

PE1720/H

Scottish Environment Protection Agency submission of 19 August 2019

Thank you for your letter of the 11th July inviting SEPA to respond to the above petition. We welcome the opportunity to respond in our role as Scotland's strategic flood risk authority. The petition calls for the development of a natural flood alleviation strategy, including translocation of the Eurasian beaver.

The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and Scottish Government's supporting guidance on Delivering Sustainable Flood Risk Management clearly emphasise the importance of natural flood alleviation (or natural flood management (NFM)) as part of the suite of measures that should be considered to help manage flood risk sustainably in Scotland. SEPA's national flooding strategy, due to be published in 2020, will further reinforce the importance of working with natural processes.

In producing Scotland's first regional Flood Risk Management Strategies, SEPA carried out a high level strategic assessment of where NFM may be worthy of consideration nationally. We produced maps showing areas of opportunity for NFM. There are currently around 100 actions that incorporate NFM in the current strategies. There will be further opportunities to include NFM actions during the development of Scotland's second set of regional Flood Risk Management Strategies. SEPA, Scottish Government and other partners continue to support delivery of these actions through activities such as the publication of our NFM Handbook, creation of the NFM Network Scotland.

Whilst we acknowledge the potential for working with natural processes to help mitigate flood risk, we do not support the production of a separate natural flood alleviation strategy. The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, Scottish Government guidance, and the soon to be published national flooding strategy clearly set out the importance of working with natural processes. SEPA and the responsible authorities will continue to set out where NFM forms part of the optimal suite of actions to mitigate flood risk in each cycle of regional Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans. Actions are not exclusive of each other, and working in this way ensures that the multiple influences on flood risk and means of mitigating that risk are considered collectively to achieve the best outcome.

We hope you find these comments useful.