

## **Full statement from Andrew Midgley, National Farmers Union Scotland.**

Andrew Midgley, Environment and Land Use Policy Manager at NFU Scotland said:

“NFU Scotland accepts that the illegally re-introduced beaver population in Tayside, which has trebled in size in recent years, is here to stay and that in some locations beavers and people can co-exist happily.

“But it is also the case that beavers have negative impacts when they locate and breed in highly productive agricultural areas. As such, the beaver population is already causing many farmers a great concern because of the way that they undermine river banks and protective flood banks and impede farmland drainage as a result of burrowing and damming.

“It is therefore essential that when beavers are formally protected, there is a comprehensive management framework in place to give farmers confidence that they will be able to deal with problems should they arise, or indeed prevent problems from arising in the first place.

“Ever since the Scottish Government announced that it was minded to protect the illegally released beavers, SNH has been carrying out commendable work through the Scottish Beaver Forum to find a consensus around the proposed management framework that will come into place once they are protected. As we are still seeking to agree a pragmatic framework that will work for the long term and avoid years of conflict in the future, any delay in timescales is justifiable.

“Based on experience, the management framework is something worth getting right first time as our members have

suffered years of difficulties associated with other protected species such as geese and white-tailed eagles. In these cases we've had long-running dispute and conflict as those affected find that the management framework designed to give them protection does not work effectively.

“In the case of beavers, we welcome the fact that all parties agree that they can cause problems on farmland and that our aim is to ensure those negatively affected by beaver activity have the tools to deal with the issue in an effective way.

“Work on developing a comprehensive management framework that involves both a licensing regime and a mitigation scheme has come a long way from when the government announced that beavers would be protected, but more work is needed to build confidence among the farming community that the measures and processes that will come into play when formal protection starts will be workable from their perspective.”