



RSPB Scotland Beaver Translocation

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you releasing beavers to Loch Lomond?

Beavers are native to Scotland and are already present in the National Park and a single animal has already been seen on the National Nature Reserve in 2019. This would be a conservation translocation involving the movement of animals from one part of their range (an area they are naturally found in) to another.

Why are beavers being moved from other places?

In certain circumstances the actions of beavers can cause conflict, and this is a particular issue in Tayside where low-lying farmland is vulnerable to beavers damming ditches and flooding land. In these areas licences have been given to kill beavers. We see this as a terrible loss for a European Protected Species (EPS) and believe that translocation should be used as an alternative to killing.

Is transporting the beavers harmful to them?

Beavers will undergo some stress during both the trapping process, subsequent vet checks and translocation, as would be the case for any wild creature, but this process has now been successfully completed for many beaver families around the UK. We will be using the most experienced and knowledgeable beaver experts to assist us in the translocation from the Beaver Trust.

Why are the RSPB working with beavers? Don't you just focus on birds?

The RSPB is a nature conservation organisation with interests in protecting and restoring all nature, but with a focus on birds. We have a long history of interest in species such as beavers, so we're delighted to be able to offer one of our sites to release these amazing animals. As a keystone species, beavers will benefit a whole range of wildlife and habitats, birds included.

What is the licensing process for a beaver translocation?

Beavers cannot be captured, transported or released in Scotland without a licence which is issued by NatureScot. The process for issuing a licence is not like a planning application and instead follows guidelines set out in the [Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations](#) which itself is based on guidelines from the [IUCN](#) (International Union for Conservation of Nature). The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations is designed to ensure that any translocation is well planned out, resourced and that any risks are assessed.

The information required for an application is set out in a [project proposal form](#) produced by NatureScot. This completed form along with any additional information such as our engagement report and the suitability and modelling report will form our licence application to NatureScot who will make a decision. We plan to submit our application by the end of August/beginning of September and, if successful, hope to release a family of beavers onto the NNR in autumn 2022.

What work have RSPB carried out on beaver translocation at Loch Lomond in the past?

In 2013, RSPB Scotland commissioned the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) to review the reserve's suitability for future beaver reintroductions should a full reintroduction in Scotland occur. Loch Lomond scored highly thanks to the availability of suitable habitat and its likelihood that beavers would arrive naturally from other known populations, (as was seen in 2019 when a beaver appeared on the NNR).

Work to build on this report was effectively paused until a change in the Scottish Government position on beaver translocations was announced in November 2021 stating that further translocations would be authorised.

The Loch Lomond report is available to download from the blog.

Why is RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond being used as a release site?

Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve (NNR) is a fantastic area for a range of wildlife, and ecological assessments have shown it to be particularly good for beavers. The areas of open water, woodland and aquatic vegetation make this an ideal location for beavers to thrive. Beavers will also be highly beneficial for the wetland and the wide variety of species associated with the NNR.

How many beavers are there going to be?

Initially, a family of between 2-8 beavers will be brought to the release site. This number varies as beavers can have kits (young) with them for up to two years before they are independent, and can have up to 3 kits per year, so a maximum family group would likely include 8 individuals and they would be kept as a complete family group. It is also possible a pair with no kits could be moved to site. It will depend on what is required for translocations from within Scotland. Any subsequent translocations will depend on how the first family respond.

Where will they come from?

Beavers brought to RSPB Loch Lomond will come from areas in Tayside.

When are beavers going to be brought to RSPB Loch Lomond?

If the application is successful, we are proposing to move the first family of beavers in autumn/winter 2022.

Won't beavers impact the habitats and species already found on the NNR?

The vast majority of the impacts on the habitats and species of the NNR will be positive, however, we carried out a thorough risk assessment evaluating the species and habitats found on the NNR to make sure that they will not be negatively affected by these plans. Our assessments have found no major issues in translocating beavers to the NNR.

Why move beavers, won't they just cause the same issues here as elsewhere?

The issues in Tayside are largely related to beaver activity on prime agricultural land, for example damming field drains which can cause flooding across areas of valuable cropped land. The area around Loch Lomond is not prime agricultural land and the water system is not as highly modified so we are not expecting the same issues here.

Won't moving beavers spread diseases?

No, the beavers undergo a full health check and quarantine process before they are moved.

What are the benefits of beavers?

Beavers create complex wetland features such as canals, wet woodland, coppice, dead wood and ponds: all of these will be a huge boost to the biodiversity currently found in the NNR. It has also been proven that healthy wetlands are more effective at absorbing and storing carbon than forestry plantations, so having healthy, well-managed wetlands is important in our fight towards tackling the climate and nature emergency, and beavers will help us to achieve this.

How will you monitor changes to water levels?

We will be installing at least one remote water depth logger on the Aber Burn prior to beavers arriving at RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond. This device will issue a text message to the Reserve Team if the water level rises above a certain trigger level, indicating that there may have been recent damming activity on the burn. This will enable the Reserve Team to rapidly assess the situation on site and determine if any mitigation measures, eg use of flow device or dam removal, are required.

What happens if the beavers damage my trees?

Beavers have strong incisors (fortified with iron!) which enable them to gnaw and fell trees. In doing so, beavers provide a natural coppicing service, enabling meadows and shrubland to establish around trees. As semi-aquatic mammals, beaver impacts tend to be largely restricted to within 20-30m of a water course. If you are concerned that trees could be impacted by beavers there are a variety of mitigation measures that can be applied to protect trees, such as wrapping chicken wire around the base, which is highly effective. You can find out more information and advice from NatureScot.

Are beavers going to damage fish populations?

Beavers and freshwater fish have lived together for millions of years, and in fact studies from across the beaver's range show that fish benefit from the influence beavers have on wetlands, including the increased opportunities beaver wetlands offer in increased prey and shelter. For example, one study has found that beaver pools support more ages and a higher number of brown trout compared to similar areas without beavers.

Will the beavers flood my land? How do we stop this?

Since beavers depend upon water to live and disperse, they are stimulated to create dams on shallow, low-energy waterways which can cause localised flooding. This enables wetlands to establish which, in areas where there is space to support this, can benefit biodiversity and the function and health of water. If beavers do build dams in an area that is causing damage through flooding, then NatureScot can give advice on a range of mitigation options to alleviate or stop damming activity. RSPB Scotland also has experience of this through our work with beavers on other reserves and will be able to advise on suitable local solutions, such as installing flow devices.

Will RSPB Scotland provide compensation for any flood damage caused by beaver dams?

The Scottish Government does not have a compensation scheme for beavers and instead focusses on providing resources for mitigation and management to prevent damage before it occurs. There

are many tried and tested techniques for mitigating the impacts of beavers, which have been used around the world.

Are the beavers going to flood the brand-new path at RSPB Loch Lomond?

The vast majority of the new path route passes through parts of the site where beavers are unlikely to have any significant impacts i.e., grassland and woodland. The water level in the fen (Aber Bog) may be raised, but in this section, we have built a boardwalk designed to withstand flooding and water inundation, which is a natural part of the site processes anyway.

Where can I go to give my opinion and find out more?

We have contracted a third-party (Wild Intrigue) to provide information sessions for the communities adjacent to the NNR and to capture and help to answer any questions and address any concerns. There has been face-to-face meetings and online events and a questionnaire available for completion to provide feedback. Keep an eye on the following for the most up to date information:

Twitter: @RSPBLochLomond

RSPB Blog: [Loch Lomond and Black Devon Wetlands - Our work - The RSPB Community](#)

You can also email beavers.lomond@rspb.org.uk with any specific questions you may have.