

**Highland Nature:  
The Biodiversity Action Plan**  
**Nàdar na Gàidhealtachd:  
Plana-gnìomh Bith-iomadachd**



**Highland Environment Forum**  
**Fòram Àrainneachd na Gàidhealtachd**  
**2015 – 2020**

**Summary Table**  
**Clàr Geàrr-chunntais**

The project proposals identified in the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan (2015-2020) have been brought together in the following summary table.

The proposals are grouped into 33 issues under six broad objectives. For each issue the table lists the title, a brief rationale, an outline of the proposed action(s), the lead partner(s) and a number of supporting partners.

This table will be updated annually to show progress towards delivering the proposed actions, highlight any blockages and suggest ways of addressing them.

Please note that the majority of these proposals are merely ideas at present. The Lead Partners have agreed to address the issue, but the other suggested partners have not yet discussed the proposed projects and the majority of the projects have not been worked up in any detail yet.

The priorities for future work have come from the Local BAPs, the previous two Highland BAPs, discussions with partners,

feedback from the 2014 Biodiversity Conference and a public consultation exercise held in late 2014.

The lead partners have agreed to work with the supporting partners to address the 33 main issues identified in this Plan. Where a lead partner is not ready to sign up to deliver action, The Highland Environment Forum (HEF) has been identified and further work will be required to encourage joint delivery of projects that all partners feel able to support.

Some projects are already underway or can be delivered through existing work programmes. Others will require additional funding and resources.

Where new action is required, partner meetings will take place during late 2015 and 2016 with a view to agreeing actions based on the proposals identified here. HEF's Biodiversity Working Group will be on hand to help the partners agree future actions and report on progress.

Undoubtedly, some projects will not be delivered during the lifespan of this Plan, and this will also be fed back to HEF and the Community Planning Partnership, along with the reasons for blockages to action.

## **SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF HABITATS AND SPECIES**

### **RIANACHD SHEASMHACH ÀRAINNEAN AGUS GHNÈITHEAN**

**Objective:** To encourage and promote land management for biodiversity.

**Amas:** Rianachd fearainn a bhrosnachadh airson bith-iomadachd.

#### **1. Promote Land Management for Wildlife**

##### **Brosnaich Rianachd Fearainn airson Fiadh-bheatha**

**Rationale:** Direct Payments and the new Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) will support improved land management for wildlife. However, out-with the Cairngorms National Park, there is little encouragement and support for farmers, crofters and land managers who wish to maximise the benefit of the grant system and low cost / no cost options to help them manage their ground for wildlife.

Direct Payments and the SRDP were reviewed and re-launched in early 2015, with a new Advisory Service (to follow) and Scottish Rural Network. There is an opportunity to raise awareness of the new options amongst land managers and agents, to maximise the benefit to Highland biodiversity and the wider ecosystem services that land managers provide.

#### **Project Proposals:**

**1.1** Organise a series of training events for land managers and agents to raise awareness of good practice and Direct Payments, SRDP, and low costs/no cost options, building on existing work (such as the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Land-Based Business Training Programme) and utilising new initiatives like the Advisory Service and Scottish Rural Network. This could provide local demonstration sites and case studies, distribute guidance and codes of good practice, and encourage more monitoring and dissemination of results.

**1.2** Investigate the possibility of using the Monitor Farms Programme or a similar approach to help a farm and/or crofting township improve its management for biodiversity and other ecosystem services, making the most of grants and demonstrating the social, economic and environmental results to land managers, agents and agency staff.

**1.3** Explore the Greening element of the Direct Payments to confirm that it is delivering the anticipated land management for biodiversity, and ensure future CAP reforms continue to include this Greening element and a corresponding payment within future schemes.

**1.4** Provide opportunities for wildlife and biodiversity groups to work with estates on citizen science or habitat management projects arising from the Wildlife Estates Scotland initiative.

**Lead Partners:** Highland Environment Forum, Wildlife Estates Scotland (1.4)

**Supporting Partners:** SGRPID, SNH, FCS, CNPA, THC, NFUS, CC, SCF, SLE, RAFTS, RSPB, TfL, SRC, L, JHI, ICF, GWCT, BASC, BBCT, SWT, LBGs

## **2. Develop & Trial the Ecosystem Approach**

### **Leasaich & Dèan Deuchainn air Dòigh-obrach Siostam Eag-eòlais**

**Rationale:** Despite lots of discussion & several landscape-scale projects there are still no real working examples of the Ecosystem Approach.

#### **Project Proposals**

**2.1** Establish an online database of landscape-scale projects in Highland, and facilitate opportunities for knowledge sharing and joint working.

**2.2** Develop a demonstration project to trial the Ecosystem Approach on a Highland catchment, and convey the results to decision makers at Highland, Scottish and European levels, linking with other studies elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum (Land Use Working Group)

**Supporting Partners:** THC, SNH, FCS, SEPA, SGRPID, RAFTS, TfL, SLE, NFUS, CC, SCF, RSPB, SGA, CNPA, CALL, UHI

## **3. Develop the Atlantic Hazelwoods Project in West Highland**

### **Leasaich Pròiseact Choilltean Calltainn an Atlantaig sa Ghàidhealtachd an Iar**

**Rationale:** This project is raising awareness of the importance of hazel woods and improving their management in Argyll & Bute, but as yet no sites have been taken forward in Highland.

#### **Project Proposals:**

**3.1** Raise awareness and improve the management of hazel woods in Highland through the Atlantic Hazelwoods Project. Forestry Commission Scotland has identified a number of woods that could be a starter for this project.

**Lead Partner:** Atlantic Hazel Action Group

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, FCS, SCF, SLE, P, BLS, THC, CALL

#### 4. The Lonesome Pine (& other species) – Identify, protect & expand isolated pockets of ancient woodland

##### An Giuthas Aonranach (& gnèithean eile) – Comharraich, dìon agus leudaich ceàrnaidhean iomallach de choilltean àrsaidh

**Rationale:** Large areas of Highland remain devoid of trees due to historical deforestation and high deer numbers, but there are isolated pockets that could provide a seed source for future regeneration.

Soil biodiversity would be protected by expanding these relict areas of ancient woodland – these soils are reservoirs of bacteria, fungi and other microbes essential for a biodiverse and healthy woodland soil, and are very important habitats in themselves.

#### Project Proposals

**4.1** Identify isolated patches of trees across Highland – this could involve a citizen science element, linking in with existing projects such as iSpot.

**4.2** Agree ways to protect and expand isolated patches of trees, with the ambition of creating connecting corridors for wildlife.

**4.3** Deliver a trial project, enabling volunteers to work with local nurseries to collect seed and grow on / plant out local provenance trees to enhance regeneration.

**Lead Partners:** Forestry Commission Scotland, Trees for Life (4.3)

**Supporting Partners:** HBRG, LBGs, TFL, OU iSpot, SNH, SLE, JMT, NTS, RSPB

#### 5. Riparian Woodland & Woodland Biodiversity

##### Coilltean Bruachach & Bith-iomadachd Coille

**Rationale:** The UK Forestry Standard and UK Woodland Assurance Standard promote the creation of significant areas of riparian and native woodland.

There is a role to ensure these areas are implemented to deliver maximum benefit to wildlife through partnership working to identify and deliver habitat networks.

#### Project Proposals

**5.1** Identify where new riparian woodland and native woodland would be of the greatest value to wildlife through a Highland-wide strategic framework for native woodland establishment, integrated into commercial woodland establishment, utilising GIS based techniques.

**5.2** Work with land managers to ensure these areas are prioritised when plantations are restructured and new native woodlands planted.

**5.3** Encourage planting of trees and replacement of lost trees in between fields and in urban areas. Ensure dead standing trees are left for their biodiversity value and that saplings come from appropriate sources. Restore river floodplain and alder woods.

**Lead Partner:** Forestry Commission Scotland

**Supporting Partners:** RAFTS, SNH, THC, SEPA, Forestry Industry

## 6. Develop Natural Treelines

### Leasaich Sreathan-craoibhe Nàdarra

**Rationale:** Transitional woodland is an important habitat that is missing from the Highlands. The idea is to encourage native woodland at low density that is controlled largely by 'natural' factors - climate in the case of mountains, hydrology/paludification in the case of bogs.

There are concerns about deer numbers and expanding woodland onto heaths & bogs, but the biodiversity benefits are likely to be great.

#### Project Proposals

**6.1** Identify potential sites and establish transitional woodlands through woodland expansion up hills and onto bogs.

**6.2** Demonstrate the value & management requirements of transitional woodlands on bogs through a trial project. This approach is already underway at several mountain sites in the Cairngorms National Park, Glen Affric, Dundreggan etc. and this project would build on the Highland Birchwoods Montane Scrub Project.

**Lead Partner:** Forestry Commission Scotland

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, TfL, NTS, CNPA, JMT, WT, HB, RSPB, THC

## 7. Peatland Restoration

### Ath-stèidheachadh Talamh Mòintich

**Rationale:** Peatland restoration is taking place in Caithness & Sutherland through the Flow to the Future Project and in the Cairngorms with Green Stimulus funding, but there are other areas in Highland that need assistance.

#### Project Proposals

**7.1** Identify sites elsewhere in Highland that would be suitable for drain blocking and tree removal, and draw together a funding bid. This work would be influenced by the outcome of the National Peatland Action Plan consultation. Recently commissioned research identified some priority areas e.g. Monadhliaths.

**7.2** Undertake a volunteer project to remove regenerated conifer saplings from protected peatland areas.

**Lead Partner:** Scottish Natural Heritage, Peatlands Partnership (7.2)

**Supporting Partners:** RSPB, FCS, CNPA, CE, TfL, LBGs

## 8. Survey In-Bye Land Adjacent to Peatlands

### Dèan Suirbhidh air Fearann Tuathanais Dlùth ri Talamh Mòintich

**Rationale:** A suggestion from the Flows to the Future Project.

#### Project Proposals

**8.1** Conduct a survey of in-bye land adjacent to the peatlands of Caithness & Sutherland to ascertain its value for wildlife, identify future management requirements and recommend ways of helping farmers and crofters to continue to manage this land for wildlife.

**Lead Partner:** SNH, RSPB

**Supporting Partners:** Other Peatlands Partnership Members

## 9 Highland PAW Group

### Buidheann PAW na Gàidhealtachd

**Rationale:** Wildlife Crime is being addressed nationally through PAW Scotland, but local groups can be established under this initiative to tackle local issues.

#### Project Proposals

**9.1** Establish a Highland Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Group to address local concerns and help with early communication, information sharing, awareness raising and publicity management.

**Lead Partner:** Police Scotland, SNH

**Supporting Partners:** RSPB, SLE, other HEF partners

## 10. Wildfire Awareness Raising

### Togail Aire mu Theintean Fiadhaich

**Rationale:** Wildfires, often resulting from deliberate and uncontrolled burning of heather moorland, are causing damage to moorland and mountain habitats and species.

#### Project Proposals

**10.1** Work with gamekeepers, crofters and other land managers through local liaison groups to raise awareness of whether or not burning is needed, appropriate muirburning practices, wildfires and the likely impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems. Promote the Muirburn Code through case studies & demonstration sites, and encourage joint working to tackle wildfires.

**Lead Partner:** Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, PS, ADMGs, SGA, NHC, SLE, CC, SCF, other HEF partners

## 11. Marine Litter Project

### Pròiseact Sgudail Mara

**Rationale:** Although there are national campaigns and local beach clean-ups, marine litter is still increasing on Highland beaches

#### Project Proposals

**11.1** Raise awareness of litter and its devastating impact on marine wildlife through promoting national campaigns; working with the fishing, aquaculture and tourism industries to reduce impacts; supporting regular beach cleans; and improving recycling and waste collection facilities at harbours and ports.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council

**Supporting Partners:** Crown Estate, MFP, MCS, KIMO, marine industries

## 12. Improve Protection for Seabed Habitats

### Leasaich Dìon airson Àrainnean Grund na Mara

**Rationale:** Inshore trawling & dredging are destroying seabed habitats, and there are concerns that the Marine Protected Area designations will not fully address this problem.

#### Project Proposals

**12.1** Contribute to discussions on inshore fisheries management measures within the Marine Protected Areas to help protect fragile seabed habitats.

**12.2** Monitor and assess the implications of climate change on coastal lagoons and encourage / promote managed retreat of saltmarsh habitats to help deal with rising sea levels.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum partners

**Supporting Partners:** THC, SNH, MS, MFP, local communities, fishing groups

## 13. Forward Planning for Aquaculture

### Planadh air Adhart airson Tuathanachas-uisge

**Rationale:** Several Local BAPs in North & West Highland identified impacts from aquaculture on wild salmonids & related species as a concern.

#### Project Proposals

**13.1** Contribute to the consultations on the Highland Aquaculture Strategy (consultation launched June 2015). HEF members could focus on this issue at a future meeting and add their voice to the discussions.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum partners

**Supporting Partners:** THC

## 14. Species Reintroductions

### Toirt Ghnèithean A-steach A-rithist

**Rationale:** The final report on the Beaver Reintroduction Trial will be considered by the Scottish Minister this year. If the Minister decides to allow further reintroductions, Highland catchments are likely to be considered.

Highland is also one of the most likely locations for the reintroduction of other species.

#### Project Proposals

**14.1** Contribute to discussions on where reintroductions could take place and if they will be allowed, or if beaver will just be left to colonise naturally from the Tay catchment and the official release site in Argyll.

**14.2** Encourage research into the reintroduction of other species e.g. lynx.

**Lead Partner:** Scottish Natural Heritage

**Supporting Partners:** RAFTS, SEPA, SLE, TfL, SWT, CNPA, RSPB, other HEF partners

## PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### DEALBHADH, LEASACHADH AGUS BUN-STRUCTAIR

**Objective:** To take biodiversity into account during building and maintenance works.

**Amas:** Luchd-dealbhadh, luchd-leasachaidh agus luchd-stiùiridh fearainn a chuideachadh gus aire a ghabhail do bhith-iomadachd rè obair togail is càraidh.

## 15. Manage Road Verges for Wildlife

### Cùm Rian air Fàil-rathaid airson Fiadh-bheatha

**Rationale:** Road verges provide a valuable habitat for wildflowers, invertebrates and other wildlife, if the flowers are allowed to set seeds.

A project was trialled in Caithness, guidance has been produced, and the Council is reducing verge mowing in rural areas, but there is a need for ongoing work to identify problem areas and tackle invasive weeds.

#### Project Proposals

**15.1** Liaise with and train Council, BEAR Scotland and contractors' staff in appropriate verge management for wildlife, and raise awareness of the benefits of 'untidy' verges in the countryside amongst the general public.

**15.2** Identify the best verges throughout Highland, monitor the impact of the new cutting regime on the vegetation, and feed the results back to Roads Staff within the Council and BEAR Scotland.

**15.3** Raise awareness of the wildlife benefit of hedges and encourage better management through cutting once every three years, encouraging the growth of mature trees within hedges, replanting and filling in gaps and cutting in late autumn. Encourage the creation of wood piles rather than shredding whole trees when felled close to roads.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council

**Supporting Partners:** TS, BEAR, LBGs, P, BBCT



## 16. Wildflower Creation & Management

### Cruthachadh & Rianachd Faichean Fhlùraichean-fiadhaich

**Rationale:** There is interest in creating wildflower meadows as an alternative to mown grass in public spaces.

#### Project Proposals

**16.1** Run a training course for Council grounds staff and community groups wishing to create and manage wildflower meadows, perhaps linking in with land management courses and a demonstration site. Council Rangers would be ideally placed to deliver this project.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council

**Supporting Partners:** UHI, SNH, NTS, BBCT, FL, SS, P

## 17. Improve Ecological Input to the Planning Process (including Green Networks and Biodiversity Offsetting)

### Leasaich Cur-a-steach Eag-eòlasach dhan Pròiseas Dealbhaidh (a' gabhail a-steach Lìonraidhean Uaine agus Cothromachadh Bith-iomadachd)

**Rationale:** At present the level of ecological advice provided to planning officers dealing with planning casework outwith designated sites in Highland is limited.

There was considerable work on Green Networks to prepare Supplementary Guidance to the Highland wide Local Development Plan, but further work is needed to turn this into a reality on the ground.

Biodiversity offsetting requires land where habitat creation or management can offset the loss of biodiversity on a development site. Some Local Authorities are developing this approach and some renewables developments are offsetting on nearby sites, but there is currently no agreement or mechanism for biodiversity offsetting in Highland.

#### Project Proposals

**17.1** Ensure that the new Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP2) and Area Local Development Plans provide a strong steer for ecological issues and maximise opportunities for maintaining biodiversity through development.

**17.2** Make sure that the principles contained within the Supplementary Guidance are included in the development briefs, and develop green networks within the larger settlements and in the A96 corridor and Inner Moray Firth through the planning process.

**17.3** Identify a mechanism for biodiversity offsetting in Highland. If a suitable mechanism can be agreed, identify potential sites and habitat improvements, and undertake a Highland pilot project.

**17.4** Provide a mentoring service for a short time to allow Council planning officers and members to build confidence in their responses by e.g. attending roost visits with a bat worker.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, RSPB, SWT, BBCT, LBGs, other HEF partners, developers

## 18. Maximise the Wildlife Value of SuDS Ponds

### Barraich Luach Fiadh-bheatha Lochain SuDS

**Rationale:** Sustainable Drainage Systems are a sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water more sustainably. They often involve ponds, and these could have higher biodiversity value.

#### Project Proposals

**18.1** Employ an officer through the graduate internship programme within The Highland Council to assess SuDS ponds in the A96 corridor as part of the Green Network, create local best practice guidance, and see how future ponds in developments can be designed and sited to maximise their benefit to wildlife and residents.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, SEPA

## 19. Secure Greater Biodiversity Input from Renewable Installations

### Dleas Barrachd Cur-a-steach Bith-iomadachd bho Ionadan So-ùrachaidh

**Rationale:** A number of wind farms have been granted planning permission in the Monadhliaths, as well as elsewhere in Highland, resulting in increased pressures on eagles and other species of birds.

#### Project Proposals

**19.1** Employ a Golden Eagle Officer to survey and monitor eagle populations, work with land managers and help raise awareness of eagle issues in the Monadhliaths.

**19.2** As further windfarm applications go through the planning process, encourage other developers to contribute to this work and establish similar projects elsewhere in Highland.

**19.3** Bring together monitoring data from offshore developments in a single database (ideally with the Oil Industry data) to give a big picture of ecological changes in the North Sea.

**Lead Partner:** SSE (19.1), The Highland Council (19.2), Moray Firth Partnership (19.3)

**Supporting Partners:** NR (19.1), THC, SNH, RSPB, RSG, DIGG, Estates & developers (19.2), Renewable & Oil Industry Sector (19.3)

## **LOCAL BIODIVERSITY WORK**

### **OBAIR BITH-IOMADACHD IONADAIL**

**Objective:** To encourage and help communities, 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.

#### **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

#### **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 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

## 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

## **AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE**

### **AIRE AGUS EÒLAS**

**Objective:** To raise awareness of biodiversity and related issues, and help children and young people to learn about local nature and wildlife.

**Amas:** Aire a thogail mu bhith-iomadachd agus nithean buntainneach, agus clann is daoine òga a chuideachadh gus ionnsachadh mu nàdar is fiadh-bheatha ionadail.

#### **24. Wildlife Gardening Project**

##### **Pròiseact Gàirnealaireachd Fiadh-bheatha**

**Rationale:** There is greater interest in growing food and demand for allotments. Some local groups have identified the potential to work with new audiences through a gardening project, and the Caithness Biodiversity Group has started a similar project in Thurso.

##### **Project Proposals**

**24.1** Develop links with local allotment and gardening groups, and provide advice on gardening for wildlife.

**24.2** Run a pan-Highland Wildlife Gardening Project with events, competitions & garden visits, funded by HEF partners & led by the Local Biodiversity Groups.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum

**Supporting Partners:** LBGs, P, BBCT, THC, SNH, RSPB, other HEF partners, Gardening Groups, Garden Centres & Nurseries

#### **25. Nature Connections**

##### **Ceangalan Nàdair**

**Rationale:** Local wildlife knowledge is being lost due to our lack of connection with the natural world. Older members of the community and those involved in managing the land often have a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the natural world, and there could be great benefit in helping others to learn from them.

##### **Project Proposals**

**25.1** Run a nature project for all ages to help communities to learn from their elderly members.

**25.2** Run a Biodiversity and the Arts project to investigate how nature influences the arts (art, music, prose etc)

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum

**Supporting Partners:** LBGs, THC, SNH, WES, SGA, OU iSpot

## 26. Eco Schools Co-ordinator

### Co-òrdanaiche Eag-Sgoiltean

**Rationale:** The Eco Schools programme lost its officer support, and some Highland schools are losing their green flag status. The Council Rangers do a wonderful job raising awareness of wildlife and green issues in local schools, but there is no central officer support to help and encourage schools to continue with this programme.

#### Project Proposals

**26.1** Employ a dedicated volunteer or member of staff to work closely with Teachers and Rangers, helping Schools to re-engage with the Eco Schools Programme and other green initiatives such as the John Muir Award, and to access resources and support for wildlife-related work as they need it.

**26.2** Encourage links between schools and farms, crofts and estates to help children learn from practical people who work the land.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, RSPB, JMT, WES, SGA, NFUS, CC, other HEF Partners

## 27. Marine Heritage Project

### Pròiseact Dualchais Mara

**Rationale:** The Highland Seashore Biodiversity Project identified a tremendous interest in seashore wildlife, and there is a desire to continue the momentum established through this Project and find out more through further marine events.

#### Project Proposals

**27.1** Secure funding for and run a second marine awareness raising project, focusing on Highland's coastal heritage and traditional links with the sea. The project could include opportunities for children to appreciate marine biodiversity through boat trips, drop-down cameras or even links with research trawlers.

A funding bid was worked up for a Wester Ross Herring Rediscovery Project which would improve our understanding of the life cycle and spawning grounds, and teach children about marine biology and our cultural links with herring fishing. It was thought this would be better delivered across Highland, and this could form part of a Highland Marine Project.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum

**Supporting Partners:** THC, SNH, MCS, SEPA, MFP, RAFTS, CE, JMT, HBRG, Field Clubs, Museums, Fishing Groups

## INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

### GNÈITHEAN SGAOILTEACH NEO-DHÙTHCHASACH

**Objective:** To tackle invasive non-native species by undertaking practical projects and promoting good practice.

**Amas:** Aghaidh a chur ri gnèithean sgaoilteach neo-dhùthchasach le bhith a' gabhail phròiseactan practaigeach os làimh agus le bhith a' sgaioleadh deagh chleachdadh.

#### **28. Highland Rhododendron Project**

##### **Pròiseact Ròs-chraoibhe na Gàidhealtachd**

**Rationale:** *Rhododendron ponticum* is a major threat to biodiversity. The first Highland Rhododendron Project co-ordinated funding applications & clearance work to give eradication projects the best chance of success, but this has ended.

##### **Project Proposals**

**28.1** Facilitate action to take forward a landscape-scale Rhododendron clearance in the four priority areas identified by the last project, instigate action on road and railway verges, investigate options for Rhododendron removal from gardens, facilitate different models for surveillance of 'cleared' areas (to stop 132ecolonization), and secure public support for Rhododendron removal.

**28.2** Continue to map the occurrences of *Rhododendron ponticum*, as well as actions undertaken to control it, and ensure all partners have access to this data to help them prioritise future works.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Invasive Species Forum partners

## 29. Highland Invasive Non-Native Species Projects

### Pròiseactan Gnèithean Sgaoilteach Neo-dhùthchasach na Gàidhealtachd

**Rationale:** The Highland Invasive Species Forum identified and prioritised the main invasive non-native species threatening Highland Biodiversity as *Rhododendron ponticum*, American mink, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam. Rhododendron, mink and giant hogweed are being tackled through various projects, but there is a need for additional work on Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, and there are other locally important threats such as Salmonberry in Caithness.

#### Project Proposals

**29.1** Run a project to train volunteers and survey urban areas for invasive non-native species, and improve opportunities for land managers to report invasive non-native species on their land. This would inform future co-ordinated control programmes.

**29.2** Control / eradicate problem species such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and Salmonberry, particularly in urban areas and along road verges and streams where these species escape from gardens.

**29.3** Raise awareness of Japanese knotweed and how to eradicate it in a project specifically targeted at crofters and householders.

**29.4** Replicate the TCV Apprenticeship Programme, which proved a very effective way of co-ordinating INNS projects on the Cromarty Firth, on other Highland catchments.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Invasive Species Forum

**Supporting Partners:** RAFTS, TCV, NTS, THC, SNH, HBRG, LBGs

## 30. Rapid Response Pathway

### Slighe Grad-fhreagairt

**Rationale:** More and new Invasive Non-Native Species are being found throughout Highland, and there is a need to clarify reporting procedures & action.

#### Project Proposals

**30.1** Identify and agree clear rapid response pathways for new species that may start to colonise, as well as raise awareness amongst the general public.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Invasive Species Forum Partners



## **BIOLOGICAL RECORDING AND DATA MANAGEMENT**

### **CLÀRADH BITH-EÒLASACH AGUS RIANACHD DÀTA**

**Objective:** To improve the management and sharing of biological records, and encourage the collection of new records, specifically targeting under-recorded species.

**Amas:** Rianachd agus co-roinn chlàran bith-eòlasach a leasachadh, agus cruinneachadh chlàran ùra a bhrosnachadh, ag amas gu sònraichte air gnèithean nach eil air an clàradh gu leòr.

#### **31. Specialist Species Advice**

##### **Comhairle Ghnèithean Speisealta**

**Rationale:** The Local Biodiversity Groups are keen to undertake species related projects, and need specialist advice.

##### **Project Proposals**

**31.1** Re-form the specialist group (STAG) to identify area-based citizen science projects that the Local Groups could carry out, and make the linkages with the national priority species lead partners. The group could also identify the gaps in our current knowledge and work up projects and funding bids to fill them.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Environment Forum

**Supporting Partners:** THC, SNH, RSPB, HBRG, BBCT, OU iSpot

#### **32. Highland Biological Database Project**

##### **Pròiseact Stòr-dàta Bith-iomadachd na Gàidhealtachd**

**Rationale:** We await clarity on the national situation regarding the storage and management of biological records, but we lack adequate facilities in Highland.

##### **Project Proposals**

**32.1** Once the national situation is clearer, secure funding for and run a project to create a Highland data management and biological volunteer co-ordination hub, building on the existing Highland Biological Database Project.

**Lead Partner:** Highland Biological Recording Group

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, THC, HEF partners

### **33. Data Collection**

#### **Cruinneachadh Dàta**

**Rationale:** Lots of species records are collected but not passed on by specialists and companies undertaking Environmental Impact Assessment surveys.

#### **Project Proposals**

**33.1** Employ a volunteer or student within The Highland Council Development & Infrastructure Department to look into data collection from new developments and establish a protocol to ensure records are passed on to the National Biodiversity Network.

**33.2** Lobby Scottish Government to produce a Pollinator Strategy, encourage the collection of more data on pollinator populations and feed this into management strategies and funding programmes.

**Lead Partner:** The Highland Council, Highland Environment Forum

**Supporting Partners:** SNH, HBRG

