

Written submission from Scottish Natural Heritage, 13 September 2017

Pow of Inchaffray

Background

SNH was made aware in the late winter of 2016-17 of issues arising from the presence of beavers for some land managers farming on the low gradient land drained by the Pow of Inchaffray. There is currently sporadic tree felling by beavers and the landowners have an informal programme of dam removal to maintain drainage.

SNH made contact with the Pow Commission in February 2017 and our advisor made an accompanied site visit in March where she saw some of the tree cutting and damming that the beavers had done. During that visit she noted that the Pow and its farmed hinterland may, because of the shape of the catchment and 'pinch points' for access for beavers from the River Earn, be a suitable site to trial techniques for excluding beavers from certain areas of land. She was aware of SNH/SG proposals to fund trial novel management techniques to assess their application as longer term beaver management options.

Proposal

The concept is that by installing a beaver-proof gate on the watercourse the animals' former free movement in the watercourse will be hampered. In order to by-pass the obstruction caused by the gate in the water, an animal is forced out of the watercourse and onto dry land where beavers are both vulnerable and, by their nature, nervous. Beaver-proof fencing erected from the gate in the water out across land thus causes the animal to stray further from the water and, being distant from water, they simply turn around and go back. While unlikely to be effective for 100% of the time, the water-gate and fence provides land managers with a deterrent to beavers seeking to enter the area.

This fencing proposal offers a suitable trial of novel mitigation work and so was discussed with Jo Guest representing the Pow Commissioners. Should it go ahead the exclusion would benefit a number of landowners and deter beavers from a farmed area of long, flat ditches and limited tree and scrub cover.

Funding

In early September SNH received cost estimates from the Commissioners for the bespoke exclusion devices, and will be discussing the potential level of any funding support or its availability with the Scottish Government before reverting to the Pow Commissioners.

Scottish Natural Heritage
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