

Meeting Notes

Highland Invasive Species sub-group.

2-4pm. Tuesday 3rd June 2014

SEPA Office, Dingwall.

1. Welcome

John Parrott	Coille Alba (Chairman)
Jonathan Willet	Highland Council
Lynn Bryden	Cromarty Fisheries Trust
Nicola Tallach	SNH
Judi McDonald	SEPA
Simon McKelvey	Cromarty Fisheries Trust
Mike Stretch	BEAR Scotland
Julie Bhatti	SEPA
Kiera McKnight	Network Rail (by phone)

2. Apologies

David O'Brien	HBRG
---------------	------

3. Approval of minutes, matters arising

Action Points 24/6/13

AP1. CM mentioned the Rhoddy problem in Glen Beasdale and the need for control of the infestation on the railway side. CM and KMcK to meet regarding this issue. *Reply - Meetings set up with those who approached me. If further /other meetings are required please let me know.* **Discharged.**

AP2. KMcK to facilitate meetings with INNS sub-group members and the relevant project managers. *Reply – Current standards circulated but being reviewed.* **Discharged.**

AP3. KMcK to investigate NR INNS Standards. **Discharged.**

AP7. But JW to chase Stan Whitaker SNH for a national update on INNS progress. **Discharged.**

3/4/14

AP1. KMcK to send a list of these 6 species to JW. **Discharged.**

4. Standing Item Questions/ Comments

4.9 Network Rail. This item was brought forward as Keira was phoning in.

KMcK has met with Corrina M from SNH. She has contacted Mike Leary of Highland Council regarding JK on the railway encroaching onto a cemetery, but he has yet to make contact.

AP1: JW to contact Mike Leary.

There was a meeting about *Spartina* (Cord Grass) in the Cromarty Firth. RSPB are controlling it and NR had previously committed to look at it.

KMcK attended the INNS Workshop in Aberdeen. JBh was there too. They reported back it. The workshop seemed to be focussing more on volunteer work to control INNS and also finding out about funding. SEPA got collared regarding their perceived requirement for volunteers to have a minimum standard of training if spraying etc. KMCK said she would feed this. Just to note the acceptable level of training for sprayers is a DEFRA matter and there are links to this on the FAQ section of the SEPA website.

AP2: LB to email KMCK about JK at the Peffery rail crossing.

KMcK said the best way to report INNS on the network was through the customer helpline as it will get put onto a task list and may be faster than contacting her directly. There is an issue with the timings of some of the spraying of JK but this may be down to getting a site off the task list as soon as possible. KMCK said she would feed these comments into the review of current standards for managing INNS that is underway. NR has a plant specialist who is willing to come to a meeting if we have comments we wish to pass on.

AP3: Does the group wish this person to attend the next meeting?

KMcK rang off after this.

4.1 Mink Project

SNH funding until 2015. Anne-Marie MacMaster is the coordinator for it. There has been training for the Fisheries Trusts who have taken over responsibility for managing the volunteers and Mink rafts. A Mink App has been developed and

SNH are keen for it to be used to show buy-in and its utility. However the volunteers aren't always that keen on new technology.

Aberdeen University will publish research on the future potential of Mink eradication in Scotland in June/ July.

The Fisheries Trusts are capable of coordinating the Mink work but may need more resources.

4.12 BEAR Scotland

There was an issue with the handover of data from the last contract holder. But this has been sorted out. All INNS sites on the Trunk Road Network are priority for control under the conditions of their contract with the SG. The contract will run for 5 years (2 have passed) with an extension to 10 years possible.

INNS sites are programmed into a TomTom in a vehicle along with advice on what to do and a picture of the species in question.

AP4. MS to ask Angus Corby of TS if he can export the existing INNS info on their database to whoever wants a copy.

MS left the meeting after his contribution.

4.2 Rhododendron Project

A survey of the remaining priority areas of Rhododendron in Highland is underway and will be completed in April. These maps will hopefully expedite SRDP applications when the new scheme opens in 2015. Funding is still an issue and there isn't likely to be a great deal for Rhododendron in the new SRDP. The HRP will continue as long as there are projects or activities for it to undertake.

AP5. SMcK is to survey the Rhoddy on Ardross Castle Estate and as the owner to submit an SRDP application for its removal.

4.3 Cromarty Catchment

Invasive Plant species Control Project

This is the last year of the current project funded through RAFTS / WEF. Cromarty DSFB staff have started spraying giant hogweed and American skunk

cabbage in the Balnagown and Conon catchments. Inspection of Japanese and Himalayan Knotweed shows another year of successful reduction in density and a likelihood of eradication in the treated areas. TCV midweek and Green Gym groups will be starting Himalayan balsam clearance in June and have increased resources at Munloch to enable this.

Orrin Rhododendron Clearance

Cromarty Firth DSFB staff will continue to spray regrowth of rhododendron in the area cleared in recent years. Fairburn Estate is continuing to clear rhododendron across the rest of the Estate.

Alness Rhododendron

With some funding for TCV days from the Forestry Commission and labour from Cromarty DSFB bailiffs, more than a km of dense rhododendron was cleared from a spawning tributary of the Alness River at Alness Castle.

Mink Project

The Scottish Mink Initiative work is continuing, with funding through SNH until 2015. The project is now being delivered through the Fishery Trust network rather than Mink Control Officers directly employed by the project.

Multi-Invasives Project

With present Invasive species project due to end in 2015, RAFTS is developing a multi-Invasive species project which will combine work by Trust staff, contractors and networks of volunteers to give efficient clearance and monitoring of invasive species.

4.4 Lochaber INNS Project

A contract will be let this summer to survey the INN Plants in Fort William and Caol. This will be funded by Highland Council. The control programme will be funded from several sources and the survey will estimate a budget for this from the mapping of INN Plants that will be undertaken.

4.5 Lower Ness INNS Project

£135K of Landfill Tax funding has been applied for from WREN. This will continue work in Inverness, Glen Urquhart and the Avoch Burn and extend it to the Upper Nairn and Lower Beaully.

4.6 GB INNS Local Area Group Update

Rob Dewar attended the meeting in York. He said, "The conference was fully booked this time with very few not attending. Best attendance so far! This could represent what is a crucial period just now with EU regulation imminent. Much of my reporting back has been conveniently formatted for me in the GB Strategy doc – Main Findings and Recommendations and the EU Regulation progress update.

Other points to report..

I posed the question " with the recognition that INNS impose such a negative cost to the EU as a whole and such funding as the SRDP representing a number of hurdles are there any plans for specific funding measures for INNS control? "...

There was not a very positive or informed response at this stage but I was drawn to recommendation 4 in the GB strategy review..."Undertake an assessment of resources required to underpin the GB strategy and implement the EU IAS regulation.

There was some initial concern that a limited species list of 50 species would be drawn up in the EU regulation. This has now been dropped largely due to GB negotiation and will be based on ongoing risk assessment for species and there is no specific limit on number of sp.

England and Wales are very likely to follow the Scottish example of a legislative approach all be it 'soft law'

Biological control continue to be carefully trialled and any risk to native species being predated on was largely dismissed as very unlikely due to the rigorous testing and trial work

The workshops provided the opportunity for people to emphasise the most important recommendations and critique others to fine tune the GB strategy. A good use of delegates I thought!

During the workshop there was an acknowledgement that not enough practitioners are involved with meetings discussing strategy and control work.

4.7 Nairn

Work is ongoing and will be complemented by work in the Upper Nairn see 4.5. This year the Findhorn is being concentrated on.

4.8 Giant Hogweed

Ongoing. Funding until March 2016.

4. 10 RBMP

The Water Environment Fund

http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/water_environment_fund/application_information.aspx is a potential funding source, however, it is currently fully-subscribed for INNS projects. But it needs the WFD to get the INNS impact on the quality of the aquatic environment raised, as currently INNS plants alone don't put a watercourse in poor condition so you can't access the funding to improve that situation. It may be worth exploring this route if the project takes a whole catchment approach – best to contact WEF directly as they will have more detail.

4.11 TCV

No report. Ullie Wetzel back in September.

5. HIS Forum 2014 – Friday 26th Sept in Ullapool.

AP6. JW to book a venue and organise speakers.

6. AOCB

Clyde something?

7. DONM

27/10/14. 2pm. SEPA Dingwall.

The aims of the Highland Invasive Species Group were agreed as follows:

- To bring together the key players and take stock of the situation regarding invasive non-native species in Highland;
- To raise awareness and spread good practice;
- To identify any major gaps and prioritise key areas for future work; and
- To work together to secure new resources and funding.

Sub Group Remit.

The Forum agreed that biosecurity issues and the securing of funding for the projects discussed at this meeting are of key importance. It also agreed that the sub-group should continue and seek to secure funding to deliver the projects it has detailed.