

Meeting Notes

Highland Invasive Species sub-group.

2-4pm. Monday 19th November 2012.

SEPA Office, Dingwall.

1. Welcome

John Parrott	Coille Alba (Chairman)
Judi Forsyth	SEPA
Jonathan Willet	Highland Council
Simon McKelvey	Cromarty Fisheries Trust
Ullie Wenzel	BTCV - Scotland
Peter Nairne	Scotland Transerv

Julie Bhatti has left Scotland Transerv to return to SEPA as a River Basin Management Plan Coordinator. The meeting wished her all the best. We welcomed Peter Nairne who will be taking over Julie's post and attending these meetings in future.

2. Apologies

Ken Knott	Forestry Commission Scotland
Lucy Ballantyne	Lochaber Fishery Trust
Barbara Macritchie	NTS – Balmacara
Gunnar Scholtz	North Highland Mink Project
Steve North	SNH
Elspeth Lawson	BTCV - Scotland
Dieter Tuerlinckx	Caithness Biodiversity Group
David O'Brien	HBRG
Ken Knott	Forestry Commission Scotland
Rob Dewar	NTS
Ben Davies	Highland Rhododendron Project
Morgane Gillet	SEPA - RBMP

3. Approval of minutes, matters arising

JW apologised for not sending out the Agenda and reminding everyone about the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

AP1. JW to contact KN and LB to finalise the site visits for the HISF4.

Discharged.

AP2. RD to circulate details of The NTS's plant donor scheme for Rhododendron. **Discharged.**

AP3. JW to circulate the draft HISF 4 Agenda to the group for approval.

Discharged.

AP4. JW to invite Catherine Murdoch SG and Angus Corby Transport Scotland to the Forum. **Discharged.**

AP5. JW to submit the updated 2013-16 Highland INNS Strategy to the next meeting. **Delayed until the March meeting.**

AP6. JW to submit Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment paper to the next meeting. **Delayed until the March meeting.**

4. Standing Item Questions/ Comments

None

5. Crayfish.

Discussion held over until the March 2013 meeting.

6. HIS Forum 2012

It went well over all, no negative comments. See feedback form summary.

It was agreed that the next Forum should be held in or around Nairn. The day would be the last Friday in September, the 27th.

AP1. JW to contact Bob Lawton of the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust about hosting the event.

7. Highland Council Operations and INNS

JW mentioned that TECS are looking to let a contract for INNS control on their landholdings that would go through the procurement process and there would be one or two preferred contractors at the end of that. JW will be liaising with Jonathan Saxby of TECS about this.

In due course a contract for the whole of the Council landholding may be let but we shall see how this smaller contract goes. The Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment paper will inform which sites are the priority for control and therefore where the contractors would be used.

8. Summary Leaflet of the WaNE Code of Practice.

JF said that there was going to be an FAQ page produced for the WaNE website. JW thought that a summary of the WaNE CoP would be produced JP was not so sure.

What is known is that such a summary would be useful and is required.

9. Updating the 2009-12 Highland INNS Strategy.

This is ongoing and will be presented to the next meeting.

10. Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment

This is ongoing and will be presented to the next meeting.

11. AOCB

SMcK – Urray net washing station. F/W fish cages nets, possibly from all over Scotland, to be washed by a tributary of the Conon. There is no statutory requirement for a biosecurity plan and this is a major loophole as there is a big (and completely unassessed) risk from F/W INNS being brought into Highland. JW had forwarded SMcK's comments onto the Planning and Building Standards Manager who will look into it.

AP2. JW to send SMcK the emails of the INNS contacts in SNH and SG so that he can bring this situation to their attention.

JP asked if there is the need for a letter to be sent to the relevant bodies regarding the future SRDP in light of it being the main funder of INNS work in private landholdings. The situation with SRDP funding being withdrawn from Rhoddie control a few months ago was a great concern and could really hit control projects and also have an impact on the contractors employed in INNS control if their work dries up outwith the public sector.

JW said that he thought that Rhoddie work under the SRDP was safe as the commitment to eradicating Rhoddie on the National Forest Estate meant that there had to be funding available to control Rhoddie in the whole landscape management zone around the NFE site otherwise the investment in eradicating Rhoddie would be for naught, thus wasting public money. Hopefully this is being fully considered. The word on the street is that the new SRDP will be a tweaked version of the current one; so insanely complicated,

not readily auditable and not fit for purpose. As its purpose is to deliver the Scottish Land Use Strategy everywhere in Scotland but without costing the delivery of that it is doomed to failure. So on that cheery note it was decided that **AP3**. Discussion about the future SRDP and INNS control funding to be has at the next meeting.

Phytophthora has been discovered on Juniper on a site in Highland.

AP4. JW to contact GB to see if he can circulate the email about this site to the HISF sub-group members.

12. DONM

2pm, Monday 4th of March. SEPA Office Dingwall.

Summary of Action Points.

27/8/12

AP5. JW to submit the updated 2013-16 Highland INNS Strategy to the next meeting.

AP6. JW to submit Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment paper to the next meeting.

19/11/12

AP1. JW to contact Bob Lawton of the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust about hosting the event.

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Standing Items.

1. Mink Project Update – Moray and the Cairngorm areas will be done by the Spey Foundation and the Lossie, Nairn and Findhorn Trust respectively, with the support from SMI. A meeting is scheduled for later this week to assess the extent of support needed in the various catchments.

The University of Aberdeen has launched the mink Sightings and raft check web site and volunteers have been invited to test the application over the next few months. Once the testing stage has been evaluated it is hoped that the scheme will be rolled out on a bigger stage.

The Hebridean Mink Project has received support in trapping and establishing a volunteer network of their own, as part of the agreed work exchange program which involved the dog handlers coming to the mainland last autumn.

Mink catches have been very low over the last few months, as with sightings. The updated web site is now online and running. The next Newsletter will be sent out at the beginning of December

Volunteers are reminded to keep an eye on the weather forecast for the next few months and remove rafts which are in danger of getting swept away during the winter spates in the rivers and burns. Until the beginning of February when the next mating season will start again.

2. Rhododendron Officer Update – A contract to survey the entire area identified in the E Lochaber LMZ has been issued, contracts to survey specific areas of W Lochaber have also been issued. Lorraine Servant is currently trying to arrange a meeting with FC and SNH to discuss Sunart.
3. Cromarty Catchment Update – Mink project work is now in the winter phase, putting the rafts into storage. An inventory of all the traps and equipment is being undertaken. There is a new TCV Natural Talent apprentice with the Trust undertaking Fishery Management.

There has been work on pumping out and gill netting the Blackmuir Curling Pond in Strathpeffer. There have been reports of Perch in it, but it is not really Perch habitat. The work has found no Perch and it is thought that the Perch previously recorded have been illegal and unsuccessful introductions. The site is also the most northerly Great Crested Newt Pond in Scotland.

Rhoddie clearance in its final year on the Orrin. The whole of the riparian area will have been cleared and replanted with native broadleaves.

Exegesis online INNS database has been developed with RAFTS. It is a public facing site that will instantly show new records uploaded onto it. These will appear and unverified records and will need to be verified. PDA's being purchased so that data can be inputted in the field. The system will be primarily be used for riparian and F/W INNS but there is scope for all terrestrial ones as it is OS map based.

All RAFTS INNS work is being rolled into a £5million LIFE+ bid along with SNH and SEPA Restoration Fund monies. Looking to build up a volunteer base after an initial couple of years of contractors tackling the riparian INNS.

PS from JW. The above bid was encouraged by the EU who see the work of RAFTS and INNS action in Scotland as leading the way in Europe. Also SNH are looking to develop a national Mink Control Strategy, which will help areas such as Wester Ross, Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh to take forward action they are keen to deliver.

4. Lower Ness INNS Project Update – Final report submitted to SNH waiting for approval and then a link to it will be circulated.
5. Nairn Update – We are discussing progress with mink control with Gunnar and Hollie tomorrow and every likelihood that control within the Nairn/Findhorn/Lossie and Spey will be continued utilising Trust and Fishery Board staff over the winter.

Made great efforts to gain access to rail track near Forres for hogweed control last year and Johns contacts proved initially very promising. However, after a promising start when we requires access in May no joy and no answer to emails and calls! Not too much of a problem last year since it was the lower end of our target control reach on the Mosset Burn but we need to get in there next year! Very frustrating though.

6. Giant Hogweed Update – A new contract will be let for the continuation of the GH project in Munloch and Auldearn 2013-15. It will follow the successful template that has been developed and has delivered action on the ground.

River Wick GH. Still no action. JP offered to visit for free to assess the site. Not a big site but the GH is starting to spread.

7. Network Rail Update – None.
8. RBPM Update - Morgane will provide an update about WaNE and the RBMP at the next meeting.
9. Scotland Transerv Update – it seems that they will lose the franchise and it will go over the Bear Scotland in March/ April 2013. A couple of GH and HB sites were mentioned at the last meeting and these have been treated although the HB was treated late in the year. But they are now on the books and should be treated annually.
10. TCV Update – Note the new name and they shouldn't be abbreviated (oops) so it is "The Conservation Volunteers". Rhoddie control on the Orrin and Garve. GH work elsewhere with the CDFC&T. There has been a name change since the last meeting the "B" has been dropped. Hopefully no more call from BT customers. The Green Gym continues in Dingwall, Inverness and New Craigs. Some clearance work undertaken at Clava Cairns and Loch Flemington.

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.