

Beaver Consultation Report

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1. Introduction & Purpose

[Forestry and Land Scotland](#) (FLS) and [Trees for Life](#) (TfL) have been working in partnership since 2022 to engage with the local community regarding a potential proposal to return beavers to Glen Affric, above the Beinn A' Mheadhoin Dam. In 2023, TfL published the [Community Consultation Report](#) which recommended additional discussions with the Strathglass community before any possible beaver release moves ahead. FLS and TfL commissioned [Deciding Matters](#) to facilitate these discussions and design a set of recommendations for actions the community would like to see before any potential proposals are submitted.

Deciding Matters (DM) worked closely with TfL and FLS to engage with those living locally who may be affected by future beaver reintegration, conducting one-to-one interviews and hosting a group workshop to understand the specific challenges associated with the local land, and identify priority concerns and risk mitigation measures that could be implemented. This work was built upon conversations and public events which had previously taken place, led by TfL, as part of the initial consultation phase. This process offered an opportunity for residents, landowners and land managers in a targeted postcode area to further engage on this topic.

2. Executive Summary

This topic of deliberation has elicited highly polarised responses from the community, with individuals having a diverse range of perspectives on the potential reintroduction of beavers into the Glen Affric area. This polarisation has resulted in tensions between community members, which has been exacerbated by fractured relationships with, and lack of trust in, both FLS and TfL.

This report will share the responses from those in the community who gave consent to engage in this process and gave up their time to take part in individual interviews and attend a workshop. There are many in the community whose voices and opinions have not been captured in this work, some potential reasons for this are explored in more detail in the responses below.

This process engaged with individuals with a spectrum of perceptions with regards to the reintroduction of beavers, with a range of relationships with the land, and a diverse array of ages.

2.1 Recommended Actions

When asked, “Do you want Forestry and Land Scotland to submit a proposal to NatureScot for the reintroduction of beavers in Glen Affric (above the Beinn A’ Mheadhoin Dam)?” **The majority of participants responded, “Yes, I want a proposal to be submitted”.**

The following recommendations received majority agreement as high priority actions to be taken forward by FLS and/or TfL:

Recommendation	Summary
Specific support and mitigation measures with clear processes	<p>There should be a single point of contact for people with concerns regarding beavers, a process-based document on how to manage beaver impacts, and practical guidance for land-owners.</p> <p>Compensation should be available (after an evidence-based assessment) to cover the cost of damages caused by beavers.</p> <p>Beavers should be relocated where necessary.</p>
Transparency and trust building	<p>There should be ongoing opportunities for the community to ask questions of the organisations involved.</p> <p>A third party should review processes and deliberation.</p>
Educational opportunities and tackling misinformation	<p>There needs to be provision of free, concise and accessible information, without the requirement for people to engage in a process.</p>
Beaver monitoring (including tracking and population control)	<p>Areas of concern should receive additional monitoring.</p> <p>The community should be made aware if beavers are moving to other areas.</p>
Comms/promotion	<p>There should be neutral forums which are able to share factual information about beavers, but also provide spaces for land managers to raise concerns and seek answers.</p> <p>Sharing updates via regular content.</p>

Monitoring of other species	Tree growth should be monitored and habitat surveys undertaken.
Information for wildlife spotters, tourists and visitors	Consider additional tourism being brought to the area and support local infrastructure. Highlight important information about protecting nature while visiting.

2.2 Transparent Decision Making

Deciding Matters understands that this report will be considered alongside a range of evidence (including letters from the community and expert insight) while a decision whether of not to submit a proposal to reintroduce beavers is made.

It is our recommendation that, regardless of the outcome, FLS and TfL publish their decision making process publicly, sharing their consideration of each piece of evidence and how they came to their final conclusion. This will support trust in the community consultation process as well as in the organisations involved.

3. Approach and Methodology

3.1 Process Delivery

3.1.1 Inception and Planning

DM worked closely with the TfL and FLS teams to identify key lines of enquiry, a series of questions which would be brought to local participants initially through interviews, and then in the format of a workshop. These questions intended to understand the range of perceptions in the community, highlight the nuance of concerns local residents have regarding the potential release of beavers, and understand what, if any, mitigation measures could be put in place to assuage these concerns.

The following interview questions were identified as being relevant:

1. How did you engage with the initial phases of this consultation?
2. Do you have any specific concerns regarding the reintroduction of beavers with regards to land that you own/reside on/manage/work on? If yes, please provide details.
3. What do you consider to be the benefits of the reintroduction of beavers?
4. What measures would you like to see Forestry Land Scotland and/or Trees for Life take as a proposal moves forward?

The responses to these questions heavily influenced workshop design, and resulted in the following key lines of enquiry for the day:

1. What are your hopes and fears with regards to this process?
2. What actions could be taken to address the concerns and measures identified through interviews?
3. Does the reintroduction process need to be paused or halted?
4. What is your vision for a potential beaver release?
5. How much do you agree or disagree with this workshop's recommendations?

3.1.2 Recruitment

This piece of work was a follow-on process and part of a wider consultation which had been going on since 2022, led by TfL and with input from FLS. As TfL's report recommended further engagement with a specific community group (those most likely to be affected by the potential release of beavers in Glen Affric), it was decided by all those involved that FLS and TfL would be responsible for distributing recruitment packs to the target community.

Recruitment packs were created by DM, with a covering letter from FLS and TfL to provide an overview of the process and the new opportunities to engage. TfL distributed these packs in person, delivering a pack to every household in the target area. This approach was taken to ensure no one was missed from this process (for example, online promotion would exclude anyone who is not digitally connected). There was an initial error, with some houses receiving an outdated recruitment pack, but this was quickly rectified and the correct information distributed.

Recruitment took place via an online expression of interest form, but a phone number and email address for a member of the DM team was also circulated to ensure anyone who was unable to complete the online form, for any reason, could reach out for direct support.

3.1.3 Accessibility and Inclusivity

The delivery team were keen that the process be as accessible and inclusive as possible, considering the wide-ranging needs of participants, and removing as many barriers to engagement as possible.

By distributing letters to each house in the target area, every single member of the community was made aware of this consultation process, regardless of past engagement, digital access, or inclusion in other community groups.

While completing the expression of interest form, participants were asked to highlight any support they would like to be put in place to ensure they could engage fully in the process. This support

could include printed materials, accessibility considerations, language support, etc. Budget was made available to ensure any support needs could be met.

3.1.4 Interviews

A range of interview times were offered to participants, across mornings, afternoons and evenings on any weekday. Participants could select their own interview time, ensuring it would not clash with other responsibilities (such as work, caring, hobbies, etc.). Participants were also able to select the method of interview enabling people to engage in a space they felt comfortable and safe in. Options included in-person, via zoom, in writing via email, or over the phone,

Interview questions were shared in advance, and a map was provided during interviews to enable participants to identify any specific areas of concern. Interviews generally lasted one hour, although timings were flexible to ensure each respondent was given time to express their views fully. Interviews were captured in note form by the DM team member conducting the interview.

3.1.5 Workshop

The workshop was held at a local venue, with catering provided by another local business. The workshop utilised multiple methods of engagement, allowing participants to share their views in ways they felt comfortable with (group discussions, written responses, anonymous feedback, drawing on the map).

It was intended that a presentation be used on the day to highlight instructions, but a technical error meant this was not possible.

As participants arrived, they were asked to complete an anonymous consensus worksheet, marking how much they agreed or disagreed with the summarised concerns and benefits which had been identified through the interview process. This was to understand the level of agreement across the group.

During the workshop, the lead facilitator shared an agenda for the day, alongside an overview of the project. Participants were split into two groups, each at a table with their own facilitator. In their groups, participants were asked to share their hopes and fears for the process, which they then shared back with the wider group.

Representatives from both FLS and TfL were present to give a short talk on their work, the process so far and potential next steps. This was followed by a Q&A session in which all participants were invited to ask any questions they had. FLS and TfL staff were available for the full day to answer any

questions from participants as they came up during deliberation. When not answering questions, FLS and TfL staff were sat away from the process so as to not sway any discussions.

Participants were next given an overview of responses gathered so far from interviews, covering the concerns and benefits highlighted in the consensus worksheet, as well as some common themes which had been noted. Groups were given time to discuss their initial thoughts at their tables before taking a short break.

Measures which had been highlighted during the interview stage had been clustered into themes prior to the workshop. After the break, these themes were split between the two groups, with each group being asked to review the interview responses and draft recommendations by answering the following questions:

- Why is this theme important?
- What specific actions should be taken, and by whom?
- What will success look like if this action is taken forward?

One measure was not discussed at this stage: pausing the reintroduction process. As this was not likely to have a range of possible actions attached to it, it was saved as a follow-up conversation for each group to address once they had reviewed the other mitigation measures suggested by the community.

After lunch, the groups swapped themes so that they could each review the others' recommendations and add their own comments. This was to give each participant the opportunity to feed into each potential measure, resulting in collective ownership of all outputs from the workshop.

Once each group had looked over their first themes again, responding to any comments or making any final edits, they were asked to consider all the recommendations, and then discuss whether the process should be paused. Pausing, or stopping, the process was a measure that came from multiple interviews and was important to discuss on the day as a potential next step for this work.

To summarise their thinking from the day, each group was asked to draft a vision statement before the end of the workshop. These vision statements aimed to summarise the thinking behind their recommended next steps, and provide some context for this report.

As a follow-up, the recommendations drafted during the workshop were shared as an online voting activity, enabling those who attended the workshop, and those who were unable to attend, to share their individual level of agreement with each recommendation. This provided DM with an overview of the level of consensus across those who participated in the process.

3.1.6 Delivery Challenges

Deciding Matters team have discussed in depth whether to share this workshop incident in this report due to the sensitive nature, but due to voices potentially not being reflected correctly the team felt it was fundamental to add this for full transparency. Below we address a workshop incident and some of the wider context of these perspectives and challenges to consider how we can start addressing these in future community deliberative settings in Scotland.

Alongside participants who engaged in deliberative discussions and activities throughout the day, an additional group of community members attended the morning but did not engage in the structured workshop. Some of this group had taken part in the interview process, some had not been involved or given prior consent to take part, and some were not from the area in scope/targeted for this piece of work. This group wanted to express their views and were invited to take part in the workshop by the lead facilitator when they arrived but instead chose to have a separate conversation with the TfL and FLS staff.

Unfortunately for other participants, this ended in disruption and aggressive shouting from a member of this group, resulting in one person being asked to leave the room.

Deciding Matters' facilitation team's role is to create a safe neutral space for everyone regardless of views or background and on whatever topic or issue is being discussed. Although the arrival of this group was both unexpected and unusual, this incident reflects the overarching issue that the topic is a very important and emotive topic for many people in the area, particularly those who are concerned of the impact on their land.

Many participants who took part in both the interviews and the workshop emphasized that they were concerned that pro-beaver voices would not be heard, or would be undermined by those who were vocally against the reintroduction, with worries that recommendations in this report would not be followed in an attempt to avoid conflict with anti-reintroduction groups. There were also concerns that pro-beaver sentiments would be met with hostility in the community.

It is also important to note, those community members who are against the reintroduction of beavers need a safe and neutral space to share their valid concerns. Many felt that the process was biased against them from the start due to the involvement of vocally pro-beaver organisations, and individuals who raised concerns often did not feel they were being heard.

Tension between individuals with conflicting perspectives, and fractured trust in the organisations leading this work has resulting in difficulty reaching consensus as a community. This could be addressed through further deliberative workshops with neutral facilitators and experts with a range

of backgrounds. Further information around perceived challenges and recommendations moving forward can be found in section 7, Learning and Process Recommendations.

3.1.7 Additional Interviews

After the workshop was complete and a draft report circulated, a number of community members reached out to DM asking for the opportunity to engage with the process and take part in an interview. FLS and TfL agreed to extend the process and a secondary round of interviews were held with any member of the community who was interested. As some recommendations had already been drafted by the community, interview questions were slightly adapted to take this into account and the follow-up voting activity was shared with new interview participants alongside a document detailing the workshop outputs. Final questions were:

1. How did you engage with the initial phases of this consultation?
2. Do you have any specific concerns regarding the reintroduction of beavers with regards to land that you own/reside on/manage/work on? If yes, please provide details.
3. What do you consider to be the benefits of the reintroduction of beavers?
4. Please complete the voting to detail your level of agreement/disagreement with the recommendations details above (there is also an option to abstain). You will also be asked to answer the question **“Do you want Forestry and Land Scotland to submit a proposal to NatureScot for the reintroduction of beavers in Glen Affric (above the Beinn A’ Mheadhoin Dam)?”**
5. Do you have any additional comments?

Many participants utilised the additional comments section to add measures they would like to see alongside the recommendations drafted during the workshop.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Demographics

We set out to engage with at least 10 members of the community, and were thrilled to receive 74 responses to the expression of interest form. Of these 74, 28 people took part in initial interviews, 15 of whom attended the full workshop, and a further 36 took part in the additional interviews offered after the workshop. Five of the applicants were not eligible to take part in this stage of the process as they did not live in, work on, or own land in the target area for applicants. Five applicants did not respond to follow-up communication.

During registration, participants were asked to provide the following information and demographics:

- Name
- Contact Details

- Postcode
- Relationship with the land (participants could mark all that applied):
 - Full-time resident
 - Business owner
 - Part-time resident/holiday resident
 - Farmer
 - Landowner and resident
 - Tenant farmer
 - Landowner living elsewhere
 - Crofter
 - Land manager
 - Other
- Age bracket:
 - 16-19
 - 50-59
 - 20-29
 - 60-69
 - 30-39
 - 70+
 - 40-49
- Description of how they engage with the and alongside the river
- Any additional support needs

Participants who took part in the interviews and then the workshop were highly diverse, with all age brackets from 20+ being represented, and a wide range of relationships with the land being declared. *For full demographic breakdown, see appendix 1.*

3.2.2 Gift of Thanks

All participants were offered a £20 gift of thanks for taking part in an interview, and an £80 gift of thanks for attending and taking part in the workshop. A gift of thanks is recommended best practice by Scottish Government through the Open Government Participation Framework, and is recommended by deliberative democracy organisations across the UK. The gift of thanks is intended to recognise the time dedicated to the process by participants as well as the invaluable insight they provide. It also ensures no financial burden is taken on by participants simply for engaging. The gift of thanks was paid by bank transfer, or available as a voucher of the participants' choice. The option of receiving a voucher ensures that any participants who receive benefits are not penalised for accepting the gift of thanks.

4. Interview Responses

All interview responses from have been clustered into themes and summarised below. These responses are the opinions and perspectives of the individuals who participated. Some responses may read as contradictory, as participants had individual insights which have all been captured. Full raw data for interviews can be found in the separate document, Thematic Interview Outputs.

4.1 How did you engage with the initial phases of this consultation?

Theme	Summary of responses
Engaged	Some people attended the consultation drop-in sessions held in the local halls. Most people who engaged attended multiple sessions and took part in additional conversations across the community, including with local groups such as the community council.
Didn't feel able to communicate pro-beaver perspectives	Many participants noted that they did not feel comfortable attending the initial drop-in phases as they felt that pro-beaver perspectives would be met with hostility from other community members in attendance. There was concern that any public support for a proposal would create conflict within the community and between neighbours. There was also some concern that some of those against the reintroduction were implying that was the majority perspective while this did not appear to be the case.
Didn't know about it	Some participants hadn't been aware of the initial phase until they received a letter about this follow-on process. Many residents don't regularly use social media and worried that they would miss future opportunities if social media was the main way of communication.
Scepticism of the legitimacy of the process	<p>Some participants were sceptical of the processes surrounding the reintroduction of animals, with unlicensed releases known to have taken place in the local area previously.</p> <p>Initial information from the organisations involved did not include an official survey of the land by a legitimate and neutral party, and so information based on the survey undertaken could not be relied upon.</p> <p>There were some concerns raised about the groups being targeted for the different phases of consultation – initial pop-ups included tourists or visitors to the area who wouldn't be affected by a reintroduction, this phase did not include communities covering the whole catchment area.</p> <p>People who expressed concerns at meetings did not feel their concerns were taken seriously or that questions were answered appropriately (for example, data was given with regards to beavers in other areas but not on a similar, hydro-managed system).</p> <p>Concern that the whole process has been biased towards a beaver reintroduction.</p> <p>Delivery of initial phases being led by pro-beaver organisations meant that many of the community felt the consultation was heavily biased and should have been delivered by a neutral party from the beginning.</p>
Unable to attend in-person sessions	It's hard for people to give up their time to attend in-person sessions when they have other responsibilities, such as childcare or shift work.

	Land-based jobs, such as those in agriculture, can also be hard to plan around as changing weather, or needs of livestock cannot always be determined in advance and so in-person sessions can be hard to attend.
Utilised wider engagement tools	Some people who were unable to attend in-person sessions made use of the TfL website and generally found that to be a useful tool, although would have liked more information around beavers behaviour and the benefits they can bring to an area.
Relationships impacting engagement	Some participants noted that the process undertaken by TfL and FLS created additional division in the community and poor communication from the organisations made the process more lengthy and complicated.

4.2 Do you have any specific concerns regarding the reintroduction of beavers with regards to land that you own/reside on/manage/work on?

Theme	Summary of responses
Lack of trust in the organisations/process	<p>Some participants were concerned that none of the organisations involved were neutral, (FLS and TfL are seen as pro-beaver, DM is being paid to undertake this work, a previous landowner involved in the process is the chair of TfL).</p> <p>Lack of appropriate engagement from wider organisations has impacted trust in the process. NatureScot has been contacted multiple times about previous unlicensed releases of beaver on this river system but has not taken action. SSE has not engaged with any discussions with the community.</p> <p>Introduction of beavers seems to go against the missions of both TfL and FLS, who should be protecting trees and the riverbanks.</p> <p>This seems irresponsible when there isn't money to cover the damage that could be caused by beavers (there won't be a compensation scheme).</p> <p>No land survey has been undertaken by a neutral party and with agreement from landowners along the river.</p> <p>Concern that the introduction of another protected species is another way to try and get national park status which could also cause issues for local people working on the land.</p>

	Some of the local community also felt that comments comparing arable land in the local area with that of Tayside implied that farmland locally was less valued.
Flooding	There is already a lot of flooding in the area, beavers aren't likely to improve that. Concerns that beavers will block drainage channels and ditches.
Beaver welfare	Concern that the Beinn A' Mheadhoin site wouldn't be suitable for beavers due to the hydro scheme causing unpredictable water levels and the presence of dams and turbines. Some participants also had concerns that the introduction of a small gene pool would result in inbreeding without the introduction of more genetic diversity within the population.
Misinformation and public perception	Some participants were concerned about misinformation being spread about beavers and the damage they could potentially do (e.g. some people thinking they'll eat salmon but beavers are herbivores). There was concern that misinformation was creating additional fears in the community.
Negative backlash and persecution	Some participants noted that they would be concerned that people who do not want beavers to be released will take inappropriate action, including shooting beavers. Fears of beaver persecution from hostile actors. Negative backlash from the initial consultation phase meant that some people in the local community did not feel able to share their pro-beaver comments or feel comfortable engaging in the broader conversations.
Damage to riverbanks	While beavers won't dam the River Glass, they could damage the banks and surrounding habitat. Erosion of riverbanks could cause significant risk to those who work on the land up to the river's edge (up to and including death if a tractor rolls, for example). Undermining banks will affect stability of farmland. Damage caused by beavers to the banks would likely be permanent, for example, a stretch of bank collapsing on top of a burrow.
Negative impact on other local wildlife	There are a range of native species living currently on the river, and there are concerns that the reintroduction of beavers will negatively affect: salmon, otters, kingfishers, ground nesting birds, red squirrel, pine marten. By significantly altering the riverbank, burrowing and damming, beavers could destroy the habitats of these other species.

	<p>Beavers could affect salmon spawning grounds by preventing grown salmon from migrating (creating dams as a block).</p> <p>Reintroduced beavers would not have a local predator to control the population naturally.</p>
<p>Negative impact on tree growth</p>	<p>Lots of island lochs in Beinn A' Mheadhoin are currently free from grazing animals and are a great place for natural regeneration – these will become a feeding ground for beavers.</p> <p>Some participants are concerned that newly planted trees (which have been placed with the intention of protecting the riverbank) will be destroyed.</p> <p>Mature trees, 5-150 years old could be gone. It's not reasonable to wire-wrap every tree along the bank. Beavers have already destroyed some mature trees along the local riverbank.</p> <p>High levels of grazing from both sheep and deer could mean that trees felled by beavers are unable to coppice and are unable to continue to provide a sustainable food source for the beavers.</p>
<p>Impacting community relationships</p>	<p>There were concerns that decisions made could cause conflict for members of the community with different perspectives on beavers.</p> <p>Some participants noted that the people most likely to be affected are the people who have the least resources already (e.g. tenant farmers utilising subsidies to maintain farmland).</p> <p>Some participants noted that some members of the community who were very vocally pro- or anti- beaver reintroduction sometimes spoke on behalf of the wider community without consultation. There were concerns that this process may cause more polarisation rather than supporting community cohesion.</p>
<p>Impact on livelihoods</p>	<p>Some participants were concerned about the potential loss of land from bank erosion, resulting in a halt in future development.</p> <p>The lack of compensation means that there is no support for people who lose land, development opportunities, inheritance, etc. Landowners will be left without support to deal with any damage caused by beavers.</p> <p>There is a risk that people will see a life's work on the river's edge be destroyed (e.g. those that have been working on creating habitat for other native species such as kingfishers).</p>

Negative impact of increased tourism	There were some concerns about increased numbers of tourists to the area which lacks suitable infrastructure to deal with this. There is also the increased risk of damage such as fires that tourists may cause.
Water levels and human management of water system	Concern that water levels will be managed to benefit the beavers rather than the people.
Ongoing beaver management	Some landowners highlighted that there is only a 2-week window to find and remove a beaver dam before NatureScot would have to be involved and this is not a reasonable timescale to find and deal with the dam. There is concern that there is not a clear monitoring process already in place, despite a Beaver Management Officer being in post. A clearly defined system to deal with concerns needs to be in place.
Beavers migrating downstream	There were some concerns that the beavers would migrate downstream and start to breed. Beaver populations are already known to live on the River Glass and participants were concerned that the populations will blend and populate rapidly.
Unknown factors	The land is changing due to the ongoing climate crisis and we do not know how the reintroduction of a species will further affect the land.
Limited access to support	Arduous administrative processes to access support will result in people not being able to get help in a timely manner.
Risk to livestock	Flooding to farmland could cause overflow and land-stuck livestock. Farmers currently get warnings from SEPA if there is likely to be flooding, but there wouldn't be a warning system in place for beaver related activity. Without effective testing, new beaver populations could bring diseases to the area which affect livestock. Undermined banks could be highly dangerous for cattle.
None	Some respondents noted that they had no concerns.

When answering this question, participants were also presented with an OS map of the local area where they could add specific details. *For the full map, see appendix 2.*

4.3 What do you consider to be the benefits of the reintroduction of beavers?

Theme	Summary of responses
Restoration of native species	Some respondents noted that beavers are a native species and had been in this area previously and so should be returned to it. Beavers have

	<p>previously been an important part of every watercourse in the UK and will support those environments.</p> <p>By reintroducing a native keystone species, the local ecology might be supported to return to a more natural state.</p>
Enjoyment of wildlife	<p>There was some excitement at the prospect of seeing beavers in the local area.</p> <p>Some participants thought it would increase the enjoyment of nature.</p>
Increased tourism boosting local economy	<p>Beavers could generate more sustainable, eco-tourism which would benefit many local businesses and boost the local economy.</p> <p>Some participants noted that beavers may increase the likelihood of the area becoming a national park which was seen by some as a good thing.</p>
Supporting biodiversity	<p>Some participants noted that beavers are a keystone species and can support habitats for a wide range of native species, including invertebrates, salmon, native trees (through coppicing).</p> <p>Pools created by beavers can provide homes for native species that might not otherwise be found in the rivers locally. The addition of felled trees to these pools create ideal habitats for a range of invertebrates, which then positively impact the wider food chain and bring further biodiversity to the area. Improved biodiversity will generally improve the ecological status of the area.</p> <p>Beavers' protected status could also create protections for other local wildlife.</p>
Educational Opportunities	<p>Opportunities could arise for schools programmes and citizen science programmes.</p> <p>Some participants noted the presence of beavers could bring new outreach programmes to the area.</p>
Improvements to wetlands	<p>Felled trees or the presence of dams could help repair wetland ecosystems, slowing the flow of water upstream, creating pools on the riverbanks and filtering water to enhance water quality downstream.</p> <p>These pools can help prevent drought in dry years which may become more of a concern in the future due to the ongoing climate crisis.</p>
Ideal habitat for release	<p>Some considered that the release site above Beinn A' Mheadhoin Dam shouldn't affect farmland and would provide a perfect habitat for beavers.</p>
Flood prevention	<p>Participants noted that beavers can reinforce banks and landscapes, while dams can create natural pools. This will cause the river to meander more, mitigating flood risks.</p>

	There were hopes that changing the river environment will slow the flow of water which will also help alleviate flood risks.
Social and cultural benefits	Some participants highlighted the potential social and mental health benefits if the local residents increase their engagement and enhance connections with nature.
Improved habitats for fish species	<p>The pools and habitats created by beavers can create additional breeding grounds for salmon and trout as well as creating shelters for salmonids.</p> <p>Potential increases in presence of invertebrates due to beavers' influence can provide an additional food source for fish.</p> <p>The area is an important one for salmon and trout and beavers could support the local fishing community.</p>
Supporting tree growth	Many participants noted that beavers eating trees should act as a natural coppice and help native tree populations regenerate.
None	Some respondents noted that there were no benefits.

4.4 What measures would you like to see Forestry and Land Scotland and/or Trees for Life take as a proposal moves forward?

Theme	Summarised suggested measures
Beaver monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management plans and emergency response measures should be made public • Monitoring and reporting of beaver movements • Keeping beavers to a localised area where possible • Learn from monitoring measures taken in other areas (e.g. Perthshire) • Minimal human disruption to beavers where possible • Monitor the landscape and any changes caused by beavers • Trapping and relocating beavers found to be residing on farmland
Educational opportunities and tackling misinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the public on beaver welfare • Engage with local schools and local children's groups (e.g. educational trips, or asking the children to name the beavers) • Share news and updates on the beaver population • Ranger-led talks scheduled throughout the year (to be self-funded by charging participants) • Sharing unbiased information about beavers • Accessible awareness raising campaigns (e.g. series of lectures in public places)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling misinformation being shared by local groups (e.g. presentations to community councils) • Highlighting protected status of beavers, including law and relocation measures • Educate around positive impacts on local ecology and biodiversity • Information shared to be cited and sources linked • Align any educational opportunities with the existing curriculum
<p>Comms and promotion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, unbiased information being shared publicly • Film on the benefits of having beavers back in wetlands ecosystem (such as The Big Picture films) • More social media presence (e.g. nature watch) • Share relevant case studies • Use plain English and accessible language • Emphasise accredited, peer-reviewed and referenced sources to tackle misinformation
<p>Clear processes for damage mitigation support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to all concerns with respect and sincerity • Clear and accessible processes for local people to report concerns • Processes which are not arduous to complete (e.g. no long administrative tasks) • Compensate those who are negatively impacted by damage caused by beavers • Clear roles and responsibilities of who should be contacted and who is responsible for damages caused by beavers • Remove beavers from a property as soon as any signs of damage are spotted • Repair and protect critical infrastructure • Clear processes to report flooding concerns affecting paths and access routes • Minimise the impact of beavers as much as possible • Ensure that the needs of the people in the community are prioritised over the needs of animals • Review and adapt processes when relevant
<p>Transparency and building trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency around why beavers are being relocated and what measures have been taken to ensure any issues are not repeated • Organisations involved to build trust with the community through transparency and continued engagement • Studies undertaken to understand potential impacts on beavers in this particular area (e.g. hydro managed areas with similar landscapes) • Concerns and mitigation measures to be shared publicly (e.g. online)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-through with actions suggested by the community • Allay community fears through clear communication and transparency around decision-making
Information for wildlife spotters, tourists and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice boards with information around beavers (e.g. how to spot a lodge, and not to disrupt the animals) • Consider access and paths for visitors to the area trying to see the wildlife • Promote respect for the land and warn of potential dangers (e.g. accidental fires) • Highlight information at key spots (e.g. Dog Falls car park) • Divert the public where beavers have decided to reside on a public access path • Creation of observation points • Limit tourism and access during lambing and calving season
Monitoring other species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear deer management measures to ensure trees coppiced by beavers are not grazed and unable to regenerate • Support salmon with continuous upstream routes (no dam blockages) • Monitor population of local wildlife (salmon, trout, otters, kingfishers, etc.) and report any changes as a result of beavers • Highlight impact on other local, native species (e.g. invertebrates and birds) • Pre-emptive planting of trees and other suitable vegetation that beavers will feed on
Protection of beavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process to report concerns about beaver welfare (e.g. where a beaver may at risk from hostile actors in the community) • Ensure beavers are not negatively persecuted by those who may be unhappy about the reintroduction
Pause the reintroduction process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop moving forward with a reintroduction • Undertake a detailed, completely independent ecological impacts assessment via someone agreed upon by both the community and the organisations • Remove unlicensed beavers from the river system

5. Workshop Outputs

5.1 Consensus Activity

Participants were asked to anonymously complete the tables below on individual worksheets. A percentage response has been added here (percentages have been rounded up to 1 decimal place).

Concern	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lack of trust in the process	11.8	41.2	11.8	5.9	29.4
Flooding	5.9	35.3	17.6	11.8	29.4
Beaver welfare	12.5	18.8	12.5	37.5	18.8
Misinformation and public perception	0	0	6.3	31.3	62.5
Negative backlash and persecution	0	0	12.5	12.5	75
Damage to riverbanks	18.8	50	0	0	31.3
Negative impact on other local wildlife	58.8	0	5.9	11.8	23.5
Negative impact on tree growth	35.3	23.5	11.8	0	29.4
Impacting community relationships	6.3	18.8	12.5	31.3	31.3
Impacting livelihoods	17.6	23.5	11.8	23.5	23.5
Negative impact of increased tourism	18.8	12.5	43.8	18.8	6.3
Water levels and human management of water system	12.5	37.5	12.5	12.5	25
Ongoing beaver management	0	12.5	37.5	31.3	18.8
No concerns	33.3	33.3	13.3	13.3	6.7

Benefits	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Restoration of native species	5.9	0	17.6	11.8	64.7
Enjoyment of wildlife	0	0	23.5	17.6	58.8
Increased tourism boosting local economy	0	11.8	17.6	64.7	5.9
Supporting biodiversity	17.6	0	0	23.5	58.8
Educational opportunities	11.8	0	5.9	29.4	52.9
Improvements to wetlands	11.8	11.8	11.8	5.9	58.8
Ideal habitat for release	5.9	11.8	11.8	47.1	23.5
Supports wider local economy	17.6	5.9	29.4	35.3	11.8
No benefits	40	26.7	20	0	13.3

Due to some initial confusion as participants arrived, consensus activity sheets were given to everyone, including those who did not intend to join the workshop and had not given consent to take part or have their input collected by Deciding Matters. Responses were collected into two groups: those who had engaged with the interview process (and thus given consent for their responses to be recorded), and those who had not. Those who had not given consent have had their responses removed from the results above.

5.2 Hopes and Fears

Participants shared their hopes and fears for the process in facilitated groups, both through discussions and by commenting on post-its.

Hopes:

- Clear idea of plan going forward
- More detail on proposals
- To reach a consensus/compromise that everyone is happy with
- Clear action points to tackle and assuage fears
- Misconceptions cleared up on both sides
- Everyone will feel heard
- Differing opinions all seen as valid
- Project goes ahead with community approval
- We will be listened to
- Our opinions will be taken into account
- People with different viewpoints, even very different ones, will feel safe to speak and be listened to
- Useful discussions will lead to outcomes that most people are happy with
- People will take time to listen to each other
- To be presented with all the knowledge required to make an informed decision
- To learn more about others opinions
- Successful reintroduction that listens and acts on peoples' fears and worries
- Listening to each others' opinions and acknowledging them
- Constructive conversations
- Practical ideas and outcomes
- Working with communities to monitor, educate and include all
- Coexistence
- Clear direction/decision
- Find out more details
- Learn what the objections are
- Everyone feels heard and able to express their worries
- Those that may have concerns around beaver reintroduction can have some of the questions answered and ultimately feel more comfortable with the idea
- Everyone gets their voices heard
- People come away with a full understanding of the project
- Learn more about the process
- Hearing the rationale behind those against beavers
- Productive discussion where all opinions are heard

Fears:

- Strong disagreements between community members
- Conflicts
- That both sides of the argument aren't represented – everyone talking large scale discussion
- Not being able to share views – or say them right
- Being shut down by angry/loud people
- People not listening
- People whose views should be included aren't staying all day – they don't seem to

- want to engage positively, so will probably push back later in the process
- People will fall out
 - Meaningful discussions will be hampered by strong opinions
 - Projects similar will be unable to go ahead in the future
 - A reintroduction which doesn't take into consideration peoples' worries. It ends up causing conflict in the community
 - Whitewash
 - Ulterior motives
 - Process will drag on too long
 - No beavers
 - Process goes poorly and sets back further reintroductions
 - People may not be here to have an open discussion
 - People don't raise their concerns and then resent/are against the reintroduction post-consultation – possible persecution of released individuals
 - Non-constructive conversations
 - Strong opinions, difficult to approach
 - Not everyone given a chance to speak/discuss

5.3 Recommendations

In their groups, participants reviewed the suggested measures which had come from the interviews. They then drafted the following recommendations, taking the time to review and input into each recommendation through a carousel process.

Specific support and mitigation measures with clear processes

Why is this theme important?

- Clear process for accessibility and to reduce stress/cost/time of going a mitigation process
- To prevent conflict and division
- Make sure everyone feels they don't need to take things into their own hands
- To make sure no there is no ambiguity in the process
- Compensation is important in some cases but can't be over and above what happens elsewhere, needs to be in keeping with national processes
- To keep the community involved
- Prevents division from deepening
- Keeping people onside to protect beaver welfare
- Clear process is important because we need to include everyone, see the bigger picture and not just focus/get stuck on small/insignificant changes – keep looking forward
- Encourage people not to take matters into their own hands
- Improve the public perception of beavers
- Gives people a voice
- Important to support individuals with very local issues that could affect support for the project on a larger scale
- Clear support processes allow all parties to access easily, get advice and mitigate impacts relevant to them

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone understands who is responsible for helping if “damage” is caused – there should not be debate about what support is available • Accessing support should be easy and stress-free 	
What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?	What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single contact for people to contact, with some permanence • Ways for landowners to submit photos/cases they are concerned about, to be reviewed • A clear process-based document on how to manage impact of beavers and how to follow up • Practical guidance including proactive activities • Compensation after an evidence-based assessment on damage including flooded land, tree damage, having insurance invalidated • Explore how to fund compensation schemes through local opportunities, e.g. parking charges • Low impact mitigation measures, e.g. grants for tree protection • Funding for loss of livelihood • Relocating beavers where necessary • Compare different mitigation measures that work in other locations (including internationally) • Follow Scottish code for translocations • Standardising mitigation measures or approach to mitigation is different – ensure flexibility and relevance for local context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People visiting service/reaching out will be high if the process is accessible • No (illegal) action taken against beavers or people taking matters into their own hands • Availability of someone to talk to who understands local context and has capacity to help quickly • Proactive rather than reactive mitigation • Mitigation tools will be easy to access and are being used • Compensation is managed on a case-by-case basis, verified by qualified and independent auditors • A balanced cashflow • Successful compensation will come from sustainable funds, with a clear scheme for where the money is coming from/going, and what qualifies for compensation

Transparency and trust building

Why is this theme important?

- There is currently conflict and barriers to people engaging with the process
- Without dialogue there will be more division
- Perception that support is for beavers not people
- There are feelings at the moment that there is a forgone conclusion about the release of beavers

- Trust will be hard to win unless organisations are honest about people’s power and capacity to shape the process legitimately
- People wont engage or trust the process if they don’t think their voice will be heard
- To support people to feel comfortable having a conversation with the organisations
- Ending division
- So people know what is happening at all stages
- People are more open to change if they feel like they have a say
- It’s important that people are informed about what is going to/is already happening so concerns are addressed before they happen which will ensure appropriate mitigation is in place
- Keeping the community involved will prevent divisions from getting bigger
- No transparency means no trust, no trust means no dialogue
- To ensure everyone is included in moving forward and making changes
- No one will feel excluded, no division
- Maintain the support of the local community

What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?	What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rename beaver officer role to be about people not beavers, e.g. community liaison • Ongoing constructive conversation and communication • More frequent Q&As • A web page or email newsletter with update feed to share what’s happening • Online surveys with real-time feedback to help people feel heard • Maintaining a third party to keep on delivering independent processes of deliberation and information sharing • Newsletters • A clear way for people to provide feedback on processes and a clear complaint procedure (e.g. on interactions with the beaver officer) • Keep extending invitations to all stakeholders (including those not in attendance) to keep engaged • Consider how people might feel empowered to take part • Ensure processes don’t drag on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of all perspectives will feel comfortable asking questions and engaging in conversation • No dead beavers • Ensuring all stakeholders are involved and wide inclusion of the community to ensure people feel the process is transparent • People will feel a level of ownership in the process from all sides • Continuous feedback is available for the process • Quick feedback time (up to a couple of weeks) • Fast, clear responses from central contact (such as the beaver officer) • Clear strategy for permanence of structure and funding for the central person • Positive feedback

Educational opportunities and tackling misinformation

Why is this theme important?

- For acceptance of the process
- To improve relations and reduce community tensions
- Because misinformation might create risk for beaver welfare
- Improve public perception
- Stop the spread of misinformation
- Better understanding can lead to acceptance
- Education addresses and reduces concerns
- Improve understanding of beavers
- Misinformation can lead to ignorance, blind opposition and even persecution
- Through education, peoples' concerns can be answered/addressed leading to greater acceptance of beavers

What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?

- Teach the next generation so they can see beavers as part of the environment
- To inform/educate the public, start with children but also the locals
- Provision of free, concise and accessible information
- Engage with the media including TV and film (look to example of Scotland The Big Picture)
- Utilise FLS rangers
- A general contact to call and chat to with any questions (possibly the beaver officer)
- Leaflets with information
- Create a tourist trail (utilise school/community funds)
- School visits
- Educational focus on problems and concerns people have
- Information should be available with no pressure for people to engage
- Accessible paper copies of information for people who don't have digital access

What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?

- Attendance, uptake, engagement
- Uptake of leaflets
- Surveys on peoples' responses to information e.g. workshops
- Use of multiple channels for accessibility e.g. paper, online, social media, in-person
- Analytics online
- School uptake and reengagement with workshops
- True facts won't be lost through misinformation
- All will have access to free, concise and accessible information regardless of background or education

Beaver monitoring (including tracking and population control)	
<p>Why is this theme important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is one of the themes that people have the most concerns about • Ensuring that monitoring is being used to manage people’s concerns properly • Ensuring a healthy population • Supporting beaver welfare • Understanding the behaviours and movements of beavers • Prevent/pre-empt problems • Learn more to inform future management/releases 	
What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?	What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a “report-a-dam” system so landowners, or anyone, can report for swift resolution • Concern areas should be identified with more intensive monitoring e.g. gardens, golf course, • Create a clear process regarding how concern areas are defined and by whom • Knowing which bits to monitor so that impacts are understood swiftly • Inform people that beavers are moving into other catchments • Be clear about who is monitoring beaver health and welfare (more people than the beaver officer?) • Gather more evidence and feasibility of beavers in highly managed watercourses specifically damming and varied waterflow) • Utilise local community of practice as citizen scientists, e.g. swimmers, kayakers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed monitoring programme which is publicly accessible • Protection measures for vulnerable areas are in place • No unexpected flooding • Dam reporting system for the community – for dams, beavers, signs of activity and lodges • People are educated and empowered • Sensitive information is restricted to avoid unhelpful tourism or persecution (from the wider public, not restricted from landowners) • There is an accessible population management plan • Introduction of a citizen science project

Comms/promotion	
<p>Why is this theme important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent misinformation • Give people the opportunity to learn more 	
What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?	What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure comms doesn’t come across as beaver propaganda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balanced and sensitive comms strategy that is ongoing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider who will host the information (role for volunteers/community, independent bodies, organisations) • Need to be careful about how widely beavers are celebrated • Create a web page with fact-checked information (including citation of evidence) to reduce misinformation in an accessible way, specific to the area • Use of social media, radio, newsletters • Ensure sensitivity of content to avoid further polarisation • Create a forum where land managers can raise concerns and seek answers for their questions • Someone for land managers to talk to if they are worried • FAQ section and beavers on websites for everyone to access • Involvement of people in celebrating the beavers – especially school children • Creation of nature trails • Information boards • Social media presence with videos and images • Engage with a lot of people to make content, but have someone to regulate and manage balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous conversation with the community • Knowledge of all monitoring actions (see monitoring theme) such as how to report issues and contact staff • The community has a sense of empowerment and the process has been successful • Balanced story with polarising elements removed • Creating a sense of community coming together to do something for ecology • Meaningful community engagement
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Monitoring of other species	
<p>Why is this theme important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willow and other trees being eaten by beavers faster than they can grow • Monitoring other species will help us tell whether biodiversity is improving • Able to tell a story about impact • Scientific opportunities • This is about replacing elements of our biodiversity/ecosystem that's missing 	
<p>What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully monitor tree growth • Undertake habitat surveys • Information gathering 	<p>What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good data sets and reported in a “plain English” way • Engagement of the community as citizen scientists

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued tree planting and managing food sources for the future • Protection of mature trees • Take steps to ensure there are no profound negative impacts on tree population • Undertake herbivore impact assessment (e.g. what is the impact on deer) • Create a citizen science project to monitor various areas/species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A before/after survey to gather baseline data and who any positive/negative impacts • Knowing whether trees and other species (e.g. tree inhabitants) are being impacted
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Information for wildlife spotters, tourists and visitors

<p>Why is this theme important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to community if you have a lodge near your house • Prevention of more risk from poor behaviour of visitors (e.g. recent wildfires) • Irresponsible tourism has negative effects and this is something the community has experienced in the past 	
<p>What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?</p>	<p>What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specific locations where guides can take tourists • TfL to help with general tourist management • Have official places to stop and see beavers, discouraging people from stopping in unhelpful places • Taking a “multi-channel” approach to manage visitors • Review and ensure potholes are managed effectively • Consider access to public toilets • Better road signage • Information boards with information about rights and responsible access • Making sure search engine results highlight the places we want people to go to see beavers (including nature trails) • Create a beaver trail with specific education and places to visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate infrastructure will be in place • Tourists are being educated • Sensitively managed with the local people in mind • Lots of good information and information boards are available • A happy, thriving community • Community projects can be funded by tourism • Specific beaver trails are in place

Pause the reintroduction process	
Why is this theme important?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all of the community agrees with the reintroduction of beavers 	
What specific actions/measures should be taken, and by whom?	What will success look like if this action/measure is taken?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not submit a proposal for the reintroduction of beavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLS will not submit a reintroduction application to NatureScot

5.4 Vision statements

In their groups, participants were asked to complete the sentence “Our vision is that the reintroduction of beavers into Glen Affric would...” and encouraged to reflect upon their recommendations.

Our vision is that the reintroduction of beavers into Glen Affric would...

... become a positive model for native species reintroduction to enhance biodiversity and restore the landscape through continual monitoring, education, and engagement with the local community.

... would only happen after steps are taken to implement the actions proposed through this consultation, and then a final check-in with the community as an additional failsafe for everyone. We hope this would show partners are willing, engaged and want to build trust.

6. Levels of Agreement

All participants, including those who were unable to attend the full workshop, were invited to vote on the recommendations and share their level of agreement. The vote was conducted online, but a printed copy was made available for those without digital access. Levels of agreement for each recommendation were:

- I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns
- I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required
- I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it
- I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority
- I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority
- I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority
- I abstain from voting on this recommendation

The activity concluded with the question: Do you want Forestry and Land Scotland to submit a proposal to NatureScot for the reintroduction of beavers in Glen Affric (above the Beinn A' Mheadhoin Dam)?.

48 participants completed the voting activity. The results were as follows:

Recommendation: Specific support and mitigation measures with clear processes	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	11
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	0
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	4
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	5
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	25
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	3

Recommendation: Transparency and trust building	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	10
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	0
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	1
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	5
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	29
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	3

Recommendation: Educational opportunities and tackling misinformation	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	11
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	1
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	1
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	6
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	26
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	3

Recommendation: Beaver monitoring (including tracking and population control)	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	10
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	0
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	0

I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	4
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	31
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	3

Recommendation: Comms/promotion	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	11
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	1
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	6
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	11
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	15
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	4

Recommendation: Monitoring other species	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	10
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	1
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	1
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	10
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	23
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	3

Recommendation: Information for wildlife spotters, tourists and visitors	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	9
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	3
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	1
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	7
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	10
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	15
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	3

Recommendation: Pausing the reintroduction process	
Level of Agreement	No. of Votes
I disagree with this recommendation as it doesn't address my concerns	11
I disagree with this recommendation as I don't think it's required	13
I disagree with this recommendation but I could live with it	7
I agree with this recommendation, it is a low priority	0
I agree with this recommendation, it is a medium priority	2
I agree with this recommendation, it is a high priority	10
I abstain from voting on this recommendation	4

Do you want Forestry and Land Scotland to submit a proposal to NatureScot for the reintroduction of beavers in Glen Affric (above the Beinn A' Mheadhoin Dam)?

- **Yes, I want a proposal to be submitted: 32**
- No, I do not want a proposal to be submitted: 16

7. Learning and Process Recommendations

7.1 Interview Insights

During the interview stage, some participants highlighted what they would like to see from future community processes, and how they would like to be made aware of opportunities to engage:

<p>Next time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to approach the topic with sensitivity and create safe spaces for people with a spectrum of views to engage • Format to be reviewed for future sessions • Very difficult to get the technical details into the public minds – people either glaze over or have already made up their mind and will not change that • Not sure the format will have alleviated the concerns of people who were an automatic “no” to beavers • Bring in an independent organisation from the beginning to ensure no biases
<p>Methods of communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings at the hall that people didn’t know about as not everyone had social media – liked the letter through the door so everyone was able to engage – and that it was incentivized • Think that the letter drop approach is the most appropriate way to reach the community (without excluding but also being targeted) • Didn’t know about the process until a letter was received • Utilise local networks who can share information through email or Facebook • Provide face-to-face and online options • Contact by post – letter drop or leaflet with details is the best way to contact. Don’t mind if follow up process is online but should be done in-person first

7.2 Topic and Process Challenges

The group who attended the workshop but did not engage were made up of predominantly landowners reflecting a wider ongoing issue of rights over the land. Comments were raised by this group around decision-making and who has right to make decisions over land-management. For example, if you rent a property vs if you own land and property. This brings us to a potential social economic class issue of who is and is not entitled to have a say.

Just transition and listening to landowners and compensation. We have to recognise the genuine concerns and fears of landowners and the real challenges of rising costs of land-management. This is a national issue around how we can compensate farmers, crofters and landowners in a sustainable way for if, and when, things go wrong.

Dissenting voices and unsafe spaces. It is important that those most affected are heard and listened to (i.e. landowners and land managers) and this should be balanced with considerations of social equity, environmental and sustainability, and the rights and interests of the community. Feedback from other members of the community were that many did not feel able to speak in previous consultation sessions such as the drop-ins due to loud and dissenting voices. Many participants in this workshop highlighted to facilitators they were concerned this disruptive group would be prioritised over those who consented to take part and were following workshop guidelines. The consenting workshop participants also had a range of views, both pro- and anti-reintroduction, and still came to a consensus.

Building community trust and legitimacy. It becomes ever more important that it is not the loudest voices or who shouts the loudest that dominate a decision. Trust and legitimacy can only be built by community members of all backgrounds and views working together to come up with proactive solutions that meet the needs of everyone.

Emotional tensions and trust in organisations/services/government. It is important to also recognise emotional tensions and lack of trust in organisations, services and government for landowners.

7.3 Learning and Recommendations from Deciding Matters

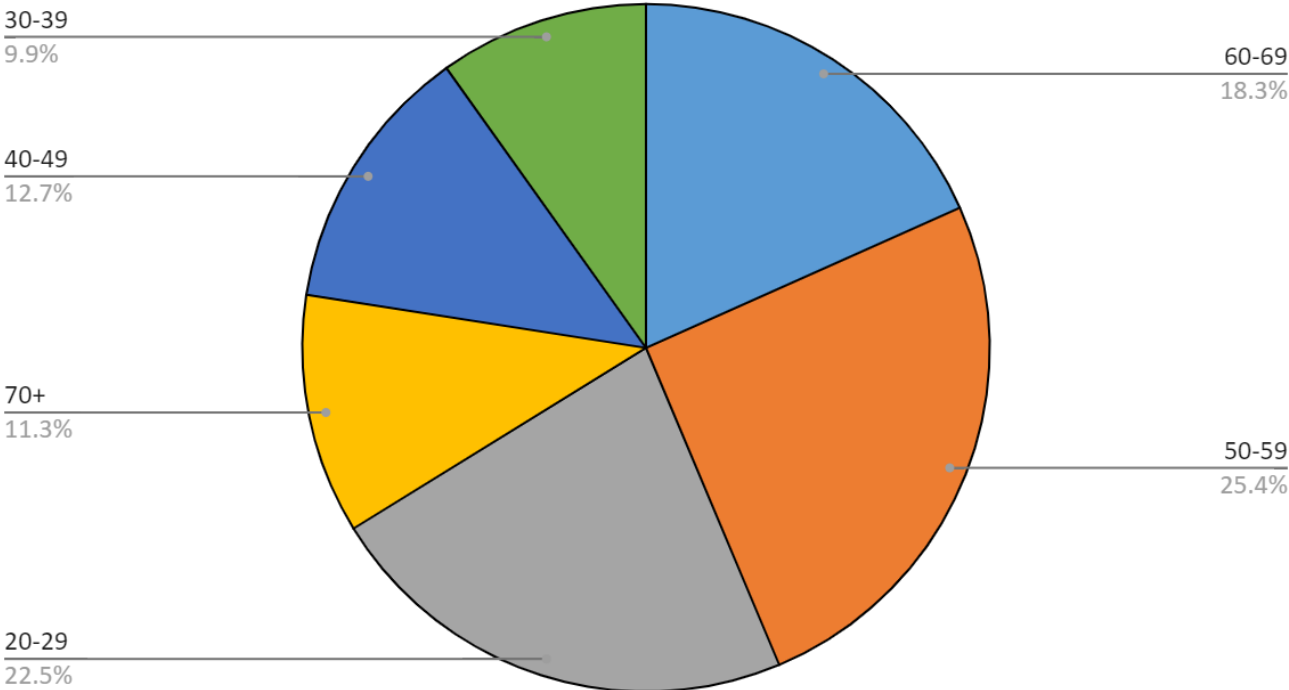
Area of learning	Recommendations for future processes
Initial engagement and anonymous forums	Many participants highlighted that they did not feel able to share pro-beaver comments at the initial drop-ins due to fear of backlash and hostility from other members of the community. A safe, neutral and

	anonymous space should be provided for anyone who wishes to share their opinions. This initial feedback phase should be very light touch, not requiring significant time or background knowledge from participants. For example, a short survey shared through all local channels (both online and in-person) would potentially engage higher numbers.
Drop in sessions for information sharing and discussions	Drop-in sessions should still be utilised, but only as an opportunity to share information with the community, and provide a space for individuals to ask questions or highlight the need for further information. Drop in sessions should be used for transparency purposes (updating the community on decisions being made, processes underway, etc.) and to continue to build relationships.
Incentivising participation through gift of thanks	Participant gift of thanks are recommended by Scottish Government, as well as considered best practice by deliberative democracy organisations across the UK. Paying participants for their time (a payment in line with the real living wage) ensures that appropriate value is placed upon their input as experts of their community. It also removes any financial burden which participation may otherwise place on an individual (for example, if they have to say no to an additional work shift to attend a workshop, or pay for childcare).
Neutral facilitation	Many participants expressed concern that the process was initially led by organisations which are known to be pro-beaver. This meant that the consultation felt biased and did not seem like a legitimate and meaningful way for the community to be heard. Future processes should bring in a neutral facilitation team from inception, ensuring all participants are able to share their thoughts with someone who will not be biased for or against their responses.
Expert input	Future processes should include evidence from a range of experts, with a range of perspectives on the topic. This will support participants to understand a wider array of insights, and come to an informed conclusion during deliberations.
Clarity and transparency around any weighting of responses	Consideration should be made as to whether some responses carry more weight than others (for example, if a known group is likely to be impacted to a significantly higher degree than other groups, such as local farmers). Any weighting decisions should be considered carefully, ensuring no other groups are unintentionally marginalised (for example, those who cannot afford to own land but whose homes and jobs would be impacted). Any weighting should be clearly communicated, with transparency around how the decision was made and clearly defined parameters.
Transparent decision making	Where the final decision is to be made by an organisation and not by the community, the organisation should share their decision making process, including the evidence utilised, considerations made, and any weighting. This information should be shared with the community to support trust in organisations and processes.

8. Appendices

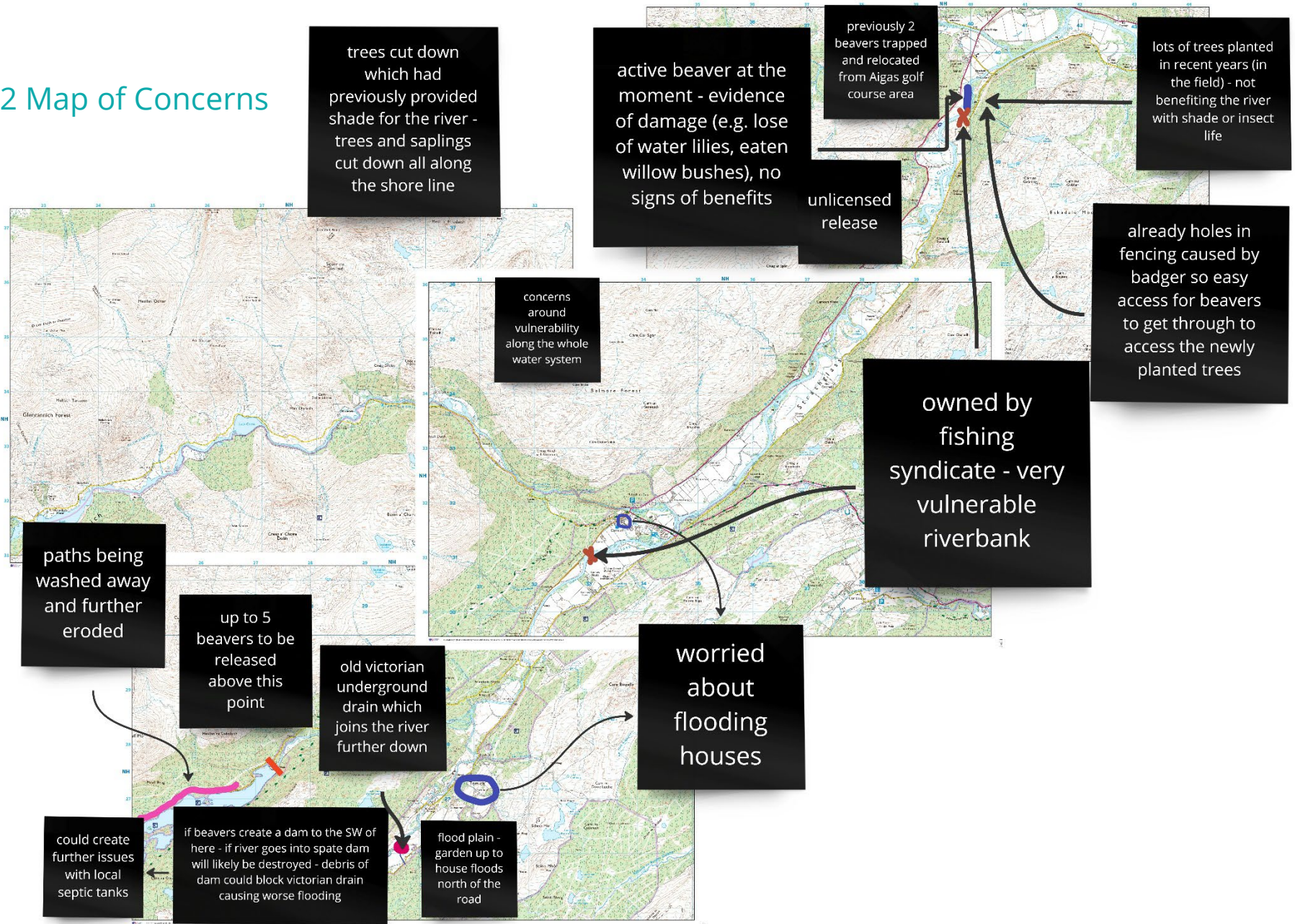
8.1 Participant Demographics

Age Bracket



Relationship with the Land	Respondents
Full-time resident	35
Full-time resident; Landowner and resident; Business owner; Farmer	2
Full-time resident; Business owner	4
Landowner and resident; Business owner; Farmer; Other	1
Landowner and resident	5
Full-time resident; Farmer	1
Other	2
Part-time/holiday resident; Landmanager; Business owner	1
Business owner	1
Full-time resident; Landowner and resident Business owner; Landmanager	1
Part-time/holiday resident	1
Landowner and resident; Crofter	2
Landmanager; Full-time resident	1
Full-time resident; Landmanager; Business owner; Farmer; Landowner and resident	1
Full-time resident; Other	1
Full-time resident; Landmanager	2
Landowner living elsewhere	2
Landmanager	2
Full-time resident; Landowner and resident; Business owner	1
Part-time/holiday resident; Other	1
Landowner and resident; Farmer	1
Full-time resident; Landowner; Other	1
Crofter; Landowner living elsewhere	1
Landowner and resident; Business owner	1

8.2 Map of Concerns



9. Get in Touch

To speak to the Deciding Matters team about the contents of this report, please contact Rachel:

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