

Kilmaronock CC

From: Jenny Bryce <Jenny.Bryce@nature.scot>
Sent: 01 February 2023 09:53
To: secretary@kilmaronockcc.org
Cc: BEAVERS; Andrew Sinnott; Gavin MacLellan; Anita Anderson; David Scott-Park
Subject: FW: Recent Beaver Release in Kilmaronock
Attachments: 230118 Beaver Mitigation Assistance NatScot.pdf

Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Gavin and Andrew,

Apologies for the time taken to respond to your letter of 17th January; it has been a busy time for our team and as you mention Kieren Jones in our team is on paternity leave.

Water level monitoring

The beaver release licence has been issued to the Site Manager at RSPB Scotland, Loch Lomond and as such they are the responsible person for ensuring actions in the licence are carried out. This includes monitoring of water levels at locations on the Aber burn. From a site meeting with RSPB in January I understand levels have been established based on discussions with neighbours and reflecting the natural fluctuations; noting the very high levels experienced in January this year.

NatureScot is also in the process of commissioning a UAV LiDAR survey of the NNR which will allow detailed assessment of changes in the vegetation communities; wetlands and woodlands on the NNR over time.

Woodlands and trees

We have prepared the following text on 'understanding beavers' for use on our website (not yet live, but I can provide the link to circulate once it is live) which perhaps helps to explain why and how beavers interact with woodlands and trees and that this is a natural part of riparian woodland ecology, that would once have been the norm. We expect this will be one of the impacts that people start to see as beavers recolonise new areas and that riparian woodlands will over time see some changes as beavers re-establish. In many cases these changes will be beneficial however, we recognise it can be upsetting when trees that have been recently planted or have important personal attachments are impacted. Ensuring there is good management of other herbivore impacts is an important part of the dynamic to ensure that beaver coppiced trees can regrow and that natural tree regeneration can establish.

Beavers are herbivores and browse on a wide range of bark, shoots, leaves and roots, from riparian to aquatic vegetation. They fell trees for food but also building materials for constructing their dams and lodges. They have a preference for tree species with soft wood such as willow, birch, alder, aspen, ash, poplar and hazel, but what they will eat is relative to what is available. The felling of native trees results in coppicing and root growth, which can extend the life of some species and result in the strengthening of river banks.

Beavers mostly feed along or close to the water's edge to avoid predation. As a result most foraging activity occurs within around 20m or so of the water's edge with beavers rarely moving more than 60m from water to forage.

Foraging by beavers brings a range of biodiversity benefits. Selective feeding and tree felling opens up woodland canopy, allowing more light to reach the ground, enabling the regeneration of understorey vegetation, increasing the diversity of plant, lichen and bryophyte species, and improves feeding opportunities for insectivorous birds and bats.

Opening up of the canopy also results in increased light hitting water-bodies which has been shown to increase breeding in amphibians and can raise the water temperature leading to an increase in the number of aquatic

invertebrates. But increased temperatures may favour non-salmonid species, which have a greater tolerance for lower oxygen levels in the water.

The increase in standing and felled deadwood on land and in water from beaver foraging has also been shown to provide valuable habitat for fungi, invertebrates and beetles which act as a food source for many species of amphibians, birds and fish. Deadwood, both on land and in water, provides shelter for many species from their predators, along with breeding sites. Deadwood in water increases scour which can help with the naturalisation of rivers, but may present conflicts in some locations.

Tree felling can be undesirable and hazardous in some locations. Sensitive trees in the immediate riparian zone may require mitigation to prevent them from being felled. They can be protected individually using wrapping and painting methods or as a stand using fencing.

Making space for nature and creating a buffer from intensive land use along the river is an alternative form of mitigation which will allow natural regeneration of native riparian vegetation and will reduce the need for beavers to forage on mature trees.

NatureScot operate a Beaver Mitigation Scheme and can provide advice and practical assistance to land managers experiencing negative beaver impacts. NatureScot's support for tree protection will depend on what is appropriate to the local setting and is focused on protecting trees and woodlands where there is a public interest – i.e. trees of heritage, cultural or landscape value. We would not support all trees being protected for a variety of reasons including that beavers rely on woody material for seasonal forage. Our guidance is focused on individual tree protection using established protection techniques using wire mesh and deterrent paint. <https://www.nature.scot/doc/protecting-trees-beavers-using-wire-mesh> We would be happy to support some demonstration of these techniques in the local area.

We are currently working with Scottish Forestry to develop advice specifically relating to riparian woodland creation and new plantings in the presence of beavers.

The Beaver Team can be contacted on the Beavers@nature.scot email address and we normally aim to respond within a few days.

Beavers are European Protected Species and as such carry strict protections including of their lodges, burrows and dams. Simple management techniques to prevent beaver damage, such as protecting trees or woodland or removing newly-built (less than two week old) dams, does not require a licence. However, other actions such as removal of more mature dams, manipulating dams, or beaver removal, can only be carried out under licence. In providing a licence NatureScot need to be satisfied that the three strict EPS licensing tests are met. <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/licensing/european-protected-species-licensing>. The email address for licensing enquiries is licensing@nature.scot

Both NatureScot teams will respond to any requests where there is an imminent risk to public health and safety with priority.

I hope this provides the responses you were seeking, but please follow up if you have any further queries.

Regards

Jenny

Dr Jenny Bryce | Wildlife Management Team

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nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

My working pattern is 9.30am - 2.30pm Mon-Friday

From: Kilmaronock CC <secretary@kilmaronockcc.org>

Sent: 18 January 2023 15:26

To: Kieren Jones - NatureScot <Kieren.Jones@nature.scot>

Cc: Gavin MacLellan <gavin@lornmill.com>; Anita Anderson <anita.j.anderson@talktalk.net>; David Scott-Park <david@portnellanfarm.co.uk>; Andrew Sinnott <andrew.sinnott@btopenworld.com>

Subject: Recent Beaver Release in Kilmaronock

Dear Kieren,

Happy New Year.

At our recent community council meeting, the first since the granting of the application to release some beavers on the local Aber Burn, some questions were raised about implementation of mitigation measures to protect trees and monitor water levels.

Please see attached letter and respond accordingly.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Sinnott
Secretary

<https://kilmaronockcc.org>

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Thoiribh an aire airson adhbharan gnothaich, 's dòcha gun tèid sùil a chumail air puist-dealain a' tighinn a-steach agus a' dol a- mach bho NàdarAlba.
