

3.3 Local Biodiversity Work

Obair Bith-iomadachd Ionadail

Objective: To encourage and help local groups and volunteers to carry out practical biodiversity projects.

Amas: Coimhearsnachdan, buidhnean ionadail agus saor-thoilich a bhrosnachadh is a chuideachadh gus pròiseactan practaigeach bith-iomadachd a ghabhail os làimh.

Background

Cùl-fhiosrachadh

There are seven Local Biodiversity Groups in Highland (excluding Badenoch & Strathspey, which is covered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and its Cairngorms Nature partnership). These seven Groups are responsible for updating and ensuring progress is made to deliver their Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Cairngorms Nature is much better resourced and delivering well for biodiversity within the National Park. It is represented on the Highland Environment Forum and referred to throughout this Plan as a source of good practice. For the purposes of this section, we will focus on the rest of The Highland Council area and the following Local Biodiversity Action Groups.

Caithness Biodiversity Group
Sutherland Partnership Biodiversity Group
Wester Ross Environmental Network (WREN)
Easter Ross Biodiversity Group
Skye & Lochalsh Environment Forum (SLEF)
Lochaber Biodiversity Group
Inverness & Nairn Biodiversity Forum

There are many other wildlife and environmental groups operating around

Highland ranging from community groups who own and manage land, to Field Clubs & recording groups like Highland Biological Recording Group, to local groups affiliated to national bodies such as Scottish Wildlife Trust or the Scottish Ornithologists Club.

In addition Community Councils, Rotary Clubs and other local groups often undertake projects to benefit wildlife, even though they are not directly set up to do so.



Since the LBAP process started in Highland in 2002, the Highland Biodiversity Partnership has run four programmes to support projects which help local people find out about the wildlife on their doorstep and undertake projects to support it. HEF has continued this approach with the Highland Seashore Biodiversity Project.

The programmes funded small projects that were undertaken by volunteers on an ad hoc basis following suggestions from local people. They were developed and managed by the Council Biodiversity Officers, with tremendous on-the-ground support from the Council's Countryside Rangers.

However, it is getting more and more difficult to find funding for smaller projects, and all of these programmes require significant administrative support from the volunteers running the projects, the Rangers and the Biodiversity Officers.

Opportunities

Cothroman

Links with Health & Tourism: There is growing recognition of the link between biodiversity and health as well as economics, particularly tourism. This has already allowed the Highland Biodiversity Partnership (now HEF) to secure funding from wider schemes and grant bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and Leader, and there may be merit in pursuing joint projects with new partners.



Green Gyms: Many governmental bodies and charities run volunteering opportunities whereby people interested in making a

difference can give their time and in return, keep fit, learn a new skill and make new friends.

Green Gyms are a good example. Run by The Conservation Volunteers, Green Gyms provide co-ordination and support to volunteers undertaking environmental projects such as invasive species clearance or habitat management.

Blue Gyms are a similar concept, based on the shore, and could include beach clean-ups and surveys.



LEADER: The new Highland LEADER Programme was launched in 2015, and there may be opportunities to draw together a funding application to this or other sources such as Heritage Lottery Fund for a Highland-wide Local Community Biodiversity Development Officer as part of a wider project to establish and source funding for small community projects.

The issues, updates, project ideas and case studies for Local Biodiversity Projects have been grouped under the following three sub-headings:

Local Biodiversity Groups and Action Plans
Volunteering for Wildlife
Funding for Small Projects

Local Biodiversity Groups and Action Plans

Buidhnean agus Planaichean-gnìomh Bith-iomadachd Ionadail

Issues

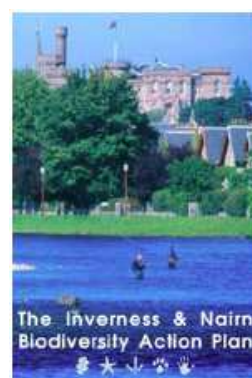
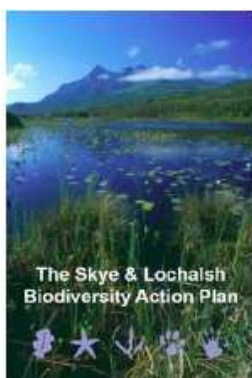
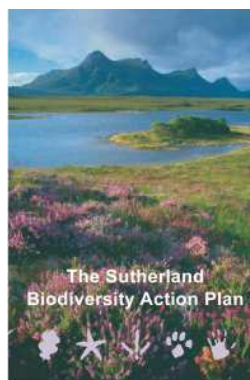
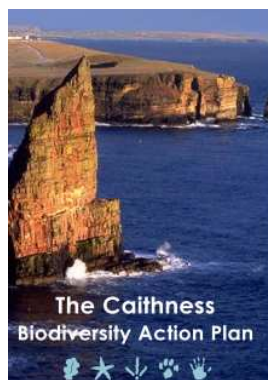
Cùisean

The seven Local Biodiversity Groups are very different and have set themselves up in different ways.

The Groups in Caithness, Wester Ross and Skye & Lochalsh undertake local projects, have their own constitution and bank account, and maintain an independent website. The Sutherland Group is a sub group of the Sutherland Partnership and has received administrative support and funding to run a small grants scheme in the past. The Groups in Easter Ross, Lochaber and Inverness & Nairn are more agency-based, with very little community representation, although an annual evening forum is held to update the public on progress with wildlife projects taking place locally.

The Groups have found that there is a lack of people who are willing, able or confident to take project management responsibilities, yet successful local projects depend on individuals who are willing to lead them. These issues are faced by most community groups, which are heavily dependent on a small number of volunteers.

The Groups were formed in 2002/3 to prepare a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for their area. Seven Highland LBAPs were produced, and these Plans are now over ten years old. There is a desire to update them, although the Local Groups do not have the capacity to undertake this work themselves and the partners do not have the funding to update all the Plans simultaneously.



Update

Cunntas às Ùr

Capacity Building Programme: The Highland Biodiversity Groups Capacity Building Programme ran from 2009 to 2013. It delivered 25 projects, 41 events and 14 profile-raising materials, involving over 1,000 people and training 113 Local Biodiversity Group members. However, most Groups are still experiencing difficulties and are heavily reliant on the Biodiversity Officers and the Countryside Rangers to co-ordinate meetings and deliver projects.



During a Bio Blitz event, experts and members of the public work together to survey a natural space; seeking, identifying and recording as many species as possible over 24 hours

When: 19th May 19:00-22:00
20th May 05:00-17:00

Basecamp @ The Greenhouse,
14 High Street, Dingwall
Everyone welcome to this free event!

Saturday 19th May	Sunday 20th May
19:00 Mammals, mini beasts and Moths: set up mammal, pitfall and moth traps across the different sites.	05:00 Dawn Chorus bird survey (Booking required)
21:00 Bat walk: use bat detectors to record different species of bats across the different sites.	09:00 Check mammal and pitfall traps. Check overnight moth trap.
	10:30 Invertebrate, plant and bird surveys along the estuary.
	12:00 Freshwater life: kick sampling
	13:00-14:00 Lunch
	14:00 Pond dipping
	15:00 Invertebrate, plant and bird surveys across woodland and riverbank habitats
	16:00 Electrofishing demonstration and fish survey
	17:00 BBQ back at Basecamp!

Basecamp @ The Greenhouse, High Street, Dingwall.
 There will be a range of activities and displays at the Greenhouse throughout the day.
 Everyone welcome for the whole evening/day or turn up to The Greenhouse 15mins before scheduled activities to find out their locations.

Contact: maryflooris@gmail.com or 07828140192 for more information and to book onto Sian dawn chorus survey.




Local Biodiversity Action Plans: Three Groups (Sutherland Partnership Biodiversity Group, Caithness Biodiversity Group and Skye & Lochalsh Environment Forum) have reviewed and updated their Local Biodiversity Action Plans with funding from

The Highland Council. However, the resulting Reviews still need work to make them into useful public documents, and consequently have not yet been consulted on or made publically available.

The other Groups have expressed interest in updating their Plans, and some work was undertaken to redraft the Inverness & Nairn and Lochaber BAPs some years ago. In the longer run, the intention is to bring the LBAPs together into a single Highland BAP at its next review in 2020.



Seashore Project: The Highland Seashore Project has undertaken a number of training and awareness raising events in coastal locations all over Highland. The intention was that this programme would be delivered jointly with the Local Biodiversity Groups but, with the exception of WREN, this collaborative approach did not work and the Project has relied heavily on the Countryside Rangers to deliver local events.

Ongoing Local Groups Support: The Highland Council supports local groups with meeting costs, website charges & insurance premiums, and there is a small amount of funding to enable volunteers who travel to meetings out-with their area to reclaim expenses.

Future Action

Gnìomh san Àm ri Teachd

20. Local Biodiversity Action Plan Updates & Delivery

Cunntasan às Ùr & Libhrigeadh a thaobh a' Phlana-gnìomh Bith-iomadachd Ionadail

Rationale: National agencies are looking to local groups to deliver regional and national biodiversity objectives, but there is no easily accessible fund or support to help them undertake this. The Highland LBAPs are all over ten years old, and the local groups do not have the capacity to update them.

Project Proposals

20.1 Help Local Biodiversity Groups to identify current local priorities and work up projects which address them through holding LBAP workshops with key local partners and individuals. The outcome would be short, action-focused LBAP updates which will help prioritise local biodiversity work over the next five years.

20.2 Help local groups to secure funding and deliver these projects through a Highland-wide Community Biodiversity Development Officer. Mentoring project leaders could be one way to address the lack of capacity.

Lead Partner: Highland Environment Forum

Supporting Partners: THC, SNH, LBGs, other HEF partners

Volunteering for Wildlife

Ag Obair gu Saor-thoileach airson Fiadh-bheatha

Issues

Cùisean

There are many opportunities for interested individuals to volunteer to help wildlife projects around the Highlands, run by many organisations. However, these programmes are often heavily dependent on external funding and so run on short timetables with very little co-ordination and support for volunteers after the projects have finished.

Update

Cunntas às Ùr

Volunteering Programmes: Many Highland organisations and groups run volunteering

days to help with surveys, clearing invasive non-native species, site maintenance, etc.



Examples include The Conservation Volunteers, Trees for Life, Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust, Nairn & Lossie Fishery Trust, Forestry Commission, RSPB Scotland,

National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, John Muir Trust and The Highland Council Rangers.

Citizen Science: There have been a number of projects aimed at training volunteers in survey and monitoring, e.g. Wildlife Counts, Highland Seashore Project.



These projects have produced species records, but have found that more thought needs to be given to how these records are verified and passed onto national recording

initiatives, and this needs to be built into the project planning stage.



Volunteering for Wildlife Conference: The 2015 Biodiversity Conference, entitled “Environmental Volunteering in Highland: Do we need a Collaborative Approach?” took place in Inverness High School in March. The conference had a good range of speakers and delegates from the environmental and more traditional volunteering sectors, and a Highland Environment Forum working group has since met to try to promote joint working.

Future Action

Gnìomh san Àm ri Teachd

21. Improve Volunteering Information

Leasaich Fiosrachadh mu Obair Shaor-thoileach

Rationale: Several Local Biodiversity Groups have identified a need to improve links between volunteering projects and volunteers.

Project Proposals

21.1 Improve linkages between volunteering groups and volunteering opportunities, bringing together groups with suggestions for local projects, and making opportunities and contacts more visible to the public as well as improving the links with health and social enterprises.

Lead Partner: Highland Environment Forum

Supporting Partners: THC, SNH, TCV, RAFTS, FCS, RSPB, NTS, TfL, TSI, HTSI

22. Highland Green Gyms

Lùth-chleas Uaine na Gàidhealtachd

Rationale: There is growing recognition of the link between biodiversity & health, and support for practical projects involving volunteers.

Project Proposals

22.1 Encourage volunteering projects such as Green and Blue Gyms, linking biodiversity and health, with input from the Local Biodiversity Groups and Council Rangers and funding from the Landfill Communities Fund.

Lead Partner: The Conservation Volunteers

Supporting Partners: THC, LBGs, TfL, BBCT

Funding For Small Projects

Maoinachadh airson Phròiseactan Beaga

Issues

Cùisean

Whilst it is still possible to secure funding for wildlife projects, particularly if there is a citizen science or volunteering element to them, the administration associated with accessing this money is often off-putting to volunteers wishing to undertake small projects. There is a lack of easily accessible funding for small projects.



Update

Cunntas às Ùr

Biodiversity Programmes: On behalf of the Highland Biodiversity Partnership, The

Highland Council has secured funding for local projects on five separate occasions since the biodiversity action planning process started in Highland in 2002 (summarised below).



Many local projects have received funding in this way, but these programmes require a significant contribution in terms of project and budget management time – both from the local project leaders and The Highland Council Rangers and Biodiversity Officers.

- The Highland Biodiversity Project was initiated in 2002 with funding from the Highlands & Islands Special Transitional Programme matched by THC, SNH, HIE,

Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise and RSPB. It supported a Biodiversity Officer post, seven Highland LBAPs, over 40 community led practical projects and awareness-raising initiatives, an image collection, a hay meadow survey and a Marine Innovation Award Scheme.

- The Highland BAP Implementation Programme ran from August 2004 to March 2007 and delivered 37 community-led biodiversity projects (total spend > £90,000, funded by SNH, THC and the North Highland and WHELK Leader Programmes).
- The Communities Project for Highland Biodiversity (2007-2010) funded 24 local projects (total spend > £100,000, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, THC, SNH, HIE and RSPB).
- The Local Biodiversity Groups Capacity Building Programme (2009-2013) delivered 25 projects (total spend > £100,000, funded by the Highland Leader Programme 2007-13, THC, SNH and RSPB).
- The Highland Seashore Project started in January 2013 and will run until December 2015 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, SNH, THC and the Crown Estate Marine Stewardship Fund (see Case Study).

In addition, the Sutherland Partnership and the Caithness Partnership have both run small environmental grant schemes with funding from SNH and the Highland Leader Programme 2007-2013. These local schemes have supported many biodiversity projects in Sutherland and Caithness.



SNH Grants: SNH provides small grants for the following priorities:

- a wider range of people experiencing, valuing and helping to look after nature and landscapes,
- better places in which to live, work and visit,
- improvements in the health of Scotland's nature and landscapes,
- that nature and landscapes are managed sustainably as a key asset for sustainable economic growth.¹

Landfill Communities Fund: The Landfill Communities Fund has supported a number of practical habitat-based projects over the last six years. The Fund is managed by the Council, and up to £10,000 is available for site-based projects that improve biodiversity. Applicants need to find 10% from a third party, and the Biodiversity Officers can help groups wishing to apply.



¹ <http://www.snh.gov.uk/funding/our-grants/>

Case Study

Sgrùdadh Cùise

Communities Project for Highland Biodiversity

Pròiseact Choimhearsnachdan airson Bith-iomadachd na Gàidhealtachd

The Communities Project for Highland Biodiversity was a three year £100,000 programme which provided funding and support to 24 local biodiversity projects around Highland.

It was supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, and received match funding from The Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and RSPB Scotland.

The following is a summary of the outputs from the 24 projects:

- 268 volunteers were directly involved in practical biodiversity projects such as collecting wildflower or tree seed, growing them on and planting them out, or the control of invasive non-native species.
- Over 2,250 people learned about Highland wildlife and took part in a survey or training event.
- Over 1,000 children from 21 schools found out about their local wildlife and took part in practical projects to help it.
- 6 reports and 2 databases have been produced to further the conservation of aspen woodland, wood pasture, marine habitats, elvers and biodiversity generally as well as to help target problems such as invasive non-native species.

- 5 guidance notes, 4 fact sheets, 18 interpretative panels, 1 art wall, 2 wildlife guides, 1 postcard and 1 tea towel were produced to help raise awareness.
- The project helped 17 UKBAP priority species, 4 UKBAP priority habitats, and many local priority habitats and species.
- 11 of the 24 projects exceeded their agreed targets, 10 met their targets and 3 projects did not meet their targets (largely due to over-ambitious targets or difficulties caused by e.g. project leaders changing jobs).



Future Action

Gnìomh san Àm ri Teachd

23. Urban Biodiversity Project

Pròiseact Bith-iomadachd Bailteil

Rationale: Brownfield sites often provide valuable wild plants for insects and habitats for small mammals & birds. There is a need to identify good sites as well as provide advice on the potential for improvements on public buildings & sites in urban areas.

Project Proposals

23.1 Identify local brownfield sites that are good for wildlife, as well as public buildings where nest boxes for swifts, bats etc. could be put. Educate public officers as to the benefits of such actions. This project could be carried out by volunteers from the Local Biodiversity Groups, with support from The Highland Council officers.

Lead Partner: Local Biodiversity Groups

Supporting Partners: THC, SWT, other HEF partners

