

## Agenda

### Highland Invasive Species sub-group.

2-4pm. Tuesday 4th March 2014

SEPA Office, Dingwall.

#### 1. Welcome

John Parrott	Coille Alba (Chairman)
Jonathan Willet	Highland Council
Barbara Macritchie	NTS – Balmacara
Corinna Mertens (phone)	SNH
Judi McDonald	SEPA

#### 2. Apologies

Kiera McKnight	Network Rail
Julie Bhatti	SEPA – River Basin Management Coordinator A&B
David O'Brien	HBRG
Lucy Ballantyne	Lochaber Fishery Trust
Simon McKelvey	Cromarty Fisheries Trust
Rob Dewar	NTS

#### 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.*

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

**AP3.** KMck to investigate NR INNS Standards. Ongoing.

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

22/10/13

**AP1.** JW to find out Transport Scotland's and Scottish Canals INNS policy.  
Discharged. **They don't have formal policies.**

**AP2.** JW to circulate the feedback summary sheet and notes from HISF5.  
**Discharged.**

4. Standing Item Questions/ Comments

**SNH?** is working in partnership with NRail, THC and BEAR Scotland. NRail is recording 6 key species for control, Rhoddy is one. Transport Scotland is looking to issue joint contracts for road and rail maintenance.

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

5. Rapid Response Protocols

Discussion postponed until the next meeting.

6. HIS Forum 2014 – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> Sept

Venue discussed. Ullapool decided to be the best.

7. Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment/ INNS Policy Highland Council

No further comment.

8. AOCB

JP. Aspen will be flowering this year. Notes the sites of the colonies and take pictures of the flowers.

9. DONM

2pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2014, SEPA Dingwall.

Standing Items – Organisation Updates.

1. Mink Project

Updates now through the local Fisheries Trusts.

2. Rhododendron Project

- The NWSS data for Rsp cover has been extracted for certain sites and this will continue. The mining of the NWSS data will continue and more interpretation of this will come out over the coming months.

- A £9000 contract to survey the remaining priority Rsp woodlands in Highland is now underway and will finish by the end of this Financial Year. This will mean all of the key woodlands have been surveyed and all the information required for a SRDP application will be available.
- The status of Rsp control in the new 2014-20 SRDP is unclear. It is under the woodland improvement option but not under a heading of its own.
- Regardless of the SRDP there is the opportunity to develop a Rsp control programme funded by the Landfill tax stretching from Lael to Durness as there are three historic landfill sites covering all the west coast at Ullapool, Lochinver and Rhiconich. There may be a contract let to develop this project and apply for funds in 2014/15.
- FCS are investigating the possibility of extracting the data for the area of Rsp that has been removed to date through the SRDP. This is labour intensive as site files need to be accessed individually. The amount of clearance on the National Forest Estate will also be detailed and this will be publicised to reinforce the fact that Rsp is being controlled and this is successful. If possible data on the cost of this work will be gathered too. This will be useful for forward budgeting.
- There has been some talk of the need to develop an industry standard methodology for the survey of Rsp. A meeting to take this forward is planned in the next FY.

### 3. Cromarty Catchment

#### Alness Rhododendron

Having completed clearance of Rhododendron from the River Orrin over the last 5 years work has started to clear the Alness catchment. Fishery Board staff are working alongside TCV to clear Rhododendron from the banks of the Alness and a spawning tributary at Ardross Castle. With funding for TCV from the Forestry Commission more than half a kilometre has been cleared this spring so far.

#### Mink project

The Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust has taken over the delivery of the Scottish Mink Initiative in the North Eastern region of the SMI project. A network of volunteers and rafts has been developed and supported by the Trust. A SMI Newsletter is available at <http://www.scottishmink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Spring-2014-SMI-NewsletterFINAL.pdf>

#### Cromarty INN Plant project

We are entering the last year of the current RAFTS / SEPA Invasive plant clearance project. This project has been successful in significantly reducing the densities of all target species in catchments around the Cromarty Firth. To achieve eventual eradication further work will be required and RAFTS are looking for funding to continue clearance until a network of volunteers can support the Trust in monitoring and treating any regrowth or new outbreaks. Trials have taken place with a new handheld PDA to record INNS survey, treatment and monitoring data. Alongside this a new website allows the public and volunteers to report sightings of INNS ( [www.inns.rafts.org.uk/](http://www.inns.rafts.org.uk/) ). Initial reports are treated as candidate sites until the Trust can verify them, treatments can also be reported so that members of the public can see if a sighting is new or is in an area already under treatment.

#### 4. Lochaber INNS Project

This was the final year of our current SEPA funded INNPS control project, our umbrella organisation is currently applying to extend this into further years. Knotweed on the river Lochy is significantly reduced, with no sign of plants in the upper reaches now. Inverlochy islands at the bottom of the river are still heavily infested, as are sections of land around Fort William. LFT is developing a project to work with the Criminal Justice Service to get offenders on community payback orders to help with Japanese Knotweed control, giving experience and qualifications to the offenders, clear up Japanese Knotweed and give the community back large areas of its foreshore. The project development is going well with a good proportion of funding come in but we are still short of the full amount.

Generally the JK and GK is being controlled well by treatment, mostly stem injection. However each year we find new stands so our map of knotweed isn't looking much better than at the start!

#### Mink

Mink trapping has been very quiet this year, with few people catching mink despite a good effort. Having spoken to people involved in other mink projects this seems to fit into a trend of generally few mink caught in 2013. I am about

to contact all volunteers to encourage them to make a final push before the end of the project in summer 2014.

#### Crayfish

No update since August when we last trapped the crayfish ponds and found no crayfish despite trapping for 250 trap nights.

#### Ft William JK Survey Update.

- There was a meeting on the 5th November 2013 to discuss the INNS problem in Fort William. Its aim was to find a way forward to developing a control plan for the key INNS in this area.
- It was agreed at the meeting that Highland Council will draft and fund a tender for the survey of plant INNS in the area within the 40mph zone in Fort William and selected sites outwith this area to produce a map of the INNS in this area. It will be used to cost a control programme. The tender will be let in Spring 2014.
- The INNS control programme would be expected to have multiple funders.

#### 5. Lower Ness INNS Project

Landfill tax application of £135K over 3 years has been applied for to take forward this work. Expanded to cover the upper Nairn, lower Beauly and Avoch Burn.

#### 6. GB INNS Local Area Group Update

No update.

#### 7. Nairn

##### INNs Plant Control

Control of hogweed-knotweed on Nairn through issue of round up to local contractor, Mike Mitchell, and equipment to Kilravock Estate. Good progress with GH/JK on Geddes and Cawdor Estates with GH/JK being reduced to manageable levels. Good progress also underway on Kilravock Estate but still considerable work to be done. So far no control of GH/JK has been implemented downstream from Howford Bridge. Joint application for further funding to continue control on the upper Nairn submitted with John Parrot and the Ness Fisheries Trust.

Continued control of GH along Mosset Burn with Forres "Monday Night" volunteers, the upper Mosset has been treated for two years and a considerable drop in GH recorded, very few (<20) large plants found in 2013. Successful spraying completed from A96 down to sewage works with good kill rate on the Giant Hogweed. Some good press coverage also produced further interest from local volunteers. Control will continue in 2015. Network Rail also completed a treatment of GH alongside rail crossing at Forres however, still no ideas on their long term treatment plans. Local environmental group "Wild Things" have also carried out control of HB along Mosset and Sanquhar Pond.

Survey on Lower Findhorn still not fully completed so this is a key action for 2015, I'm also exploring options for aerial surveys on Findhorn and other two rivers to improve monitoring approach.

Assisted with control of GH/JK and skunk cabbage on the upper Lossie with Kellas Estate, limited progress, skunk cabbage treated around pond and along outflow along with some GH. However, the JK infestation is very severe and will required much more effort, beyond scope of current funding, so looking into professional contractors for future control. More JK and HB discovered further upstream throughout Dallas estate, key target for 2014 to reduce the spread.

#### Mink Control

Nine mink captured-culled over autumn/winter, Several captures were notable, a sighting of a mink near Dallas was reported in early November and ghillie, Dougie Ross, reported its capture a few days later 21st. My wife, Lesley, reported a small, black animal running alongside the road near Dalvey in the evening of the 18th November, after viewing some photos she was convinced it was a mink and so Sean Maclean and Davie, the gardener at Dalvey estate, baited traps in anticipation. A few weeks later their efforts were successful with a female mink, captured on the 12th December.

Several sightings and excellent photos of mink in action at Burghead also began to arrive through the winter. Three traps were baited and set in

January, in Burghead harbour and along the coast. A mink, was captured in one of the coastal traps on the 18th of January.

Despite this success there are still areas within Moray that require attention several sightings of mink have been reported from the Spynie area and two new volunteers have been recruited to assist with monitoring and trapping around Spynie loch. We still feel there may be more mink along the coast and are concentrating further efforts on the stretch between Burghead and Lossiemouth. Trapping also continues along the Nairn and the surrounding area but to date no definite reports of mink activity.

#### Crayfish

Trapping continued to end of October 2013 with the Nairn AA and over 400 were caught. Aberdeen Ph.D student Rupert Houghton, assisted with trapping in Sept/Oct and has been analysing existing data and developing additional trapping strategies for the coming season.

Thanks to Sean Maclean (FDSFB), Erin Hunter (ex NDSFB), all proprietors, gamekeepers, anglers and volunteers who have helped over 2013.

#### 8. Giant Hogweed

Ongoing, 3 more years of coordinating the spraying to go. It finishes in 2016. The River Wick control is underway this year too. GH in the Nairn and Ness being controlled through other schemes.

#### 9. Network Rail

No update.

#### 10. RBPM

No update.

#### 11. TCV

No update.

#### 12. Scotland Transerv

No update.

**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.