



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01815

Name of petitioner

Steve Micklewright on behalf of Trees for Life

Petition title

Translocate protected beavers to reduce licensed killing

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to initiate a programme to translocate protected beavers to suitable habitat outside existing beaver range, to minimise the need to kill animals adversely impacting arable farmland.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

In my capacity as Chair of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance, I have written to the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform asking that translocation of beavers be permitted from Tayside to other areas outside their existing range.

Trees for Life has also written to Scottish Natural Heritage offering to make land available for beavers translocated from Tayside and we have contacted them ourselves to share our experience of opening balanced conversations about beavers with local communities.

Petition background information

This petition is prompted by the Beaver Summary Report 2019 issued by Scottish Natural Heritage on 28 May 2020 (<https://www.nature.scot/snh-beaver-licensing-summary-1st-may-31st-december-2019>) which indicated that 87 beavers, estimated to be one fifth of the total protected population in Scotland, had been shot under licence in Tayside during the period May-December 2019.

Further details about Scottish Natural heritage's beaver management regime were provided in answer to Written Parliamentary Questions No S5W-29079, S5W-29081, S5W-29083, S5W-29084; S5W-29088, S5W-29091, S5W-29093, S5W-S5W-29094 and S5W-2905.

In a previous report (Beavers in Scotland: a report to the Scottish Government 2015 p27), Scottish Natural heritage indicated that 105,586 hectares of suitable 'core beaver woodland' habitat exists throughout Scotland (<https://www.nature.scot/beavers-scotland-report-scottish-government>)

scotland-report-scottish-government/.

Many members of the public find it morally repugnant that a fifth of the population of species that only received European Protected Species status on 1 May 2019 has been allowed to be killed under government licence in such a short space of time. Scottish Natural Heritage have acknowledged in the Beaver Summary Report 2019 that the high level of licensed killing is impacting population expansion in certain areas, and leading Scottish conservation bodies have expressed concern that the extent of the killing could potentially threaten the genetic viability of Scotland's beaver population.

The issue is particularly concerning given the recognised role that beavers have in enhancing biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change (see <https://www.nature.scot/management-framework-benefits-beavers>). While beavers can sometimes be problematic for farmers in low-lying arable land, the intensity of licensed killing is potentially increased by government policy that effectively limits translocation to within those river catchments where beavers are present. If this policy is allowed to persist, it may be many decades before beavers reach areas of suitable habitat in new river catchments where their environmental benefits are sorely needed.

Changing policy to allow Scottish Natural Heritage to translocate beaver to suitable habitat outside current range can create a win-win situation: minimising the number of beavers killed under licence and reducing pressure on affected farmers in Tayside, while simultaneously providing environmental benefits to communities in those new areas to which Tayside beavers will be translocated.

Related information:

<https://treesforlife.org.uk/scotlands-beavers-we-need-better-options/>

Unique web address

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/beaver>

Related information for petition

<https://treesforlife.org.uk/scotlands-beavers-we-need-better-options/>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

Closing date for collecting signatures online

27 / 08 / 2020

Comments to stimulate online discussion