

## 2. PROGRESS UPDATE

### CUNNTAS ÀS ÙR AIR ADHARTAS

#### Summary of Progress to Deliver the 2010 BAP

#### Geàrr-chunntas air Adhartas gus Plana-gnìomh Bith-iomadachd na Gàidhealtachd 2010 a Lìbhrigeadh

The following table provides an update on progress made since the last Highland BAP was produced in 2010.

It recognises the good work of all the partners, not just the individuals involved in the Highland Biodiversity Partnership (which has now been integrated with the Highland Environment Forum).

Over half (13/24) of the projects proposed in the 2010 Highland BAP have been delivered or are underway and making good progress, with key successes being made under the headings of invasive non-native species and awareness-raising.

Projects to control Rhododendron, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed and American mink have been taking place across Highland. The Highland Invasive Species Forum helps partners to share good practice and plan future work to achieve the greatest effect.

The Highland Seashore Project is also noteworthy as a very successful awareness-raising project. This project is due to end in December 2015, and it is hoped that further funding can be found to build on its successes through a future project focusing on the wider marine environment.



Some progress has been made on a further eight projects. These were largely partnership projects that have been limited by lack of available funding and lack of officer time to work up and agree detailed proposals to deliver the outputs.

No progress was made on three projects, again due to lack of officer time.

This table does not recognise the good work undertaken in Badenoch and Strathspey by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and partners, which is complimentary to the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan.

The table's rows have been shaded green where the project has been delivered or significant progress has been made, yellow where targets have not been met but some progress has been made, and orange where no progress has been made.

We have added a column to highlight gaps and future project ideas. This was used to start to formulate ideas for the 2015-2020 Highland BAP, and the rest of this Plan contains suggestions for projects to address these gaps as well as new project ideas.

Suggested Action	Target (Lead Partner)	Progress since 2010	Gap / Next Steps
<b>1. Recording &amp; Data Management</b> 1.1 Project Facilitation	7 projects linking national partners with local biodiversity groups to be worked up by 2013 ( <i>Scientific &amp; Technical Advisory Group (STAG)</i> )	STAG not currently operational but local projects have been delivered e.g. Bumblebee Conservation Trust is working with the Caithness Biodiversity Group, Scottish Agricultural College & land managers to improve habitats for great yellow bumblebees.	Lack of guidance on local priorities and possibilities for local action – potential to reform STAG & help make connections between local groups & lead partners.
<b>2. Local Biodiversity Groups</b> 2.1 Capacity Building Programme	7 LBAP Project Plans, 7 funding bids, 21 events, 7 leaflets, 7 websites, 7 training courses by June 2012 ( <i>THC &amp; Local Groups</i> )	The Capacity Building Programme ran from 2009 to 2013 with funding from Leader, SNH, THC and RSPB. The targets were met but local groups are still experiencing capacity issues.	Lack of capacity within some local groups. Increased bureaucracy & difficulty in accessing small grants.
2.2 Volunteering	3 practical projects involving volunteers to be initiated by 2011, 7 local groups to have representation from local volunteers by end 2011 ( <i>Local Biodiversity Groups</i> )	27 biodiversity projects were delivered by volunteers from the local biodiversity groups through the Capacity Building Programme. Volunteering Groups are represented on the Caithness and Easter Ross Biodiversity Groups. Bioblitz events took place at Dingwall (ERBG) & Inverewe (NTS)	Lots of volunteering groups do valuable work for biodiversity eg Trees for Life; potential for collaborative working, strengthening links with health sector & raising awareness of existing opportunities.
<b>3. Invasive Non-Native Species</b> 3.1 Mapping Project	Database, maps & report to be delivered by March 2010 ( <i>Invasive Species Forum</i> )	Project completed on time – Database, maps and Report held by THC and used by Invasive Species Forum to prioritise future work.	Work complete, HISF meets regularly to discuss future priorities.
3.2 Giant Hogweed Control Co-ordinator	Co-ordinator post February 2010 – March 2012 ( <i>The Highland Council / SNH</i> )	Project began in 2009 and secured further funding from SNH and THC to continue. Very positive results - in 2013 both the Nairn and Wick Rivers had control programmes, so all known areas of Giant Hogweed in Highland are being controlled.	Work ongoing, all areas under control & project extended to 2020 when we hope GH will cease to be a major issue in Highland.
3.3 Rhododendron Strategic Control Project	One-year project to start in Summer 2010, funding sought for extension ( <i>Forestry Commission Scotland / SNH / The Highland Council</i> )	The Highland Rhododendron Project employed a Project Officer from 2010-12, now the project continues without one. 14 Sols (Statement of Intent) for Rhododendron control were submitted to the SRDP by the time the scheme shut. The project prioritised key areas of control and funded surveys to expedite future SRDP applications. FCS Rhododendron Strategy was produced and significant clearance work carried out in Highland. NTS is running a plant swap initiative at Torridon, replacing ponticum with non-invasive ornamental rhododendrons, producing & selling rhodie charcoal, & providing training & interpretation.	SRDP is only funding source for clearance on private land. Lack of action on roads & railways (potential to spread along linear routes). “Over the fence” Rhododendrons reseeding into cleared ground. Lack of public support. - Possible extension to NTS plant swap project, particularly in cleared areas. - Deliver co-ordinated clearance in the 4 priority areas identified by the project.

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3.4 Invasive Species Apprentice - BTCV Natural Talent.	One-year apprentice placement starting 2010 ( <i>Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust / British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (now TCV)</i> )	The first apprenticeship was very successful, so much so that the Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust appointed a second apprentice. RSPB also had a successful apprenticeship at Abernethy.	Potential for further apprenticeship or similar projects elsewhere in Highland.
<b>4. Biodiversity Awareness</b> 4.1 Awareness Raising	Regularly updated website, 1 Forum event, 1 newsletter & 4 press releases per annum ( <i>The Highland Council</i> )	The website has been renewed and continues to grow, news and events sections are regularly added (as time allows). Annual forum events are held in Inverness & Nairn and Easter Ross, and conferences / networking events are held each Spring. <a href="http://www.highlandbiodiversity.com">www.highlandbiodiversity.com</a>	Lack of officer time to update website & run conferences & events - currently undertaken by Highland Environment Network (HEN) under HEF contract, ongoing commitment required.
4.2 Nature Detectives	Primary School Booklet produced by June 2010, trialed in E Ross & if successful, rolled out to other Highland schools in 2011/12 ( <i>The Highland Council</i> )	Project delivered, the booklets are now being used in 38 Highland schools, and THC is working on a Gaelic version.	Lack of time – Gaelic version delayed & no follow-up in schools. Potential for follow-up project using booklet & existing web-based resources, needs centralised support to promote in schools.
4.3 School Biodiversity Resources	1 Local Biodiversity Group to contact & work with a High School biology or geography teacher per annum ( <i>Local Biodiversity Groups</i> )	No progress by Local Biodiversity Groups but several HEF partners work with schools (e.g. Council Rangers, RSPB, RAFTS & Wildthings), lot of information available on various websites (e.g. Grounds for Learning, Woodland Trust nature detectives).	Difficulty in contacting & liaising with teachers – potential for project linking resources with teachers (little & often) & maintaining THC support for Rangers work in schools.
4.4 Marine Sub Group	Presentation to the 2010 Highland Biodiversity Forum ( <i>Environmental Research Institute</i> )	Delivered, the 2011 Forum focused on marine biodiversity, and a presentation on underwater biodiversity was given to the first meeting of the expanded Highland Environment Forum in Sept 2013.	Marine Project Group meets twice annually to deliver Seashore Project, wider issues (e.g. seabed habitat loss) not covered.
4.5 Marine Biodiversity Project	Marine Awareness Raising Project to be presented to the Highland Biodiversity Partnership in December 2010 ( <i>Marine Project Group</i> )	Highland Seashore Project running 2013-2015 delivering multiple outputs (training, resources, surveyors network, awareness-raising materials & events, roadshow, arts & cultural heritage festival, schools competition).	Seashore project very successful, did not cover underwater & offshore issues. Great interest in future Marine Project & requests for further training & support.
4.6 Soil Biodiversity	Newsletter & website article, press release, presentation at 2011 Forum ( <i>Highland Biodiversity Partnership</i> )	28 events were held by local biodiversity groups and partners as part of the Highland Soil Biodiversity Festival (2012). FCS completed soil map digitisation and created a Soil GIS Data model to enhance data accessibility.	Potential for a project to raise awareness of soil-related issues amongst land managers (2015 = International Year of Soils).

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<b>5. Planning, Building &amp; Infrastructure</b> 5.1 Road Verge Biodiversity Project	Joint project to be agreed in 2010 ( <i>The Highland Council / Transerv (now BEAR Scotland)</i> )	Following a successful trial in Caithness, THC and BEAR Scotland are starting to incorporate wildflower friendly mowing regimes where operational constraints allow. Guidance has been produced for tractor drivers, and nearly 30 roadside sites have been identified by members of the public.	Staff & organisational changes have delayed action, THC now not cutting verges in rural areas (other than for safety reasons).
5.2 Biodiversity & Planning Guidance & Training	European Protected Species Guidance Note launched early 2010, planning conditions produced with training by end 2010 ( <i>THC</i> )	EPS Supplementary Guidance produced in 2011, formally adopted into the Highland-wide Development Plan in March 2013. Planners' training on EPS and biodiversity has run annually since 2011.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential for further co-ordinated training.</li> <li>- Potential for Green Network biodiversity project.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Sustainable Use</b> 6.1 Local Habitats & Species Priorities Lists	7 lists agreed & guidance available by end 2010, training for potential applicants, agents & case officers in 2011 ( <i>Management Sub Group</i> )	After discussion it was agreed that producing species lists would only complicate the situation. RSPB & SNH provided training for agents & case officers on management for waders.	The next stage of the SRDP will run from 2015-2020. Potential for training on opportunities to enhance biodiversity through new scheme.
6.2 Developing Links Between Land Managers & Conservationists	7 meetings / guided walks & 7 articles in journals / newsletters over the 2011 / 2012 period ( <i>Highland Biodiversity Partnership</i> )	No progress by HBP but SNH has produced lots of materials aimed at this user group <sup>1</sup> . RSPB's Volunteer & Farm Alliance project ran for number of years. FCS published UK Forestry Standard & Guidelines on Water & Soil, Biodiversity & Climate Change	Potential for series of training events building on existing initiatives to raise awareness of good practice & SRDP / low cost / no cost options for agents & land managers.
6.3 Native Woodland Project	Project worked up and funding identified by 2012 ( <i>Management Sub Group</i> )	FCS completed the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, Highland Report produced & is available on FCS website. No progress on Highland project, Atlantic Hazel Action Group running for 7 years in Argyll.	Atlantic Hazelwoods Project – FCS have identified a number of woods in Highland that could be a starter for this project.
6.4 Deer Management	Presentation & discussion at 2010 Partnership meeting ( <i>Deer Commission Scotland (now SNH)</i> )	Deer Legislation approved in Parliament under WANE bill. SNH published Code of Practice on Deer Management. Concluded Review of Wild Deer – a National Approach which sets priorities for deer management in next 5 years. SG Rural Affairs Committee carried out review of deer management arrangements and produced a series of recommendations.	This issue needs to be tackled at a Scottish level (through Government, SNH) and a local level (through Deer Management Groups & their Deer Management Plans). No clear role here for the Highland BAP.

<sup>1</sup> Further information is at [www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/)

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6.5 Uncontrolled Muirburning	Presentation to 2011 Forum. Newsletter & website article, press release ( <i>Highland Fire &amp; Rescue Service</i> )	Presentations given to the Highland Biodiversity Partnership and Highland Environment Forum by Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, but no progress made on issue of uncontrolled muirburning & accidental wildfires.	Wildfires seem to be increasing in number and extent across Highland, lack of awareness of impacts on wildlife amongst land managers.
6.6 Wild Harvesting PhD	Universities contacted by end 2010, student to start work in 2011/12 ( <i>Management Sub Group</i> )	No progress, but interest (and demand) for wild foods continues to increase	Project not included in 2015 BAP due to lack of interest / lead partner.
<b>7. Local Plant Sources</b> 7.1 Highland Wildflower Nursery	Site identified by Spring 2010, Business Plan written by the end of 2010, Nursery started in 2011 ( <i>British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (now The Conservation Volunteers)</i> )	Feasibility study highlighted the value of the proposal, the need for it and its potential. TCV took on this project but, despite their best efforts, failed to secure funding. The Caithness Biodiversity Group operates a wildflower nursery with Key Community Supports in Thurso (Planting the Future Project). Tree nurseries are operating at Little Assynt (Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Project) and Kincaig & Fort Augustus (Highland Aspen Group / Trees for Life).	Although the Highland-wide proposal fell through there are local initiatives around the Highlands which HEF members could support and work with to deliver wildflower and tree nursery projects at a more local scale.
<b>8. Local Nature Reserves</b> 8.1 LNRs	1 Local Nature Reserve (or equivalent e.g. community woodland) to be created per annum ( <i>Highland Biodiversity Partnership</i> )	Guidance and support is available from the Council Biodiversity Officers. Meetings have taken place with 2 interested groups, but designation relies on community groups wishing to designate their local area and so far, Merkinch remains the only LNR in Highland.	Guidance & support is available for any community groups wishing to set up an LNR. No further action identified for 2015 HBAP.
8.2 Community Gardens	List to be drawn up by end 2010, future Forum to focus on gardening for wildlife in communities ( <i>Highland Biodiversity Partnership</i> )	No progress Sunny Lochaber United Gardeners (SLUG): FES purchased an area of land by Fort William to allow them to provide land and facilities to enable the local community to enjoy gardening, grow their own produce, make friends and get fit.	Potential for a pan-Highland Wildlife Gardening Project funded by HEF partners & led by Local Biodiversity Groups with links to allotment & gardening groups. Could have events, competitions & garden visits – good links with health agenda.

### List of Acronyms:

BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (now TCV)	HISF	Highland Invasive Species Forum	Sol	Statement of Intent
ERBG	Easter Ross Biodiversity Group	LNR	Local Nature Reserve	SRDP	Scottish Rural Development Programme
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland	NTS	National Trust for Scotland	STAG	Scientific & Technical Advisory Group
FES	Forest Enterprise Scotland	RAFTS	Rivers & Fisheries Trusts Scotland	TCV	The Conservation Volunteers
HBP	Highland Biodiversity Partnership (now HEF)	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	THC	The Highland Council
HEF	Highland Environment Forum	SG	Scottish Government	WANE	Wildlife and the Natural Environment Act
HEN	Highland Environment Network	SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage		

