (100, 19.4%), then 'I am aware NatureScot offer this advice but I am concerned that the framework will not mitigate impacts effectively' (80, 15.5%), and lastly 'I was not aware that NatureScot offer this advice' (19, 3.7%), with only five respondents leaving this question blank.

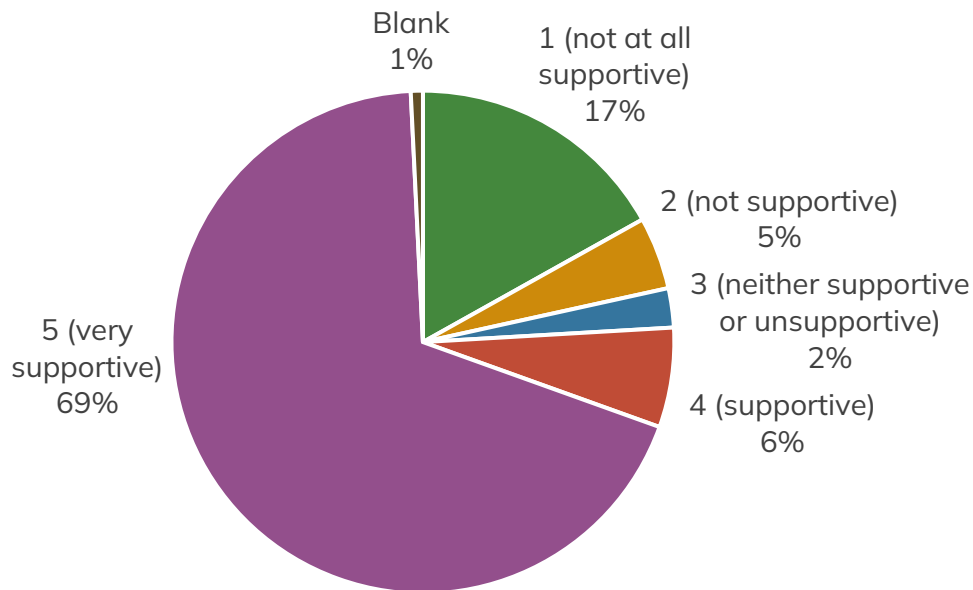


Pie Chart 4 - Showing results in the online survey when respondents were asked if they were aware that NatureScot provide advice and support for land managers to help address specific issues caused by beavers.

Support for the proposed plan

The final question of the main body of the survey asked: 'How supportive are you of the proposed plan by the Park Authority for the translocation and release of beavers into the upper Spey catchment on a scale of 1 – 5 (with 1 being not at all supportive and 5 being very supportive)?'.

The vast majority of respondents selected '5 (very supportive)' with 354 people selecting this option (68.7%). The next highest result was '1 (not at all supportive)' at 87 (16.9%), followed by '4 (supportive)' (33, 6.4%), '2 (not supportive)' (24, 4.7%) and finally '3 (neither supportive or unsupportive)' (13, 2.5%).



Pie Chart 5 - Showing results from the online survey when respondents were asked how supportive they were of the proposed plan by the Park Authority for the translocation and release of beavers into the upper Spey catchment.

Additional comments

Respondents were asked: 'Do you have anything else to say about our plans to bring beavers back to the Cairngorms National Park? Please detail any positives, concerns or queries (250 words max)'. 332 respondents chose to leave a comment.

The key themes of the comments are outlined below, with some examples, and the full list of comments can be found in appendix 13.

Themes:

- The strongest theme in the comments was that of support for the proposal with regard to the potential ecological and biodiversity benefits:

"I think it is fantastic that you are actively working to address the biodiversity crisis, improve Scotland's poor Biodiversity Intactness Index, and use nature solutions to address the climate crisis. It is great to see attempts to improve our natural habitats and support species that share our living spaces."



“[..]The positive impact they will have on biodiversity within the area will be extraordinary. It will be great to see more wetland areas develop, creating more suitable habitat for many declining wetland species, helping increase flood prevention, and reduce carbon loss [..]“

“Returning beavers to the upper Spey catchment will have huge benefits for downstream communities in terms of mitigating climate change related flood risk. Beavers will also help to restore the area’s biodiversity creating new areas of interest for people who live in or visit the Cairngorms National Park.“

- The potential impacts on farming was a key theme in the comments, with farmers expressing a range of views, mostly around the mitigation framework:

“The riparian owners of the Tay and Isla are only too aware of the destruction caused by beavers to riverbanks, flood defences, drainage channels and forestry [..] The proposed mitigation measures do not appear to have been considered properly and nor do they provide the very necessary compensation on an ongoing basis.”

“Agree significant benefits all round could result - ecosystem functioning and wildlife enhancement, landscape, climate change resilience, awareness & eco-tourism, etc. Release programme is a huge step in the improvement of our environment and sits well with the realignment of farming and wildlife management and future farming policy, as long as farmers believe in the process. Comment above on mitigation plan is not negative, much appears to be in place to mitigate but more detail and guarantee of financial support/time will build confidence among land managers. Maintaining land managers and relevant others as a core part of the process will greatly improve the success of the programme.”

- Another notable theme was people voicing concerns around tree felling and riparian woodland:

“[..]One concern I have is how the introduction of beaver will be combined with managing deer and sheep numbers within the



surrounding area so that any trees nibbled or felled can regenerate as part of a natural system [..]”

“I have worked extensively on Tayside where beavers are now well established. They cause catastrophic damage to native broadleaved trees growing in riparian areas”

- Many comments expressed support for the National Park Authority taking a leadership role and the approach taken towards engagement:

“The plans are robust and well-thought through. It is great to see the CNPA prepared to bring beavers back, but particularly to do so with real care for the potential effects they might have.”

“Having a dedicated beaver officer is a strong move. For landowners to have a known, trusted and easily accessible person to help and quickly respond to any potential issues as they arise, or even helping to plan for and mitigate before they arise, will help people to coexist with beavers. Beaver activities can present challenges and those are likely to impact on a small number of people, and it is important to support them.”

- Comments relating to salmon populations and fishing were common, but varied widely in tone and context:

“I fish on both the Tay and Spey catchment areas and having seen the damage caused already on the Tay by beavers I am not supportive of them being released on the Spey. I am not convinced that the salmon population has not already been adversely affected by beavers released on the Tay and fear a similar occurrence on the Spey.”

“[..]They will benefit anglers / fishers by creating optimal conditions for fish to lay their eggs, create necessary riparian habitats, creating shade, shelter and food sources for fish and any potential dams will not impede on fish migration [..]”



- Some business owners expressed their views, seeing potential opportunities with the reintroduction of beavers:

“This is for me as a nature lover and also a local Business owner and also Someone interested in ecological studies a no brainier. These animals will bring much needed and welcome visitors and resources with that to the area all year round and they’re natural behaviour will protect wetland areas from flooding and droughts. It’s a win win for the animals themselves and the areas in which that are introduced. “

Analysis of results

Note – the below analyses exclude responses left blank so values might differ from those above.

Comparison of level of support and where respondents live

Key findings:

- 'Very supportive' is the highest scoring category from respondents in all regions by a large margin.
- Broadly similar results in most regions.
- 'Not at all supportive' peaks in respondents outside of Badenoch and Strathspey but within the National Park – although it is worth noting that this region only accounts for 4.5% of all respondents, with 67.7% living outside of the National Park and the other 27.8% living within Badenoch and Strathspey, so fluctuations in the 'Elsewhere in the Park' group are exaggerated.
- 'Very supportive' peaks in respondents outwith the National Park.
- 'Supportive' peaks in respondents living within Badenoch and Strathspey

Table 5 - Showing comparison from online survey of level of support and where respondents live.

I live in:	1 (not at all supportive)	2 (not supportive)	3 (neither supportive or unsupportive)	4 (supportive)	5 (very supportive)
All respondents	17.0%	4.7%	2.5%	6.5%	69.3%
Badenoch and Strathspey	15.6%	3.5%	5.7%	10.6%	64.5%
Elsewhere in the Park	26.1%	4.3%	4.3%	8.7%	56.5%

Outwith Park	17.1%	4.9%	1.2%	4.6%	72.2%
All within National Park	17.1%	3.7%	5.5%	10.4%	63.4%

Comparison of interests expressed and where respondents live

Note – interests are not mutually exclusive and respondents could select more than one

Note – as above, consider very low response rate for ‘Elsewhere in the Cairngorms National Park’ when analysing these data

Key findings:

- Most categories have highest responses from outside of the National Park, except for non-land management business owners (which may be due to promotion efforts through the Cairngorms Business Partnership) and, naturally, local residents.
- Interesting that 39 respondents selected ‘local resident’ and ‘outwith the Cairngorms National Park’ when asked where they live. This might reflect the anticipated impacts further downstream in the catchment in the future.

Table 6 - Showing comparison from online survey of interests expressed and where respondents live.

	Badenoch and Strathspey	Elsewhere in the Cairngorms National Park	Outwith the Cairngorms National Park	Total
Farmer	17	5	48	70
Forester	6	0	19	25
Land manager	19	4	28	51

Landowner	19	2	37	58
Non-land management business owner	11	1	7	19
Angler	17	3	35	55
Wildlife watcher	85	10	213	308
Water sports user (commercial or recreational)	31	3	68	102
Walker	89	11	213	313
Visitor	1	1	196	198
Local resident	116	15	39	170
Ecologist	19	2	66	87
None	1	0	12	13

Comparison of interests expressed and level of support

Key findings:

- The groups with the largest number of respondents lean towards 'very supportive'.
- Farmers and anglers are the only two groups where 'not supportive at all' scores higher than 'very supportive' (35 of 70 respondents not at all supportive).
- Land managers show a close split between 'very supportive' and 'not at all supportive', with 'very supportive' slightly higher.
- As with the overall trend, most responses sit in the extremes, very little in between.

Table 7 - Showing comparison from online survey of survey of interests expressed and level of support.

	1 (not at all supportive)	2 (not supportive)	3 (neither supportive or unsupportive)	4 (supportive)	5 (very supportive)	Total
Farmer	50.0%	20.0%	10.0%	2.9%	17.1%	70
Forester	24.0%	12.0%	0.0%	4.0%	60.0%	25
Land manager	39.2%	7.8%	5.9%	3.9%	43.1%	51
Landowner	31.0%	12.1%	8.6%	5.2%	43.1%	58
Non-land management business owner	30.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	55.0%	20
Angler	49.1%	5.5%	3.6%	5.5%	36.4%	55
Wildlife watcher	10.4%	2.9%	1.3%	6.8%	78.6%	309
Water sports user (commercial or recreational)	12.7%	4.9%	2.0%	2.9%	77.5%	102
Walker	9.6%	3.5%	1.6%	6.7%	78.6%	313
Visitor	9.6%	2.5%	1.0%	4.6%	82.2%	197
Local resident	11.2%	3.0%	4.1%	8.9%	72.8%	169
Ecologist	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	5.8%	89.5%	86
None	30.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	69.2%	13



Comparison of interests expressed and opinion on mitigation framework

Key findings:

- Most respondents stated that this was not relevant to them, which is reflected here.
- The vast majority of respondents to whom the mitigation framework is relevant are aware of its existence, with a notable peak in lacking awareness in non-land management business owners.
- Of those aware the mitigation framework, there is a peak in foresters responding that they are not aware of the details.
- Of those aware and understanding of the framework, farmers, anglers and land managers are the groups who show the most concern that it will not be sufficient.
- Ecologists are the most happy that the framework will be sufficient to any mitigate negative impacts.
- As with the other sections, larger groups of respondents lean more towards happy.

Table 8 - Showing comparison from online survey of survey of interests expressed and opinion on mitigation framework.

	I am aware NatureScot offer this advice and happy that this will mitigate any potential negative impacts in this area	I am aware NatureScot offer this advice but I am concerned that the framework will not mitigate impacts effectively	I am aware NatureScot offer this advice but I am not aware of the details	I was not aware that NatureScot offer this advice	This is not relevant to me	Total
Farmer	11.6%	50.7%	20.3%	4.3%	13.0%	69
Forester	24.0%	16.0%	40.0%	4.0%	16.0%	25
Land manager	23.5%	37.3%	25.5%	5.9%	7.8%	51
Landowner	28.4%	15.7%	19.6%	3.7%	32.5%	58
Non-land management business owner	21.1%	21.1%	5.3%	15.8%	36.8%	19
Angler	18.2%	38.2%	14.5%	1.8%	27.3%	55
Wildlife watcher	36.6%	10.7%	20.4%	2.6%	29.8%	309
Water sports user (commercial or recreational)	33.3%	12.7%	18.6%	4.9%	30.4%	102
Walker	31.3%	8.6%	20.8%	3.2%	36.1%	313
Visitor	34.2%	8.0%	20.6%	4.5%	32.7%	199
Local resident	26.5%	14.1%	19.4%	2.9%	37.1%	170
Ecologist	46.0%	11.5%	16.1%	2.3%	24.1%	87
None	15.4%	15.4%	23.1%	0.0%	46.2%	13



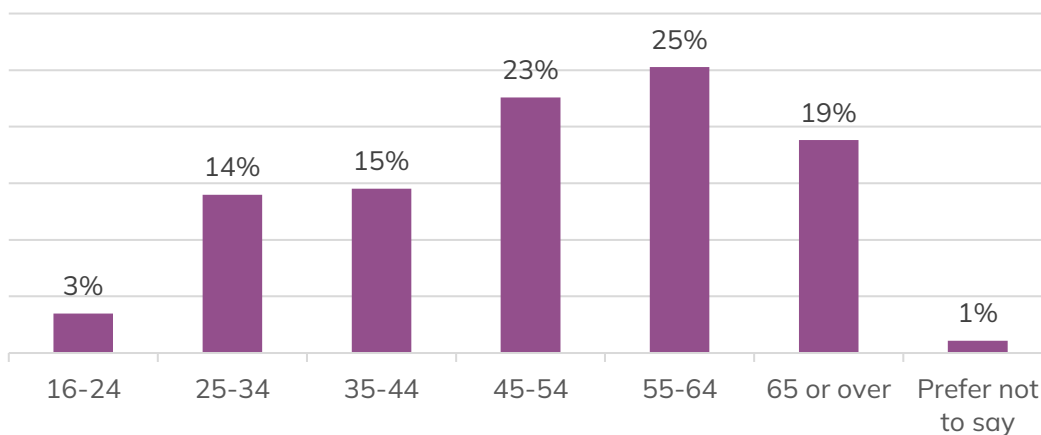
Equalities and demographics

At the end of the engagement survey, respondents were asked if they would be happy to answer some equalities questions. These questions were asked to help us make sure we involved the widest range of people possible. All questions were optional and responses will only ever be published in aggregate in a way that avoids identifying specific individuals.

72.8% of respondents said yes to answering equalities questions, 24.3% said no and 2.9% refrained from answering.

Age group

372 respondents answered when asked their age group. Responses broke down as follows:



Graph 2 - Showing age groups of respondents to online survey.

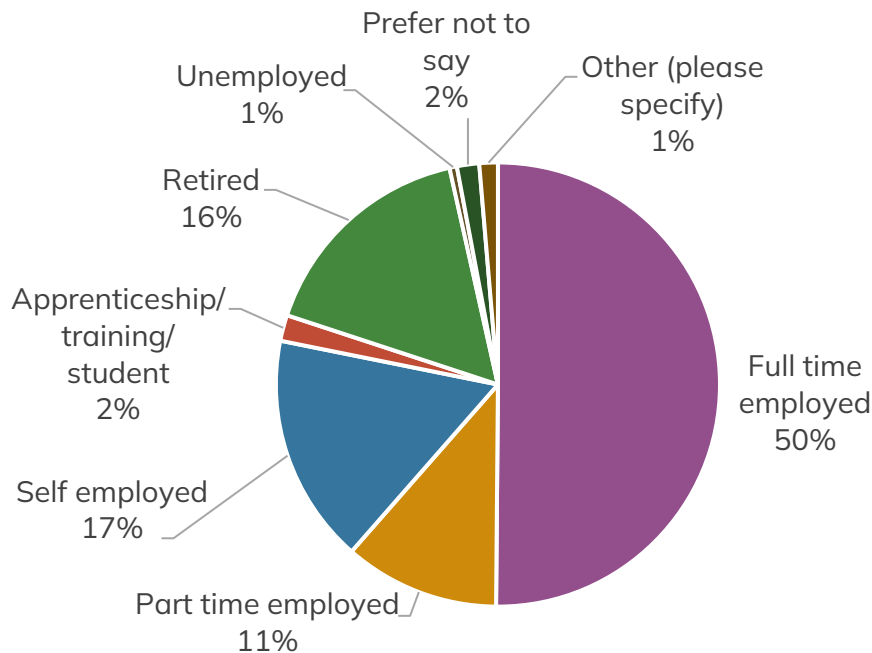
The 2011 census reported that 11.9% of Scotland's population was aged 16-24, 12.6% between 25-34, 13.9% between 35-44, 14.9% between 45 and 54, 12.6% between 55-64, and 16.8% over 65. However, the population of the National Park skews older as compared to the rest of Scotland, and there has been a decline in the number of 16-24 year olds since the last census was completed (eg the UK figure declined by 20,000 last year alone).

The data above suggests the engagement response was broadly representative of populations in and around the National Park, with the exception of those aged 16-24, which was below the Scottish average.



Employment status

371 respondents answered when asked their employment status. Responses broke down as follows:



Pie Chart 6 - Showing employment status of respondents to online survey.

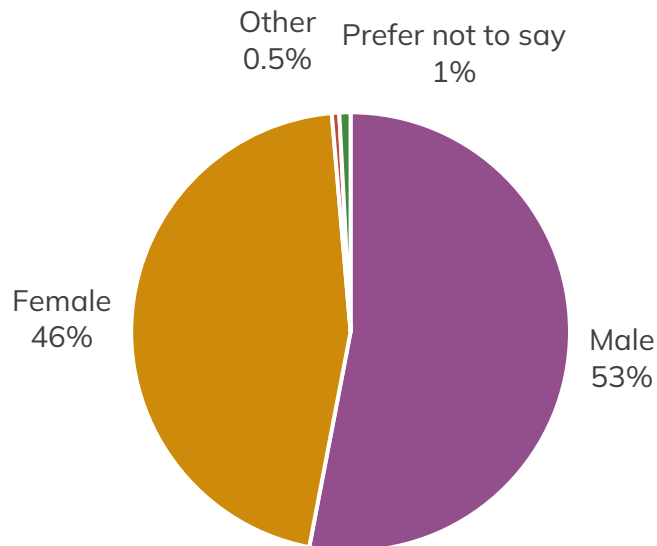
The National Park has a higher proportion of part-time and self-employed people (both around 15%) than the Scottish population (around 13%), and this is reflected in the number of self-employed responses above, but not for part-time workers which more closely aligns with the national average.

Around 1.5-2% of National Park residents are full-time students and a similar proportion are unemployed, with around 40% working full-time. These figures broadly match the response to the engagement survey above, except full-time employed people coming out 10% higher. This may be due to the subject area of the engagement.



Gender diversity

364 respondents answered when asked how they described their gender, responses broke down as follows:



Pie Chart 7 - Showing gender diversity of respondents to online survey.

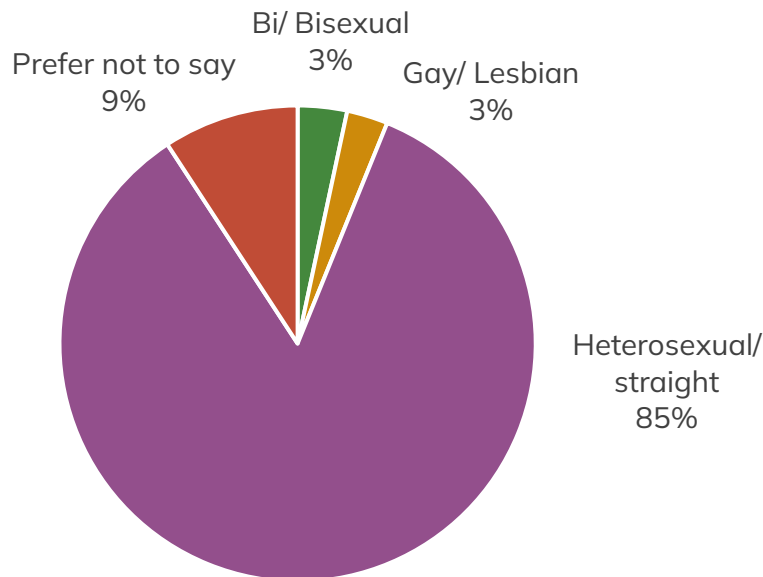
According to Scotland's Census (from 27 March 2011) – which only provided two gender options (male or female) – women made up 51% of the Scottish population and men 49%. The equivalent figures for the National Park area were 50% female and 50% male, suggesting that responses to the engagement skewed male.

Whilst not included in the last census, an NHS report published in May 2018 cited an estimate of 0.5% of the Scottish population identifying as transgender; meanwhile, 6.9% of respondents to the UK Government's National LGBT Survey identified as non-binary, and a further 0.9% as other.



Sexual orientation

358 respondents answered when asked how they described their sexual orientation, responses broke down as follows:



Pie Chart 8 - Showing sexual orientation of respondents to online survey.

By way of comparison, a 2015 report from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggested that 95% of the Scottish population identified as heterosexual, 1.0% as gay or lesbian, 0.6% as bisexual, 0.4% other, and 2.8% prefer not to say.

Ethnicity

363 respondents answered when asked their ethnic group: 95.9% of respondents answered 'White Scottish, White Irish, White Gypsy / traveller, White British', 2.8% responded as 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups' or 'Other', and 1.4% selected 'Prefer not to say'.

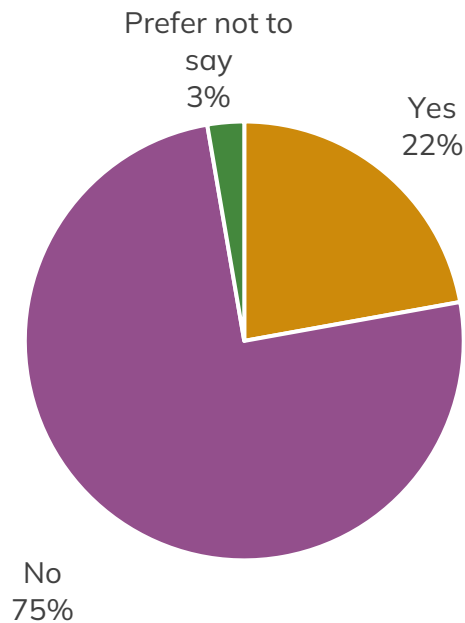
The 2011 census reported that 96% of Scotland's population was White, with 91.8% identifying as either White – Scottish or White – Other British. 4.2% of people identified as Polish, Irish, Gypsy / traveller or White – Other. The population of Asian, African, Caribbean or Black, Mixed or Other ethnic groups was 4%.



Across the five local authority areas of the National Park, 81.8% identified as Scottish, 12.8% as Other British, 4.0% as Polish, Irish, Gypsy / traveller or White – Other, and 1.5% as Asian, African, Caribbean or Black, Mixed or Other ethnic groups. It is clear that more work is required to fully engage a range of ethnic minority communities in future engagement processes, something that the Park Authority is aware of and making efforts to improve on.

Caring responsibilities

370 respondents answered when asked whether they had any caring responsibilities. Responses broke down as follows:



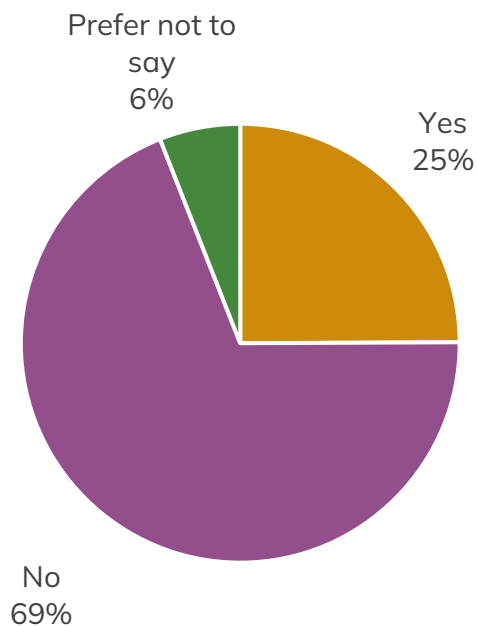
Pie Chart 9 - Showing if respondents to online survey considered themselves have any caring responsibilities.

According to Scotland's 2011 Census, 91% of people declared that they provided no unpaid care. The equivalent figures for the National Park area from 2010 showed the same, indicating no difference. The higher percentage of people declaring caring responsibilities here may be due to differences in the definitions of caring responsibilities and interpretation of the question, eg whether people accounted for dependents, children etc.



Low income

369 respondents answered when asked whether they considered themselves to be on a low income. Responses broke down as follows:



Pie Chart 10- Showing if respondents to online survey considered themselves to be on a low income.

The Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland report estimated that 21% of Scotland's population (1,110,000 people each year) were living in relative poverty after housing costs in 2019-2022. Before housing costs, 19% of the population (1,000,000 people) were living in poverty.

Conclusion

The beaver engagement has been wide-reaching. 515 people responded online, 104 attended in person events and the online reach was 84,833 throughout the formal engagement period.

It began with the informal engagement beaver blethers in March 2023 and concluded with the formal six-week engagement between August and September 2023. The engagement period and project has received wide coverage online, in print and on TV. In



the intervening period and going forward the Park Authority continues to speak with and visit land managers, farmers, crofters and other interested groups and individuals to discuss beavers, opportunities and potential impacts. The Park Authority has endeavoured to listen to and fully understand the thoughts and opinions of the Park's communities in a balanced way. This will help the Park Authority support those living alongside beavers in the future.

- 75.8% of online survey participants support the proposed reintroduction of beavers.
- Of those attendees who left comments at the in the in-person engagement events, over 50% were supportive.
- Four formal objections to the project were received outwith the online survey.
- Some groups of stakeholders have concerns – namely farmers and anglers.
- Farmers are mostly concerned about the potential impact of beavers on flood banks, productive agricultural land and livelihoods, and the adequacy of the beaver mitigation scheme.
- Anglers were most concerned about the potential impact of beavers on Atlantic salmon spawning habitat and passage.
- 515 online responses, with a representative sample of target demographics reached.