

# Workshops on species re-introductions

- **BEAVER**
- **LYNX**
- **WOLF**
- **HERBIVORES**

Each group heard an outline of context, and questioned and commented on that, before discussing three questions. 'Visitors' from other groups then had time to review and contribute before key points were chosen.

## **BEAVER**

### **Key points:**

1. Most large river systems in Scotland are suitable. Must be introduced at catchment scale.
2. Must be honest with the public about what is going on. There are political issues; education issues. Need to manage mis-information

### **Comments on context:**

- Source populations (Bavaria)
- Ecological benefits
- Water quality
- Interactions with other species eg. fish

### **WHAT source population, viability and other natural conditions are required for beaver (esp in Scotland)?**

- Genetic diversity
- There are sub species eg. east and west Europe
- Costs?
- Minimum territory 2 -3 kms waters edge

### **WHERE, generally, could the re-introduction happen (esp in Scotland)?**

- Most large river systems in Scotland
- Need fresh water and riparian woodland
- Occupy whole catchment
- Designated sites cost more

### **HOW: with what conditions and with what support measures (eg. incentives, training, advice, outreach, from where?) could the re-introduction happen?**

- Need public support
- Education is key to success
- Demonstrate the benefits
- Need management
- Deer control can be important

## **LYNX**

### **Key points:**

1. 'What is a lynx?' We don't have to change perceptions, people don't know lynx, we are working with a blank slate. Need education to win hearts and minds.
2. Habitat is already suitable / available. There is plenty of it. 'Ready to go' Need an ecobridge/connectivity over the Central Lowlands

3. Need to target landowning organisations & advisors
4. And this is linked to creating incentive payments – rather than compensation/profit foregone payments
5. Hunting versus protected status issues eg. at what stage to control; to hunt for sport?

### **Comments on context:**

- Is Beaver re-introduction acting as a 'smokescreen' for lynx re-introduction?
- Why wait for beaver? Do lynx now?
- There is intrinsic value
- Need to manage expectations & ambition
- A threat to deer stalkers?
- The challenge of people orientated conservation
- Sika deer
- It's very doable!

### **WHAT source population, viability and other natural conditions are required for lynx (esp in Scotland)?**

- Habitat already suitable
- Eurasian lynx
- Genetically viable source in the Baltic States
- Ecological connectivity across barriers such as M8 motorway;
- Additional threats inc. road mortalities
- Address issue of game birds
- Are there natural re-colonisation opps? Is this localised?

### **WHERE, generally, could the re-introduction happen (esp in Scotland)?**

- Get a group / landowner / Forestry Commission of Scotland on board to champion
- Somewhere which needs re-development/regeneration
- Needs woodland habitats of large size & interconnected. And prey species.
- Link into one of the national Parks/protected areas. Advantage of their contacts and strength as champions
- Scottish Highlands
- Scottish southern uplands / Kielder / Cumbria
- Self selection of sites seems to be possible and desirable (most people present recommended sites where they lived!) eg:
  - Lochaber
  - Perthshire
  - Abernethy / Rothiemurcus
  - Black Isle
- The first site is going to become iconic
- The site should not already be known for some other species / speciality
- Suitable sites also in Wales, south west England
- Roe habitat is probably also lynx habitat
- Not the islands

### **HOW: with what conditions and with what support measures (eg. incentives, training, advice, outreach, from where?) could the re-introduction happen?**

- Political support required
- Learning from previous release projects
- Need clear understand of the impact on stock farming & game rearing – the pro's and con's
- Education and awareness to raise public support and enthusiasm. Winning hearts and minds – both needed
- Schools education pack

- Method – take a tame lynx around to meet people and be a champion for the education
- But education issues are competing for space on the curriculum
- European funding?
- Need to reach the wider population – the human dimension. Engage stakeholders widely.
- What are the political pro's and con's of its legal status?

## **WOLF**

### **Key points:**

1. An advocacy group is needed – for all large carnivores and appropriate ecology, inc. wolves
2. This advocacy and 'selling' and education is more important/needed than more information therefore propose an education & demonstration centre
3. Need a paradigm shift – to change ourselves, our attitudes
4. Need to rethink the whole question of risk. Are wolves dangerous compared with other risks?

### **WHAT source population, viability and other natural conditions are required for wolf (esp in Scotland)?**

- Where to draw a source population from? (habituated to red deer. Sweden?)
- What type of group can champion, eg. RSZS; SWT ?
- Role of individual landowners
- Need dispersed but robust management

### **WHERE, generally, could the re-introduction happen (esp in Scotland)?**

- Go for largest area with least farming & red deer
- Need to do a GIS mapping exercise of potential
- Cairngorms. Need a predator education centre , within 3 years.

### **HOW: with what conditions and with what support measures (eg. incentives, training, advice, outreach, from where?) could the re-introduction happen?**

- Conservation & ecosystem issues versus charisma
- Need a European 'map' of experience with wolf
- Need to study socio-economic issues; psychological & cultural issues; ecological issues
- Eg. how do we farm? Traditional hill farming situation / lambs etc
- Current framing trends can create an economic opportunity
- Need imaginative communication
- Initial stakeholders are forestry interests; tourism interests; heritage interests
- But importance of involving all stakeholders from the beginning (eg. Jaguar programmes in South America)
- Need an incentive rather than a compensation approach
- Deer numbers / control issues ?

## **HERBIVORES**

### **Key points:**

1. If you have specific aims (ecological) for an area is it better to use domestic breeds (eg. pig instead of boar) or will 'wild' herbivores be better? Less complicated? Less damage? Chalk grassland damage risk?
2. In Scotland do we need other herbivore species to 'dilute' the deer effect? Boar occupy a different niche
3. Sausages versus Bambi

## **WHAT source population, viability and other natural conditions are required for herbivores (esp in Scotland)?**

- Need to reduce deer population to allow other herbivores onto the land. But relationships with other species are complex
- What are sustainable populations when thinking of whole ecosystems?
- Probably only need very low densities in the uplands – and this is not good for tourism
- For all herbivores - what is right density?
- Feral goats – how are they classified? Not protected. Not native.
- Herbivores as management tools – what are objectives? What species and density to achieve?
- Neighbouring landowners can have conflicting aims
- Sources for populations (wild boar, moose/European elk, reindeer): Norway
- Need predation to influence herbivore behaviour to allow forest regeneration or can be emulated by culling
- There are too many herbivores already (esp. deer) but wild boar occupy a different niche and are suitable to re-introduce
- Ground nesting birds – conservation conflicts

## **WHERE, generally, could the re-introduction happen (esp in Scotland)?**

- Depends on landowners
- And where there is an interest and personnel for management
- NGOs and communities owning land on west coast eg. Assynt
- Wild boar could be used at Assynt (3000 acres enclosed) to assist forest regeneration and as a management tool for bracken control

## **HOW: with what conditions and with what support measures (eg. incentives, training, advice, outreach, from where?) could the re-introduction happen?**

- Need local ownership of program to reinstate herbivore population
- Need education
- Need money – rural development funds – for ecosystem services
- Income from local wild meat
- Income from hunting eg. wild boar (as in France)
- Ecotourism
- Does current legislation (eg. deer control) allow us to take this forward?

A final discussion considered these overall species re-introduction questions:

### **What do we want to challenge from this?**

- We need to promote reintroduction of wolf within a large carnivores programme, and better to do lynx first, because there is too much baggage attached to large carnivores.
- We don't need to 're-wild' the countryside to have carnivores back, especially lynx. We can do it now.
- We should think of semi-natural and wild as all part of the same countryside – not separate.

### **What has surprised?**

- So many of us here want to talk about lynx re-introduction whereas the general public do not know what a lynx is? This 'blank slate' can be turned to advantage, we have the opportunity to create a helpful understanding and appreciation of lynx.
- Why have Scottish conservation organisations not been addressing these issues? SNH are starting a group to look at re-introductions next month.
- There has been a lot of work on beaver, over 15 years, a long time to get here. Now we must put energy into other species.

- There is a surprising variety of people here today – we need to get out of our cages and welcome that other folk really want to do this (reintroductions)
- Many key BAP species have very little resources devoted to them eg. wild cat. We have to be realistic about this, about what is achievable.
- We don't know about hybridisation (eg. wild cat). Need to know more about what we have rather than new species.
- Need to prioritise and get past everybody's favourite.
- Surprised at how 'anti' landowners are and that so many people want money to go to birds, butterflies, BAP species.
- NFU agenda sees wildlife as a nuisance ... beaver is 'thin end of the wedge'.
- The world is run by unreasonable people, we need to lay out a wide agenda inc. traditional land management, farming, re-wilding. It is all part of a spectrum...
- We should examine our motives. Why do we want re-introductions? Just to make a zoo? Are these species endangered (in European context)?
- If we make a case for Brown bear – then nobody will worry about lynx and wolf!
- No, start with wolves. Bears are scary but I can cope and accept wolves (after a visit to Romania)