

PE1720/A

Petitioner Submission of 21 June 2019

I am Les Wallace and you discussed my petition 1720 - Natural Flood Alleviation Strategy for Scotland on Thursday the 20th of June. I was somewhat alarmed that although SEPA, SNH and the James Hutton Institute were going to be contacted to provide further evidence so were NFU Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates and 'fisheries people', but not those with a specific background in natural flood alleviation. The petition was intended to take this issue to the broader public who are affected - namely those whose homes and businesses have been flooded when this might have been avoided had the strategy suggested by the petition been in place. I therefore feel that it was extremely poor there was no call for evidence from those outside government with an interest and experience in natural flood alleviation work, especially the role of beavers in this.

For true balance and objectivity, I suggest that you contact Paul and Louise Ramsay of Bamff Estate, who have had an enclosed beaver colony on their land for many years, and other members of the Scottish Wild Beaver Group. They in turn would be able to identify relevant speakers on this topic. I also suggest Mr Derek Gow, an ecologist; the Treesresponsibility Group (they are mentioned in the petition); those involved in the four trials in England to determine the effects have on alleviating flooding (and drought conditions, improving water quality and aiding conservation), and similar schemes not using beavers at the present time which include Belford in Northumbria where replica 'beaver' dams are used to slow the flow - also the case with Hardcastle Crags, a National Trust property in West Yorkshire.

The fact that so many references have to be made to schemes outside of Scotland when with our geography we could benefit more than most from this approach is intensely frustrating and was the motivation for the petition in the first instance. The petitions committee will not have broken that cycle of inaction if it only refers to non-governmental bodies which have taken an antipathetic stance to the reintroduction of beavers from the very beginning. The 'damage' supposedly due to beaver activity - real, imagined or exaggerated - even if it can't be mitigated (and there has been little evidence of interest in this) must be measured against the immense damage caused by the flooding they can reduce. I suggest the committee also ask for evidence from those who've lost their homes to floods and ask them at a time when we throw away a third of our food if preventing the corner of a tattie field from getting soggy is more important than stopping homes, villages and towns from going underwater. I wonder if the representatives from NFU Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates and the 'fisheries people' will have had that experience?

I have added in a few references below that I believe all committee members need to examine to obtain as balanced and objective a look at this issue as possible.

- This video (the most compelling one I've ever seen on any topic) examines why bringing back farming from the river edge reduces flooding and water pollution - this in itself would greatly reduce possible conflict with beavers - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00tcTY_UEk4

- This article by Mr Derek Gow a farmer himself is a powerful piece regarding the current, somewhat ludicrous situation in Scotland re the beaver - <https://markavery.info/2019/06/03/guest-blog-i-nmust-tell-yu-something-of-the-beaver-by-derek-gow/>
- Given that we are also suffering from an acute problem with vast uninterrupted moorland, tree planting and beaver translocations in the uplands as well as reducing downstream flooding would create very effective firebreaks - damp woodland and dammed water don't burn readily!! <https://thekidshouldseethis.com/post/beaver-dams-wildfire>
<https://www.thewildlifeneeds.com/2013/10/25/beaver-restoration-would-reduce-wildfires/>
- Since there has been much talk of the Tay beavers I believe this is relevant - they have never caused the flooding in Perth, unfortunately they are not being given a proper opportunity to reduce it either - <https://www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/perth-is-scottish-city-most-likely-to-flood-says-moneysupermarket/>

I hope that the petitions committee has found this constructive and is assured that I will do my utmost to help it reach a well informed and progressive stance on a subject in which so far we have been lagging behind others who often do not have as much to gain from it as we do!