

**LBAP Focus Group: Minutes from Meeting held on Monday 31 January 2005,
2:00– 5:00pm, Dunollie Hotel, Broadford**

Present: Ian Turnbull (NTS Balmacara) Chair 2-4pm Bob Macmillan (BTO) Chair 4-5pm
Alison MacLennan (RSPB) Gwyn Jones (SAC)
David Glover (Inverinate Estate) Simon Franks (NTS Kintail)
Sarah Kaye (Highland Council Ranger Service) John Philips (Highland Council Ranger Service)
Douglas Halliday (JMT) Bryan Neath (South West Ross Field Club)
Karen Phillip (SNH) Alice Brown (Highland Biodiversity Officer)

Apologies: Alisdair Danter (Highland Council) Roger Cottis (SWT)
Jyrna Batters (Sluggans Woodland Group) Chris Maginn (Artist)
Angus McHattie (Lochs Duich, Long & Alsh Forum)

1. Agree Agenda

The agenda was agreed as the draft circulated before the meeting. The notes from the meeting on Tues 11th January were agreed as accurate. Further projects that had been suggested following the 11th January meeting were circulated to the group before the meeting or on the day. These were:

Loch Cill Chrìosd (Grace Yoxin International Otter Survival Fund)

One other possible suggestion for a project which came to mind was Loch Cill Chrìosd. It used to be drained at the weir and the reeds pulled. Now the loch is silting up a lot which provides much less suitable open water for the whooper swans which used to winter there each year.

Marine Biodiversity Awareness Raising Event (Angus McHattie Lochs Duich, Long & Alsh Forum)

Awareness raising event of marine biodiversity. Similar to event held at Ashaig on World Oceans Day in 1997 (Bill Fouton opened the event.) Threats to marine biodiversity, themed displays, community, school group's involvement.
Kyleakin Hall c£1000

The following additional projects were suggested by Alison MacLennan (RSPB) at the 31st Jan meeting:

- i. Wildlife value of roadside verges. Management agreement to retain wildflower interest.
- ii. Surveys of derelict buildings for swallow, barn owl interests
- iii. Employ Project Officer for Best Practice Muirburn Management Agreement uptake
- iv. Creation of website to inform public about Environment Forum, LBAP implementation, with links to Highland Biodiversity Forum etc.

2. Discuss the list of project ideas for the £10K Highland Biodiversity funding

It was agreed that the best method of selecting 2/3 projects to investigate and develop further for the next meeting would be to set criteria against which each project could be assessed individually. The criteria chosen were as follows:

1. Fits Skye and Lochalsh LBAP aims and objectives
2. Meets Highland Biodiversity Project timescale (completed within 1 year, March 2005 - Spring 2006)
3. Realistic and achievable (e.g. has landowner consent etc)
4. Is a new project that hasn't been tried before

5. Has wide impact and appeal
6. Has positive biodiversity gains/achieves action on the ground

In total 22 projects were suggested, and these were short listed to the following 5 projects (highlighted in green in the table) which it was agreed would be investigated further for the next meeting to be held in 2/3 weeks time. **Volunteers from the LBAP Focus Group agreed to develop 1 or other of the projects initially by drafting a 1 page summary before the next meeting to include: how it fits with LBAP, costings, who would carry it out, equipment needed, etc.** Those people are listed in brackets below:

1. Develop tourism aspect of raising awareness of Skye and Lochalsh Biodiversity e.g. Biodiversity Trail leaflet series/wildlife watching guide (**John Philips/Sarah Kaye**)
2. Aquaculture – flotsam/jetsam beach cleans within Skye and Lochalsh. Co-ordination of existing beach cleans/ Beach clean weekend event in Spring 2004 (**Douglas Halliday**)
3. Black throated diver raft in Loch Cluanie (**Brian Neath/Alison MacLennan**)
4. Marine Biodiversity Awareness Raising Event .Threats to marine biodiversity, themed displays, community, school group’s involvement. (**Angus McHattie**)
5. Surveys of derelict buildings for swallow barn owl interests etc. School group involvement, and report proposing and implementing solutions e.g. alternative nest sites (**Bob MacMillan, Alison MacLennan**)

It was also agreed that two other projects, (highlighted in yellow in the table) would also be taken forward in some form; the crofting demonstration project as a separate meeting initially comprising some of those in attendance at a Grassland Management Workshop for Skye & Lochalsh and Lochaber held in 2004 in Kyle. **Action Karen Phillip.** This could then be brought back to the Environment Forum at a later date, (or possibly to the LBAP £10k project spend if a suitable project could be devised in time). It was agreed the development of display panels, the second project, would use the £2k available for the open day event required under the Highland Biodiversity Project, to create panels to take around various shows in 2006 once the project (s) had been completed. Alice Brown confirmed that there was some flexibility on the number of projects taken forward, i.e. not limited to 2 maximum, however, only £2k available *in total* for event/open day summarising what projects the had been money spent on. The discussions surrounding selection of the projects are summarised in the table below by project:

Project proposal	Comments
Setting up an Environmental Forum including an awareness raising event	Agreed that a good use of the £2k assigned to holding an event following project completion (a requirement of the Highland Biodiversity Project funding) could be put to developing display panels to take to a series of 2006 events such as Black Isle show, Skye Agricultural show etc which could simultaneously raise awareness of LBAP and Environment Forum.
Display panels on the biodiversity of Skye and Lochalsh in general to take to Black Isle show, Skye Agricultural show etc which could simultaneously raise awareness of LBAP and Environment Forum.	(This could simultaneously inform public about what projects have been carried out and perhaps also promote Skye LBAP/Environment Forum.) This would reach a wider audience than if holding a separate event that might not be well attended. Members of the Group could take a turn in taking along the display panels to various events. <i>Develop further towards end of project completion.</i>
Invasive species control e.g. Japanese	Very expensive, not cost effective. Already a

Knotweed, mink.	legal responsibility of Highland Council.
Crofting township demonstration of best practice and production of a leaflet e.g. wildflower meadow or wetland management. (Could also be wider than biodiversity theme if further funding forthcoming e.g. rural skills workshop)	Agreed that crofting was a key habitat/landscape type in Skye and Lochalsh and therefore was particularly important in maintaining/improving biodiversity. However, a crofting demonstration project was probably out with the scope of the timescale and current funding available. Agreed that SNH would instigate a meeting which would follow on from the Grassland Workshop held last August to progress. Dependant on outcome it could then be re-visited by the Environment Forum, or taken back to the LBAP £10k spend if a suitable project could be devised in time. Possibilities could include the purchase of e.g. small bale silage machine to encourage rotational cropping, training day for managing species rich grasslands. <i>Needs further development.</i>
Muirburn demonstration project– raising awareness about impacts on habitats and species. The project would link with GAEC (Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition) and the Single Farm Payment, and would promote the Muirburn Code.	A demonstration project would not attract the moorland managers that are not adhering to the Muirburn Code, more likely those that are. Therefore this project would not reach a wide audience.
Development of path network at Kingsburgh	More suitable for LEADER+ or SFGS funding
Establish Skye and Lochalsh wildlife recording system or event to publicise existing recording systems.	There are already wildlife recording systems in place.
Project that pulls together biodiversity facts and figures that make Skye and Lochalsh unique: update Skye Data Atlas	Useful document that dates very quickly and might be better presented on a website that can be readily updated.
Develop tourism aspect of raising awareness of Skye and Lochalsh Biodiversity e.g. Develop Balmacara camp site with interpretive walk etc.	Production of leaflet (s) to encourage visitors to Skye and Lochalsh. Must be careful not to duplicate existing leaflets such as Footsteps series. Example could be Biodiversity Trail Leaflet that describes key species in Skye and Lochalsh, where best to see them/what time of year. Similar to 'what to see and when' in Free Press. Could be targeted at B&B providers. Could obtain additional funding from LEC and Tourist Board. <i>Develop further.</i>
Develop local guide books/leaflets for local habitats e.g. woodlands, grassland.	
Wildlife crime event to raise awareness, and how to report wildlife crime.	Matter for police. Leaflet already produced for Tayside Police.
Aquaculture – flotsam/jetsam beach cleans within Skye and Lochalsh. Raising awareness, lobbying industry and decision-makers.	Employ a Projects Officer for 2/3 months to co-ordinate existing beach cleans, or have just one weekend beach clean annual event? School group/community involvement. Particularly relevant following recent gales. But not new idea, and recurring problem. <i>Develop further.</i>
Environmental Education project at Portree	Already being progressed and Primary

Primary School	School seeking further funding from LEADER.
Black throated diver rafts	Specific project related to specific species. Low cost (£1000 per raft), but maintenance requirements at c £300/year (4 man days/ 2 people per autumn/spring visit day visit) NTS Kintail could possibly take on maintenance aspect. <i>Develop further.</i>
Carr Brae semi-natural woodland, designated as a Local Natural Heritage Site in Local Plan. Management of woodland for butterflies and moths.	More appropriate for Environment Forum or other funding. Land ownership issues.
Waterfowl and wader scrapes. Develop scrapes or lagoons where children could go and watch wildfowl close up e.g. at Kirkton Bay or the saltmarshes at the head of Loch Duich.	More appropriate for Environment Forum. Land ownership issues.
Additional projects	
Loch Cill Chriosd used to be drained at the weir and the reeds pulled. Now the loch is silting up a lot which provides much less suitable open water for the whooper swans which used to winter there each year.	Loch Cill Chriosid is a lime-enriched loch of European and national interest within Strath SSSI/cSAC. Appropriate management of the Loch should be taken forward by SNH in conjunction with the landowner.
Marine Biodiversity Awareness Raising Event Awareness raising event of marine biodiversity. Similar to event held at Ashaig on World Oceans Day in 1997 (Bill Foulton opened the event.) Threats to marine biodiversity, themed displays, community, school group's involvement. Kyleakin Hall c£1000	Could be a suitable project for promotion of marine biodiversity, maybe in conjunction with beach cleans. <i>Develop further.</i>
Wildlife value of roadside verges. Management agreements to retain wildflower interest.	Should be progressed with Highland Council, roads department.
Surveys of derelict buildings for swallow, barn owl interests etc.	Required to prevent further loss of habitat for bird species. Could be way to involve school groups and community. <i>Develop further.</i>
Employ Project Officer for Muirburn Management Agreement Uptake	A demonstration project would not attract the moorland managers that are not adhering to the Muirburn Code, more likely those that are.
Creation of website to inform public about Environment Forum, LBAP implementation, with links to Highland Biodiversity Forum etc	A very good idea but not feasible in the short term. A project that should be taken forward under the Environment Forum.