

INVERNESS BIODIVERSITY MEETING 31 OCTOBER 2005

Present: Jonathan Willet (THC - Highland Biodiversity Officer)
Bill Forrest (PRIN Project Officer)
Jonathan Watt (Inverness Museum)
Katy Martin (After 3 pm) (THC Countryside Ranger)
Anne Murray (SNH – AO Inverness)

This note is not intended to be a full minute of the meeting but gives some bullet points on the main topics discussed.

- On the 24 October the biodiversity partnership met to agree a partnership agreement. They looked at how the different partners would work together; who would be on the committee, what actions they would be carrying out. Once the partnership agreement is finalised it will be sent out to everyone.
- **Heritage Lottery Fund bid** - The biodiversity team in the Highland Council will be applying for heritage lottery funding. The idea is that this funding will go to local groups to help build capacity. It will pay for training and equipment. They are planning to put in a bid for £96,000 which is just under the threshold limit of £100,000. If you apply for heritage lottery funding for more than £100,000 then the response period is much longer. The £96,000 will go towards a 3 year project.
 - a. The Highland Council will be putting this bid into heritage lottery in August next year.
 - b. This money will be separate from the implementation fund.
 - c. As part of the application process they will require to put in a plan and this will need to look at specific areas of the LBAP which local LBAP groups wish to see carried out. I.e. 5 or 6 actions will be chosen for action within the next 3 years.

Action Point – Look through the LBAP and look at what actions should be carried out in the next 3 years.

- **Highland wide issues** - The Highland Council will be employing a contractor to look at all of the Highland LBAPs and look at the overarching issues which they include. They will be tasked with them pulling together an action plan and for the whole of the Highlands. This brings up important issues of Highland wide project funding to allow projects that are relevant to the whole of the Highlands to be taken forward.
- **Giant Hogweed Survey** - There is still money in the Implementation funds of Inverness and Nairn to pay for a biodiversity project. It was suggested that a survey should be carried out of the giant hogweed in the catchment of the River Nairn. GHW has been spreading in the area over the last few years having come into the area from Moray. A survey would be carried out by a contractor with input from local land owners. The survey would inform future treatment / eradication programme of the of the plant.

- The project was thought to be very positive however a number of concerns were raised:
 - Timescale – the project will have to be completed quickly.
 - Land owners / managers being unwilling to state that they have GHW on their land.
 - Not being able to start an eradication programme immediately before the survey is very out of date.

Action – Jonathan Willet to set up a meeting with key stakeholders (including community councils) to discuss the proposal.

Action - JW to discuss proposal with TEC services to determine whether or not resources could be allocated to a spraying programme (say 2/3 days a year of the spraying teams' time.)

Action – AM to update Anne Elliott (Area Officer for Strathspey and Nairn).

- **Conference dates.** The Inverness and Nairn LBAP Conference will update people on progress made under the LBAP. It is scheduled to take place on 6 May. It is planned to hold it in the Town House, the start time will be 9.30 am for coffees with a 10am start. It will run until 2 pm. It is planned that there will be a couple of walks at lunchtime to allow people to get out and enjoy the Ness Islands and possibly Merkinch. The group will be asking all those who received implementation funding to provide a couple of photographs of their project, a short summary about what they have done and what they will be doing in the future. This information will be then put together to form a series of posters. These posters will then be used at the event but also they will be used for a road-show that will go around various libraries and schools in the area.
- **Updating the LBAP** We briefly discussed who would have the responsibility of updating the I&N LBAP. Bill Forrest was willing to take on this role; however, I recommended the Highland Council's Biodiversity Officers should lead on this. All 7 Highland LBAPs will need to be updated as National Policy changes and many of the changes will need to be made to all 7 of the LBAPs. It would therefore seem appropriate the responsibility for updating all of the Highland LBAPs falls to the biodiversity officers. Jonathan Willet will ask whether this was something they can take on.

Anne Murray
Area officer - Inverness