

It SNoH joke @Natural.scot for beavers

Description

Earlier in the week, a few people copied me into a twitter exchange about Scottish Natural Heritage's delayed name change. If I was capable of doing anything on twitter, except using it as a means of enabling people to follow parkwatch's posts, I might have shared this:

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Why SNH is in need of correction rather than transformation

WORDS failed me (and SNH) when I read that "Scottish Natural Heritage will rename itself "NatureScot", while the chief executive "joked" that the initial challenge will be "ensuring we get the no space, cap S right" ("A chance to out nature at heart of wellbeing", The Herald, August 8). Yet its website is www.nature.scot...

The term "heritage" implies "that which is inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed to future generations" – and "NatureScot" has lost all that meaning.

The SNH website tells us that "using the Scottish Natural Heritage brand correctly every time lets us communicate better with our audiences and with each other. Our brand is a confident, positive statement, which creates a strong platform for all of our communications when used correctly. A professional and consistent approach helps people to recognise our work and put their trust in what we have to say." The CEO, Francesca Osowska, went on to tell us: "We've done a lot of research in terms of public opinion surveys, which shows the word heritage is what people latch onto, not natural. So they think our remit is buildings and ancient monuments: they're important but that's not what we're about." So the public can expect SNH to get a refund from the agency which advised on the last branding? Methinks that this is more likely to be a reflection on the standard of Scottish education.

The website goes on to talk at length of "transforming how we work. Transforming how we work supports everything we do for all of our outcomes." Why transform how SNH works? I thought that it was the branding that was flawed – what was so wrong with what SNH was actually doing? And in



Scottish Natural Heritage chief executive Francesca Osowska

the detail for what this transformation will mean, it says:

"Transforming how we work involves providing information at the right time to inform decisions about nature". Surely this was being done already?

"Transforming how we work involves to generate solutions together shared problems." English this is not.

"Transforming how we work involves supporting innovation and diversify the funding for nature." Surely "diversifying"? What might "diversifying the funding for nature" mean in practice?

"Transforming how we work involves being the change we want to see by being more flexible and leading by example." Understandable this is not.

And we also discover that SNH employs a "Director of People and Nature". A "Director of Nature" – oh, what power. Surely this is all it needs...

In the same edition of the paper, I was amused to notice the abbreviation for BT Murrayfield,

and I realised that SNH now appears to be an agency which doesn't know its BTM from its elbow. That is, happy to pay for second-rate advice yet incapable of recognising it as such, but capable somehow of forecasting that the "metamorphosis will see the organisation sharpen the nation's focus on nature". It seems to have no conception of the "effect on the nation" that it has already achieved, never mind its future impact.

Peter Fraser, Aberdeen AB15.

Herald Letters 15th August

Says it all really!

If you don't know SNH is the organisation which is now, following public outrage, trying to work out how it can get out of issuing licenses to cull beavers ([see here](#)). Ever since it took over from the Scottish Government responsibility for issuing licenses to kill protected wildlife c15 years ago it's staff have been in an impossible situation.

Banned from translocating beavers within Scotland, despite suitable places having been identified first in the Cairngorms National Park and then by its own staff in the Highlands ([see here](#)), it has been forced into translocating as many at risk beavers as it can down to England.

I am sure their frontline staff really do care, they just don't have a chance under the current system. It certainly was like that when I was on their Board for three years almost 20 years ago. Staff then had done some very thorough preparatory work and SNH was all ready to support the re-introduction of beavers to Scotland. However, a landowner then spoke to a civil servant and the result was the "trial" at Knapdale. Mea culpa, for not challenging how Board Members' hands are tied. It's far worse now.

The Knapdale trial was never needed, but it was a very effective way of preventing any meaningful re-introduction of beavers into Scotland. If beavers had not "unlawfully" got into the Tay catchment, we would be no further forward. The response of the Scottish Government to has been to leave SNH staff stuck with the beavers between unwooded watersheds, which the beavers are likely to have great difficulty crossing unaided and the farmers' guns. Rumour has it that the beavers which are now in the Forth Catchment came from the Tay catchment but did so with a little help – not from SNH staff, I hasten to add!

A name change, even if it had been well managed, is not going to do anything to address the issues that have been undermining frontline SNH staff and preventing them from protecting nature for years. Scotland's system for protecting nature is rotten. Fundamental reform of the relationship between central government, SNH and our National Parks Authorities, which are also supposed to put conservation first) is part of what is needed to change that.

Category

1. Cairngorms
2. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. CNPA
2. conservation
3. Scottish Government
4. scottish natural heritage
5. wildlife persecution

Date Created

August 23, 2020

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