

**18 December 2023**

**Press release**

## **Loch Lomond beavers spark change in the way habitats are assessed by NatureScot**

An Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) investigation into the translocation of a family of beavers to Loch Lomond has led to a change in the way NatureScot assesses the impact of introducing new species to protected areas of Scotland.

Concerns were raised by a local community group regarding the impact the arrival of seven beavers would have on European protected species in the area, including Atlantic salmon, and brook and river lamprey. It was anticipated that dam-building and other related activities would have an adverse effect on the fishes' natural habitat.

The group made a representation to ESS raising its concerns over NatureScot's handling of the beaver translocation licence, specifically the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulation Appraisal (HRA) process and the securing of mitigation measures to prevent adverse impacts on protected species within a European site.

Following review of the background information, ESS engaged with NatureScot and assessed its guidance policies, procedures and supporting information. Although the representation expressed concerns in respect to this specific licence application for Loch Lomond, from this individual case ESS identified a wider systemic issue.

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ESS found that NatureScot’s guidance was not suitably robust to protect the integrity of European sites, as intended by the requirements of the HRA. After looking into the matter carefully, NatureScot made a number of changes to its relevant guidance documents and an informal resolution was reached.

The full report published on 18 December 2023 can be found [here](#).

Mark Roberts, Chief Executive of ESS, said:

“On investigation, the representation from the community group uncovered a wider issue of the need for more robust implementation of Habitat Regulation Appraisals in assessing the introduction of new species into protected areas.

NatureScot has taken reasonable steps to address the concerns raised in respect of how it implements its duties.

ESS would like to thank the community group for raising their concerns and NatureScot for its assistance in resolving this matter.”

Ends.

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## **Background**

1. Translocation is used in Scotland when the presence of beavers is causing an adverse impact to other species and action needs to be taken. This licencing process provides an opportunity for landowners to apply to NatureScot to have beavers, which are a European protected species, translocated as an alternative option to culling them.

## **About Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS):**

2. Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) began its formal operations on October 2021, as part of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021, following the UK's departure from the European Union. ESS is responsible for ensuring Scotland's public authorities, including government and its agencies, are compliant with environmental law.
3. ESS is independent of Scottish Government, but accountable to the Scottish Parliament. ESS scrutinises public authorities' compliance with environmental law, the effectiveness of these laws and the way they are implemented and applied and has statutory powers to act where required.
4. ESS launched this investigation in 2022 following receipt of a representation.

**For more information, visit:** [environmentalstandards.scot](https://environmentalstandards.scot)

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