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Highland LBAP Review

Wester Ross Implementation Plan 2006-2009

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Wester Ross Implementation Plan
2006-2009**

This document was developed by EnviroCentre Ltd. in consultation with the Wester Ross Environment Network.

WESTER ROSS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2006 - 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

This implementation plan represents the next step in biodiversity action planning in Wester Ross and should be read in conjunction with the Wester Ross Biodiversity Action Plan (2004). It has been drawn up by the Wester Ross Environment Network (WREN) and EnviroCentre.

Like the Wester Ross Biodiversity Action Plan, this document forms part of a suite of LBAPs and associated Implementation Plans that have been produced for the Highland Council area by local biodiversity groups. It is anticipated that the Highland Biodiversity Partnership will be responsible for working on the strategic and cross-boundary issues identified in each of the LBAPs, and each local biodiversity group is represented on the Partnership. A Highland Biodiversity Action Plan is also underway, to draw out the main issues from the LBAPs and provide a work schedule for the Highland Biodiversity Partnership.

It is therefore envisaged that the Highland LBAP Implementation Plans will be the main tool for local biodiversity groups, funding bodies, other partners, community groups and individuals to make progress on biodiversity issues at a local level.

1.1 *Local biodiversity group*

The Wester Ross local biodiversity group is a body of interested individuals representing a number of public sector agencies, NGOs, businesses, community groups and individuals that was created to write the initial Wester Ross LBAP. The Group is constituted as the Wester Ross Environment Network (WREN). WREN is running an environment grant scheme that is delivering action for local biodiversity.

Membership is as follows:

Aaron Forsyth	WRMRP
Alan Booth	Ullapool Angling Club
Andrew Johnston	Gairloch High School
Bob Kindness	
Claire Munday	Julian Recycling Group
Dee Roberts	SNH
Ewen MacKinnon	Lochcarron Ward (Cllr)
Fran Cree	Rua Reidh Lighthouse
Janet Bromham	Highland Biodiversity Officer
Jean Urquhart	Lochbroom Ward (Cllr)
John Rippen	Laide Community Woodland
John Wilkins	Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council
Johnie and Clare Parry	Ardessie Fish Farms
Karen Starr	Shieldaig Export
Kenna Chisholm	RSPB
Kenny Nelson	SNH
Kristine MacKenzie	Strathcarron Centre
Lloyd Gudgeon	Wester Ross Alliance

Meryl Carr	Highland Council Countryside Ranger
Nicola Ewing	Ross and Cromarty Enterprise
Nicole Wallace	LEADER+
Peter Cunningham	Wester Ross Fisheries Trust
Peter Davidson	HSMO/HIFA
Richard Greene	Highland Shellfish Management Organisation
Rob Dewar	National Trust for Scotland
Roy Macintyre	Gairloch Ward (Cllr)
Sue Scott	
Tom Kilbride	Applecross Crofters

1.2 *Habitats and Species Priorities*

WREN has not identified the priorities in terms of habitats or species for the area. The Group concentrated their efforts on producing a set of project proposals that they felt could be delivered in the next three years.

2. WESTER ROSS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PROJECTS

The following four projects were agreed (in order of priority) with WREN as the priorities for action over the next three years (April 2007 – March 2010). A list of other potential projects and some general issues raised by the local biodiversity group are set out after the project plans. The Group still have to confirm the lead organisation/person for some the projects. Project management and co-ordination will have to be provided in-kind or will have to be funded in addition to the project costs outlined in the following sections.

The main concern the Group had relates to local capacity and professional inputs. If the projects get bigger, they will require more input from the project managers, most of who are volunteers. As the projects below have not come from individual champions, but are rather assembled by committee, it may be difficult to find people willing to put in the additional time required to make the original idea bigger in this way. It is more effective to attract funding into the WREN small grants scheme as the Group is doing at the moment as this allows WREN to respond to proposals from local community members (and other local organisations) rather than WREN initiating and managing projects as an organisation. If possible, WREN would like to see funding coming out of the 2007 – 2010 budgets being directed into the small grant scheme.

2.1 *Underwater Guide to Wester Ross*

Project aim: To produce an underwater guide to the biodiversity of Wester Ross.

Project objectives:

- Raise awareness and appreciation of the hidden biodiversity of the marine environment that exists in Wester Ross; and
- Encourage more recording of underwater biodiversity in Wester Ross.

Project lead: Sue Scott

Project partners: Wester Ross Fisheries Trust, Wester Ross Alliance, Lochcarron and District Business Association, Marine Conservation Society and SNH.

Project implementation and outputs:

Produce a high quality, colour book on the marine biodiversity of Wester Ross. The small book would show local people and visitors the fabulous diversity of marine life that exists on people's doorstep but is largely unseen and unknown since it is underwater. The book would be distributed throughout Wester Ross to visitor outlets, libraries, surgeries, post offices and shops (be available free or for a small fee?). The project would bring together high-quality photographs from across the area and an "easy read" guide to the marine biodiversity to raise the awareness of this important resource. It would also promote the sustainable use of the marine environment, include details of how people can help that marine environment and maybe have a section on shoreline activities for families.

Project would start in the autumn of 2007 with the book being distributed in May 2008 and could potentially tie-in with 2007 Highland Year of Culture. The book could contain stories from fishermen or a bit about the history/traditions of fishing in the area. The Group should consider the need to include Gaelic in the book.

Actions:

- Identify lead author;
- Decide on size, content and format of book;
- Collate photographic images and draft text;
- Tender for design of book;
- Tender for printing of book and decide on print-run;
- Manage tenders and drafting process;
- Organise distribution of book;
- Hold press launch/event; and
- Organise sale and collection of monies for book sold to visitors (or freely available?).

Resources needed:

- Author for text and managing book production;
- Photographic images;
- Designer and Printer;
- Publicity for book launch (poster, press, launch location and refreshments); and
- Distributor – method could use volunteers to deliver the book (this could reduce costs).

Outputs:

- Increased awareness by local people and visitors of the importance and diversity of the marine environment;
- Information resource in the form of a book, on the Wester Ross marine environment; and
- Increased understanding on how individuals can help the marine environment.

Proposed timetable:

Identify lead author/project manager by October 2007; draft text written and photographs collated by January 2008; proof-reading of text by February 2008, design and print-proof ready by March 2008; book printed and launched in April 2008; book distributed to all outlets by May 2008.

Links to UK BAP and Scottish BAP list

The project raises awareness of many UK BAP and Scottish BAP marine habitats and species.

Indicative costs:

The following costs have been estimated:

Task/materials	Cash
Lead author/project management	£1,500
Purchase of photographs	£750
Book design	£500
Book printing	£3500
Launch event	£250
Distribution costs	£500
Total	£7,000

All budget costs are estimates based on the provision of professional services and some costs maybe provided in-kind by partners or volunteers. Costs for author, design, photos, printing and distribution are likely to be higher depending on size and quality of book. The costs for a Project Coordinator are not included in this budget and would be an in-kind contribution by partners.

2.2 Crofting and Biodiversity Events

Project aim: To host crofting and biodiversity events in Wester Ross.

Project objectives:

- Raise the awareness of the benefits to biodiversity from traditional crofting practices; and
- Encourage the use of local crofting skills to help conserve biodiversity in Wester Ross.

Lead: Kristine MacKenzie, Strathcarron Centre.

Partners: FWAG, SAC, SCF, SNH and FCS.

Project implementation and outputs:

Run at least 3 training days with local crofters and other interested land managers on traditional crofting practices (drystone dyking, hay making, coppicing, arable cropping, use of heavy horses etc.) and other habitat management practices that can benefit biodiversity on croft land. Training to also include advice on current agri-environment schemes/prescriptions for crofters. Each training event is to be run on a different geographical location to enable crofters from all parts of Wester Ross to participate. Local crofters are to be involved in providing aspects of the training in each area where possible.

Actions:

- Liaise with crofters on key skills to be taught at each training event;
- Determine location, date, venue, trainers, field visits etc for each training event;
- Draw up programme for each event;
- Publicise events (poster, in local newsletters, local papers, at local meetings etc.) and organise mail shot to crofters;
- Organise venue set-up, refreshments and any appropriate displays or relevant material for delegates;
- Manage delegate bookings; and
- Run each training event and collect feedback from participants.

Resources needed:

- Trainers;
- Venue and site visits;
- Publicity material (posters, press release or ads);
- Presentation equipment (if appropriate) such as laptop, projector and screen;
- Refreshments; and
- Display or printed material for delegates.

Outputs:

- Local crofters provided with new skills or enhanced skills to enable better benefits for biodiversity to be achieved by crofting practices;
- Awareness raised on the benefits crofting provides for biodiversity;
- Crofters provided with up to date advice on current agri-environment schemes/prescriptions; and
- Network opportunities for crofters and agency staff.

Proposed timetable:

Hold initial programme planning meeting in February 2008 with key parties. Draw up programme, arrange trainers and book venues by April 2008. Organise publicity and mail shot in May and June 2008. Run 3 events in July/August 2008 (or advise on other suitable time period that is best for crofters).

Links to UK BAP and Scottish BAP list

There are no direct links to UK BAP or Scottish BAP priority habitats and species, but indirect benefits to a host of species associated with crofts.

Indicative Costs:

The following costs have been estimated (for all 3 courses):

Task/materials	Cash
Course Trainer fees	£900
Venue booking costs	£150
Refreshments	£150

Administration/staff time	£450
Press adverts/event publicity	£150
Total	£1,800

All budget costs are estimates based on the provision of professional services and some costs may be provided in-kind by partners or volunteers. The costs for a Project Coordinator are not included in this budget and would be an in-kind contribution by partners.

2.3 *Wildlife Events Calendar*

Project aim: To produce a wildlife events calendar for Wester Ross.

Project objectives:

- Raise awareness of the biodiversity events in Wester Ross; and
- Encourage more people to participate in practical biodiversity projects in Wester Ross.

Lead: Wester Ross Alliance.

Partners: All WREN members.

Project implementation and outputs:

Bring together in either a large calendar or a small booklet all the events that happen annually on biodiversity across Wester Ross. The publication would provide a weekly calendar of activities for the whole year as well as high-quality images and information on local biodiversity, how to help and where to go for further information. (Actual format and timescales covered to be finalised by Group, and whether to focus only on nature/biodiversity events).

Events would include Countryside Ranger activities, RSPB and MCS events, activities run by local groups (like the Ullapool Field Group), local and national recording schemes (i.e. BBC Springwatch, Big Garden Bird Watch, Highland Biological Recording Group initiatives, Cetacean Watch, etc.), training events, local activities and other things to do to help/see/understand biodiversity. This publication, produced on an annual basis, would be made available to every resident and to local visitors through various outlets. The publication could include an area for advertisement for local businesses.

There is potential tie-in with 2007 Highland Year of Culture. The Group should consider the need to include Gaelic in the calendar. The project would need to start in early 2007 if the calendar is to be produced for three years. The preparatory work could all be carried out in January – March 2007 (which should not incur any costs) and then the design and printing done in April 2007 (when project money should be available) for a launch at the beginning of May 2007. Alternatively, if the Group feel there is insufficient time in 2007, only 2 years could be done starting early in 2008 – Group to confirm if 2 or 3 years – SNH indicated they could provide some funds towards a 2007 calendar if spent by March 2007.

Actions:

- Decide on size, format, print-run and layout of publication (a large, foldout calendar, booklet, standard calendar?);
- Collate all information on activities proposed for period April – March following year;
- Contact any relevant local, regional and national organisations that are likely to be running an event in the forthcoming 12 months;
- Obtain photographic images;
- Draft text;
- Request local business advertisement – if including this in publication;
- Tender for design and printing;
- Organise distribution;
- Launch publication with an event/press release;
- Collate feedback from first year and incorporate into years 2 and 3 publications; and
- Organise publication for years 2 and 3 as above.

Resources needed:

- Lead to project manage production, publication and distribution;
- Photographic images;
- Information on events and activities;
- Designer;
- Printer; and
- Distributor – method could use volunteers to deliver the publication (may reduce costs).

Outputs:

- Collation of all biodiversity/nature events highlighted in one publication;
- Increased awareness of activities happening across Wester Ross, and increased local and visitor participation in such activities;
- Economic spin-off for local businesses through advertising in calendar; and
- Local people and visitors made aware of the biodiversity in Wester Ross, and given suggestions for helping local biodiversity.

Proposed timetable:

Collate relevant information on activities and events by early February 2007. Photographs sourced and draft text/layout agreed by March 2007. Tender for design and printing in mid-March 2007. Publication sent to designer in early April 2007 and printed by end April 2007. Launch event and distribution by beginning of May 2007. Collate first year feedback and begin process for year 2 and year 3 in January 2008 and January 2009 respectively.

Links to UK BAP and Scottish BAP list

There are no direct links to UK BAP or Scottish BAP priority habitats and species, but indirect benefits to the habitats and species that have events planned.

Indicative costs:

The following costs have been estimated for 3 years' calendars:

Task/materials	Cash
Photographic images	£300
Design of publication	£750
Printing	£2400
Distribution	£600
Launch event	£150
Total	£4200

All budget costs are estimates based on the provision of professional services and some costs maybe provided in-kind by partners or volunteers. The costs for a Project Coordinator are not included in this budget and would be an in-kind contribution by partners.

2.4 Invasive Species Fact Sheets

Project aim: To produce a series of fact sheets on invasive plant species for Wester Ross.

Project objectives:

- Raise awareness of the threat posed by invasive plant species to biodiversity in Wester Ross; and
- Encourage more people to participate in preventing invasive plant species from establishing and spreading in Wester Ross through effective management.

Project lead: Plantlife and Wester Ross Environment Network.

Project partners: SNH, FCS, Forest Research, FWAG, SAC, Scottish Crofting Foundation, SEPA and HBRG.

Project implementation and outputs:

Non-native species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity and there is a pressing need to raise awareness of the problem species, how to identify them, the threats to local biodiversity, and what is the most appropriate method to control or eradicate them. This project will produce 4 A4 double side, colour fact-sheets on the following non-native species:

- Japanese knotweed;
- Giant hogweed;
- Himalayan or Indian balsam;
- *Rhododendron ponticum*; and
- Others species in Wester Ross?

Each fact-sheet will summarise the up to date knowledge of the non-native species, including identification (colour pictures), problems, management and control issues, where to send records of the non-native species, and contacts for further information (vital to ensure the information is accurate). The fact-sheets will be distributed to land managers, local contractors and the public.

Actions:

- Collate all existing information on each non-native species to be included;
- Draft text for each fact-sheet and decide on print-run;
- Source photographic images;
- Tender for design and printing work;
- Manage tenders and drafting process;
- Organise distribution of fact-sheets; and
- Hold press launch/event.

Resources needed:

- Key, up to date information on each non-native species;
- Photographic images;
- Designer and printer; and
- Distributors.

Outputs:

- A set of informative fact-sheets on non-native species produced;
- Increased awareness of the issues, and the management, regarding non-native species by land managers, contractors and local people;
- Greater action being undertaken by local people and, hopefully, public-sector agencies on managing non-native species; and
- An increase in records of non-native species by local people.

Proposed timetable:

Collate relevant information on species by June 2007. Photographs sourced and draft text/layout agreed by August 2007. Tender for design and printing in September 2007. Sheets published in October April 2007. Launch event and distribution in October 2007.

Links to UK BAP and Scottish BAP list

Several UK BAP and Scottish BAP priority species (especially lower plants) are threatened by the invasive non-native plant species being tackled through this project.

Indicative costs:

The following costs have been estimated for all 4 fact-sheets:

Task/materials	Cash
Photographic images	£100
Design costs	£400
Printing	£1,600
Distribution	£100
Press adverts/event publicity	£50
Total	£2,250

All budget costs are estimates based on the provision of professional services and some costs maybe provided in-kind by partners or volunteers. The costs for a Project Coordinator are not included in this budget and would be an in-kind contribution by partners.

2.5 Implementation Plan Budget

Underwater guide	£7,000
Crofting and biodiversity events	£1,800
Wildlife events calendar	£4,200
Invasive species fact sheets	£2,250
Total	£15,250

2.6 Other Project Ideas

- Newsletter/awareness-raising leaflet on local area's biodiversity;
- Training days/events on a biodiversity theme (marine day, freshwater day etc.);
- Iconic species for each community;
- Travelling biodiversity road-show; and
- There was also a proposal to produce some large, stunning images of the local marine biodiversity, with some interpretation, to go into each village hall/community hall in Wester Ross.

2.7 General Issues raised by the Group

- Need for a part-time LBAP Coordinator;
- Fully functioning Local Biological Record Centre; and
- Funding for local WREN Grant Scheme.

3. SUMMARY

The Wester Ross Environment Network have proposed, worked up and developed four local area projects for implementation: (i) An underwater biodiversity guide, (ii) A crofting and biodiversity events programme, (iii) A wildlife events calendar, and (iv) Invasive fact sheets. Depending upon how these are implemented, two of these projects should deliver a range of direct benefits to UK and Scottish BAP targets and the remaining two projects could deliver indirect benefits to UK and Scottish BAP targets depending upon the specific events planned.