

Summary of correspondence with
Prof. Roger Wheater, OBE, FRSE

Credentials for PRW

Professional positions for 50+ yrs :

- Board Member, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.
- President, Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Chairman, The National Trust for Scotland (NTS)
- CEO, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
- Director, Uganda National Parks
- Chief Warden, Murchison Falls National Park.

...plus...

Pertinent to tonight...

NatureScot

Beaver Salmonid Working Group members

Professor Roger Wheater (chair)

Association of Salmon Fishery Boards

Marine Scotland

National Museums Scotland

Scottish Government

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

NatureScot

Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board

University of Southampton

1. The release area is not necessarily the potential settlement area

PRW notes that the National Nature Reserve (NNR) is only 1.6 square miles in a total catchment area in which beavers might expand of 269 square miles. RSPB stated that the beavers were likely to work their way up smaller tributaries rather than populate the lower reaches of the Endrick mouth.

Q. Who is looking into impacts of beavers on the remainder of the watershed?

The river Endrick Water is fed by streams that drain a large part of Stirlingshire District and flows through the village of Fintry and past the villages of Balfron and Drymen.

PRW believes that the fact that RSPB have carried out an impact study only of the NNR (with no mention of wider studies?) is highly irresponsible and there must surely be a concern by both NatureScot (NS) and the Loch Lomond & National Park Authority (LLTNPA) who have wider responsibilities for Loch Lomond and its catchment area.

Suggested Mitigation : Given this lack of information PRW suggests that there should be no release in the NNR until the wider implications have been examined.

2. Impacts on fish and fisheries

On the question of fish, it is interesting to note that the iconic species that the NNR has indicated for special protection include salmon and lampreys!!

Suggested Mitigation : I wonder if those representing fish interests who have a lawyer might ask for a pause in the release of the beaver programmed by the RSPB.

3. Costs

PRW suspects that as NatureScot (NS) have a joint responsibility for the NNR that money might be forthcoming.

However as he understands it, at present, other (surrounding) landowners would not qualify for funding such protection.

The expense of mitigation is one of the current issues of debate.

4. Effects on sewage treatment/septic tanks on the Aber flood plain

There does seem to be a lack of engagement with organisations who should be having a say on the proposals.

If there were a plan for an impact study for the whole watershed (as there should be), the action plan would be indicating any areas of potential concern and the organisations who are responsible for safeguarding them.

Summary

PRW's concern is the lack of management over the watershed and not just a small part of it and that management plans should be clear and be based on scientific and other professional understanding.

If, as PRW expects, the National Beaver Strategy is all embracing he believes that there should be no release of beavers in Loch Lomond until its content is available for examination and its requirements for all aspects of beaver reintroduction are being followed by all concerned.

Note – publication date was being rolled back as each date became due.

Finally, a message from PRW

“I do hope these thoughts on the questions that should be asked are helpful.

I have no problem with the reintroduction of beavers, but I do have serious concerns that the management criteria are not yet clearly stated in respect of control both now and in the future.

My personal view is that the maintenance of wild species is essential but I find given the amount of land available as a result of man's advancement, that the long term future of species large and small will call for research to ensure that we manage the land and species in the most efficient way possible.

This I am afraid will include population control when it is deemed essential.”

...continued

“I believe that there is much to be completed before beavers are released in Loch Lomond watershed.

This includes:

1. The publication of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (I presume that this receives its data from impact studies carried out throughout the watershed.)
2. The publication of a comprehensive management plan including goals, future research and monitoring arrangements in respect of beavers within the watershed.
3. An exit strategy that clearly defines the alternative methods of population reduction including lethal control.
4. Clear criteria for mitigation to owners and users of rivers and lochs and for those who live adjacent to them.
5. The promise from SNH that they will ensure that those applying for the release of beavers in Scotland are required to hold meetings and produce documents that encourage all those within the release area to comment or attend meetings . This would certainly include the residents of complete catchment areas and those who have a responsibility for river and bankside management.
6. I believe that the question should be asked of how they are going to cope with the results of similar releases all over Scotland ? The accelerating rate of beaver population growth in Tayside should give pause for thought and reflection as to what kind of a challenge we will be handing on to our grandchildren and their children.

I have no doubt that the price that must be paid for the return of the beaver to Scotland is a management regime that in the absence of any other method to reduce population will include culling.”