

Beavers given historic safe haven at Doune farm

The relocation is the first to take place in Scotland after being approved by nature chiefs.



The Tayside beavers are being relocated to Argaty Farm in Doune for safety (Image: Beaver Trust)A family of beavers have been saved from a death sentence and relocated to a farm in Doune - the first such move in Scotland's history.

The beavers, including three kits, were moved to the Argaty Red Kites site from prime agricultural land in Tayside, where the Scottish Government's nature agency NatureScot has issued beaver-killing licences to prevent damage to farmland.

The move - known as a translocation - was carried out by charity Beaver Trust, after NatureScot approved Argaty's application to spare the animals and have them moved to select ponds on Argaty instead.

A further beaver family and an adult beaver pair - also subject to killing licenses - will be moved to Argaty in the coming months.

Owner of Argaty Red Kites, Tom Bowser, said: "We are beyond thrilled that by becoming Scotland's first private site to legally release beavers into the wild, we have been able to save these animals.

"It will be so exciting to see how they enhance biodiversity on our farm.

"Hopefully this moment of wildlife history has helped open the door for more relocations of beavers to areas of Scotland where they are needed and wanted.



The volunteers involved in facilitating the move (Image: Beaver Trust)

“Prioritising non-lethal management when beavers have impacts on farmland will be a big win for wildlife, farmers, and for our hopes of tackling the nature and climate crises.”

Beaver dams create nature-rich wetlands that benefit many other species including amphibians, invertebrates and fish, and which also improve water quality, reduce downstream flooding, and soak up carbon dioxide.

The granting of the Argaty translocation licence earlier this month was the first sign of a policy shift by the Scottish Government.

Although its nature agency NatureScot has identified over 105,000 hectares of beaver habitat across Scotland, the government has previously said beavers cannot be relocated to new areas.

But last week the government announced it will now actively expand Scotland’s beaver population, prioritising translocation to new areas of Scotland outside of beavers’ current range over lethal control to deal with negative beaver impacts of farmland.

The breakthrough also followed a letter to ministers by a group of leading environmentalists calling for beavers to be translocated to suitable new areas, and rewilding charity Trees for Life’s successful court case in which a senior judge ruled that NatureScot’s beaver-killing licences had been unlawfully issued.

Spokesperson for Beaver Trust, Eva Bishop, said: “We’re delighted to have carried out this groundbreaking translocation.

“Beavers can be a vital ally in the fight against biodiversity loss, and responsible translocations are an important tool for allowing Scotland to expand its beaver population while sensitively managing impacts on farmland.”

Argaty is a working farm and popular visitor attraction that is home to an award-winning red kite project.



The beavers being relocated at the farm (Image: Beaver Trust)

It is a founding member of the Northwoods Rewilding Network, which is operated by rewilding charity SCOTLAND: The Big Picture.

SCOTLAND: The Big Picture executive director Peter Cairns said: “The release of beavers at Argaty is a milestone moment for Scotland’s wildlife. It’s a rewilding win that looks set to pave the way for more beaver translocations - helping Scotland to play ecological catch-up with over 25 other European countries which have successfully reintroduced beavers.”

Translocations of beavers can only take place under strict circumstances by trained experts, after local and national stakeholders have been carefully consulted.

Once widespread in Scotland, the Eurasian beaver was hunted to extinction for its pelt, meat and musk oil.

Records indicate beavers may have survived in small numbers at a few locations until the 16th century.

A government-sanctioned trial reintroduction of beavers, at Knapdale in Argyll, began in 2009.

In 2019 the Scottish Government granted beavers European protected species status.

“We owe huge thanks to Beaver Trust for supporting the translocation and to the many hundreds of people who supported our consultations, as well as the people whose land the beavers were removed from for engaging in non-lethal control,” concluded Tom Bowser.