

Report on Highland Biodiversity Seminar

Council Chambers, Saturday 12th March 2005



Prepared by: Stewart Meikle
Solas Business Services

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Introduction

The event was well attended with a total of 80 delegates from a wide range of public agencies, community organisations and representatives from LBAPs.

Councillor Ian Ross opened proceedings with an overview of the achievements to date in relation to Biodiversity within the region. He also outlined the main aims of the day:

- To celebrate practical actions for biodiversity achieved to date;
- To provide a strategic overview and look at national developments
- Look at priorities for future biodiversity activities in Highland
- Work towards establishing a wider Partnership to take forward local biodiversity actions in Highland

THE HIGHLAND PERSPECTIVE - Councillor Ian Ross

As a region, Highland is an extremely important and rich area for biodiversity. From the high mountain tops to the deep muddy basins of the West Coast sea lochs, we have a tremendous variety of habitats and richness of species that is unequalled anywhere else in the country. Highland supports 192 of the 238 UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species present in Scotland. These include species of economic importance such as the Atlantic Salmon, cod and herring, as well as conservation icons such as corncrake, capercaillie, red squirrel and water vole. Among the more obscure are a free-floating variety of knotted wrack seaweed, the Scottish wood ant and the Scottish beard moss.

Highland has 40 of the 42 priority Scottish habitats identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. These priority habitats include blanket bog and machair. A number of key habitats in Highland support a significant number of priority species. Such key habitats include:

- Native pine woodlands (particularly important for wood ants, fungi, red squirrel, capercaillie and other priority species)
- Arable farmland (8 priority bird species are associated)
- Montane habitats (not identified as a national priority habitat in their own right, despite supporting many priority species)
- Rivers and their associated habitats

The UK priority species and habitat lists are only part of the biodiversity picture. Some species are not rare but are “keystone” for certain habitats. An example is kelp forests. Kelp is not rare, but provides a source of food and shelter not only for the animals that lives amongst it, but also most animals in the surrounding area.

Biodiversity is linked to the traditional approaches to nature conservation, but presents a more inclusive opportunity for action that focuses on sustainable and wise use of resources rather than purely designated sites and protection of rare species.

Highland Biodiversity Project

- Funded by ERDF, SNH, HIE, RSPB, CASE & THC
- Got underway in January 2002 with the appointment of Janet Bromham

The Highland Biodiversity Project represents a first step towards an integrated approach to the management of the biodiversity in the area. Local authorities and others are being encouraged to take local action to promote biodiversity, to

complement and help deliver national action programmes and projects. The majority of local authorities are now involved in the preparation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans, which are contributions to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

In 1999 an informal "Biodiversity Partnership" was established of organisations and individuals across Highland who have an interest in promoting biodiversity. As a first step, an evaluation of the existing and potential uses of biodiversity was commissioned, funded by THC, HIE, SNH and RSPB. This report by Bidwells highlighted the broader socio-economic and cultural values of biodiversity.

The Cairngorms Partnership produced a LBAP for the area within their remit which includes the Badenoch and Strathspey area. This LBAP was launched in 2002 and is being taken forward by the Cairngorms LBAP Project. Stephen Corcoran, the Cairngorms Biodiversity Officer, is based within the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Funding for the Highland Biodiversity Project to cover the rest of The Highland Council area was provided by The Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise, RSPB Scotland with match funding from the Highlands & Islands Special Transitional Programme European Regional Development Fund.

The project got underway in January 2002 with the appointment of Janet Bromham. The intention in Highland was to have a broad approach to biodiversity, not only looking at species and habitats, but also at the social and economic opportunities provided by biodiversity.

Highland Biodiversity Project Aims:

- To identify and initiate priority actions for biodiversity;
- To involve communities in biodiversity;
- To promote community-based sustainable development; and
- To produce a series of Local Biodiversity Action Plans for the Council area.

A Local Biodiversity Group was set up for each area, comprising of representatives of various land uses, community interests, businesses and agencies, to oversee the drafting of the Local Biodiversity Action Plans and to allocate resources to a number of local awareness-raising and practical projects. Seven **Local Biodiversity Action Plans were developed and these included:**

- Caithness
- Sutherland
- Skye & Lochalsh
- Wester Ross
- Ross & Cromarty (East)
- Lochaber
- Inverness & Nairn

The purpose of the plans is to raise awareness of local biodiversity, identify priority habitats and species and suggest projects and actions that could be undertaken by individuals, communities & agencies in the next five to ten years. Together they form a strategy for future biodiversity work in the Highlands.

Within these LBAPs areas a number of activities have been undertaken and these include:

- 17 Know Your Own Patch Events

These projects have ranged from guided walks and open days to flora and fauna surveys, school projects and nature based activities.

- 24 Community-Led Practical Projects

These projects have included farming and wildlife projects, habitat improvement, wildlife watching hides, clean-ups, school projects and invasive species control.

- The Caithness Biodiversity Collection

The Caithness Biodiversity Collection is a set of over 400 images of the wildlife, landscapes and land uses of Caithness and was commissioned from wildlife and landscape photographers Ken Crossan and Ian Sarjeant, and underwater photographer Sue Scott. An informal partnership, the Caithness Wildlife Tourism Project Group, supervised the collection of the images.

A calendar and set of schools posters were produced, and circulated around schools and businesses within Caithness. The Collection is available to anyone – communities, businesses, organisations, agencies or individuals – to use, as long as their use is not profited from directly.

- Hay Meadow Project

Lochaber and Skye & Lochalsh contain the largest extent of traditionally managed hay meadows in Scotland. These rare flower-rich grasslands are used for pasture and making hay, and are particularly valuable in biodiversity terms for their rich diversity of plants and insects, as well as their importance for birds such as the corncrake.

The Highland Biodiversity Project supported a re-survey of these grasslands and hay meadows in Skye, Lochalsh and Lochaber in summer 2003. The results were compared with previous surveys and showed a decline in the extent of the habitat and linked this to changes in management. Information was also collected on management, and it is hoped that the results will feed into the future management and development of agri-environment schemes in these areas.

- Marine Innovation Award

The Marine Innovation Award Scheme was run on a pilot basis in 2002 and 2003. It aimed to reward projects and companies for innovative works that demonstrate best practice in the sustainable use of Highland coasts and inshore waters.

Applications were invited from marine resource users in the fishing, aquaculture and general environment (including wildlife tourism) sectors within Highland inshore waters.

Following the success of the pilot the Highland Council, with funding from Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the North Highland Leader + Programme,

has initiated a new marine and coastal development scheme entitled HiMARCS (Highland Marine Resources and Communities Scheme).

- Habitat & Species work supported
 - A river habitat restoration workshop run by the Association of West Coast Fisheries Trust.
 - A bumble bee survey workshop hosted by the Caithness Field Club.
 - An otter conference on Skye run by the International Otter Survival Fund.
 - Butterfly Conservation (Scotland) carried out a project to raising the profile and delivering management advice for the rare chequered skipper butterfly in Lochaber. The species is a UKBAP priority species that's distribution has declined elsewhere in the UK, and is now centred around Fort William.
 - A school land use information pack on Seafield and Strathspey Estates.
 - A series of awareness-raising postcards on the marine environment produced by the Wester Ross Marine Reserve Partnership.

Four leaflets have been produced as part of the project.

- A leaflet on whale, dolphin & porpoise watching in the Scottish Highlands was produced with the support of SNH, aimed at local people and tourists around the Highland coast, has proved very popular.

Three attractive interpretation leaflets were also produced as part of local community projects.

- Explore Achvarasdalen woodlands
- Newtonhill Community Woodland
- Common Plants of the Highlands

A Highland Biodiversity Project website was set up: www.highlandbiodiversity.com. This gives details on Highland biodiversity, the Highland Biodiversity Project and its work, and you can download the local biodiversity action plans for the 7 areas and the Cairngorms.

Highland BAP Implementation Programme

- Funded by Leader+, SNH and THC
- October 2004 – October 2006
- £90,000 in total
- For biodiversity projects to contribute to the delivery of the 7 Highland LBAPs
- Opportunity for Local Biodiversity Groups to fund priority projects in their LBAP area
- 17 projects currently being developed

In order to build on the work done during the first phase of the project, through the production of the plans and the various projects supported, and contribute to the implementation of the LBAPs funding was secured in October 2004 from North and

West Highland Leader+ Programmes, SNH and THC for a 2 year programme to deliver biodiversity projects.

£90,000 in total was secured. £10,000 has been allocated to each LBAP area for biodiversity projects. £2,000 is allocated to each LBAP area for events / open days to publicise the results of these projects to both local people and those involved with biodiversity projects across the Highlands, to share experiences and best practice and build connections between the areas.

The local biodiversity groups which were set up to steer the production of the Plans are putting forward priority projects to be funded through the programme. 17 projects are currently being developed for approval by the Highland Biodiversity Project steering group.

Next steps

- Build on achievements so far and successfully deliver, monitor and evaluate the 7 LBAPs
- Develop the options outlined for a second phase of the project (workshop sessions in the afternoon)
- Formation of a wider Highland Biodiversity Partnership
- Agency commitment to biodiversity

Councillor Ross stresses that Agency commitment to local biodiversity action is key to making this happen. The Council are in the process of approving the appointment of a permanent Biodiversity Officer. All public bodies now have the duty to further the conservation of biodiversity under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. This new post will help the Council to meet their biodiversity duty, contribute to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, help to take forward action for biodiversity across the Highlands and deliver the LBAPs through working with the new Highland Biodiversity Partnership.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE - Michael Scott, Deputy Chair of SNH and Chair of the SBF Marine Working Group

Biodiversity came to the fore with the UN Conference Of Environment and Development (UNCED = the 'Earth Summit') in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. A number of conventions were signed including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). A total of 180 governments (including UK) signed. There is therefore an international obligation to protect biodiversity, which there has never been for 'nature conservation' per se.

The CBD definition of Biodiversity:

“‘Biological diversity’ means the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.”

Global Biodiversity Assessment (1995):-

“Biodiversity is defined as the total diversity and variability of living things and of the systems of which they are part.”

The Vision - CBD preamble:

- *Affirming* that the conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humankind;
- *Conscious also* of the importance of biological diversity for evolution and for maintaining life sustaining systems of the biosphere;
- *Concerned* that biological diversity is being significantly reduced by certain human activities;
- *Noting* that it is vital to anticipate, prevent and attack the causes of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity at source;
- *Aware* that conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity is of critical importance for meeting the food, health and other needs of the growing world population, for which purpose access to and sharing of both genetic resources and technologies are essential...
- *Recognising* also the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation;
- *Noting that*, ultimately, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity will strengthen friendly relations among States and contribute to peace for humankind.

CBD Article 1:

The Objectives of the Convention are...

- the conservation of biological diversity;
- the sustainable use of its components;
- and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

ie close links Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (basic principles of sustainable development).

CBD taken forward by annual Conference of Parties (COPs) , with advice from Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)

1. Nassau, Bahamas Dec 1994
2. Jakarta, Indonesia, Nov 1995
3. Buenos Aires, Nov 1996
4. Bratislava, May 1998
5. Nairobi, May 2000
6. The Hague, April 2002
7. Johannesburg, Sept 2002
8. Kuala Lumpur, Feb 2004

World Summit on Sustainable Development

Johannesburg, Sept 2002 – target agreed:-

“to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010”.

EU ‘Gothenburg’ target (2001):-

“to protect and restore the functioning of natural systems and to halt the loss of biodiversity in the European Union by 2010”

– 6th EAP, EU BAPs; thematic strategies (soil, marine etc)

UK / Scottish target:-

“to halt the loss of biodiversity and continue to reverse previous losses, through targeted action for species and habitats” (no target date stated)

UK Action

- 1994: *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* – major commitment to take forward action for biodiversity.
- 1995: *UK Steering Group Report – meeting the Rio Challenge:-*
 - *develop costed targets for the most threatened and declining species and habitats;*
 - *improve accessibility and co-ordination of biological datasets*
 - *increase public awareness and involvement by targeting key sectors;*
and
 - *recognise the importance of Local Biodiversity Action Plans, which complement national action plans and use a top-down and bottom-up approach (eg Highland LBAP)*
- 1995-1999: Action Plans in 6 volumes covering 391 species and 45 habitats – ‘traditional nature conservation’, but logically prioritised, and all species deemed equal (capercaillie cf medicinal leech).

Biodiversity Action in Scotland

1. UK BAP taken forward by UK Biodiversity Group, and 'country groups'.
2. In Scotland, established Scottish Biodiversity Forum to encourage 'wide stakeholder engagement'.
3. Within that, a Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Steering Group to develop ideas for a Scottish Strategy, now taken forward by new Scottish Biodiversity Committee (first meeting April 2005).
4. Concern that all the effort focussing on species and habitats – element 1 of the CBD objective.
5. Wider perspective diminished (sustainable use and equitable sharing).
6. Public and politicians not fully engaged.
7. Some of the wider policy blockages to biodiversity conservation not being addressed.
8. Scottish Biodiversity Strategy published by Scottish Biodiversity Forum, May 2004, and presented to the (then) Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development, Allan Wilson.
9. November 2004, the new Minister, Lewis MacDonald, speaking at the launch of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, enthusiastically endorsed the Strategy, and confirmed that he would adopt it as the Strategy which Scottish Ministers are required to designate under clause 2(1) of the Act.

Major political commitment to the Strategy.

“OUR VISION: It’s 2030 – Scotland is recognised as a world leader in biodiversity conservation. Everyone is involved, everyone benefits. The nation is enriched.”

“OUR AIM: To conserve biodiversity for the health, enjoyment and wellbeing of the people of Scotland, now and for the future.”

Five Strategic Objectives:-

1. Species and Habitats: To halt the loss of biodiversity and continue to reverse previous losses through targeted action for species and habitats.
2. People: To increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity, and engage many more people in its conservation and enhancement.
3. Landscapes and Ecosystems: To restore and enhance biodiversity in all our urban, rural and marine environments through better planning, design and practice.
4. Integration and Co-ordination: To develop an effective management framework that ensures biodiversity is taken into account in all decision-making.
5. Knowledge: To ensure that the best new and existing knowledge on biodiversity is available to all policy-makers and practitioners.

Strategy Implementation Plans, also launched for consultation in May 2004.

- Rural biodiversity – the traditional 'countryside' issues.
- Urban biodiversity – the 'people agenda' as most of us meet biodiversity in the urban environment.
- Marine biodiversity – a major issue poorly addressed in the past.
- Interpretation, communication and education – getting the message across.

- Local delivery – absolutely critical: ‘think global, act local’.

PLUS: chapter on the cross-cutting issues that must be considered in addressing the above.

Well received. Amended in the light of consultation, and will be published on web soon at www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk

Agenda for Action in Scotland

- “Encourage the Local Biodiversity Action Plan network* and ensure it has adequate resources to support the delivery of national objectives and to facilitate action by local people.”
- “Improve the co-ordination and management of the Local Biodiversity Plan network* – between Local Biodiversity Action Plans and with national level Biodiversity Action Plans.”
- “Develop at local level further actions for biodiversity conservation and enhancement, that take full account of climatic, economic and land-use change.”
- “Strengthen the role of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan network* in engaging a wider range of people in biodiversity conservation, and in exploring innovative ways of promoting interest in biodiversity.”

The Context for Action in Scotland

Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 Part 1, Clause 1(1):-

“It is the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.”

New, and major, legal commitment – something we never had for nature conservation.

- So, we have made considerable progress, but now we must make these commitments work.
- Action at the local level is going to be absolutely critical to that end....

CONNECTING NATIONAL TO LOCAL – Jo Lenthal (Scotland LBAP Project Officer, Scottish Biodiversity Forum)

A key role of Scottish Biodiversity Forum (SBF) is to ensure the free flow of information at international and national level and disseminate this at a local level. SBF help to ensure that the information is relevant at a local level.

SBF also seek to receive information from a local level and feed this back into national and international strategies and policies. In particular statistics relating to Biological Recording were extremely important and valuable in helping to assess and identify priority areas/species.

What is an LBAP?

From a recent Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)/Lead Partner (LP) seminar organised by the Scottish Biodiversity Forum, it was evident that Lead Partners still weren't sure what the LBAP process aims to do? To help clarify this, the below are some generic aims drawn from LBAP Partnerships across Scotland:
To help clarify this, the below are some generic aims drawn from LBAP Partnerships across Scotland:

- To ensure the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of the LBAP area, through the development of effective, local, working partnerships.
- To ensure that national targets for species and habitats, as specified in the UKBAP, are translated into effective local action.
- To identify targets for biodiversity conservation appropriate to the area, incorporating issues of local importance and reflecting the values of local people.
- To strengthen understanding of, support for and involvement in, the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the LBAP area.
- To provide a focal point for information exchange, to assist partnership development between those working in biodiversity conservation throughout the region.

The term Lead Partner can be confusing. In essence, the term Lead Partner organisation determines that organisation which is responsible for a particular UK Biodiversity Action Plan species or habitat action plan (SAP or HAP). However, within that organisation there is an individual (or co-ordinator) responsible for a particular species or habitat. These are first point of contact for that particular species or habitat.

Liaison between these LBAP Partnerships and Lead Partners is vital as connected national and local thinking will maximise benefits for biodiversity conservation. In 2002, the UK Biodiversity Reporting Round asked Lead Partners and LBAP Partnerships to look at linkages between themselves; a relationship which had not been objectively tested until that time.

LPs were asked to:

- describe their interaction with LBAP Partnerships,
- state whether co-ordinated action by LBAP Partnerships will be important in achieving the plan targets.
- unless they thought contact with LBAP process was unimportant, select (from a list of options) which were the most appropriate forms of engagement.

From this, 59% of LPs said they'd had poor, little or no contact with the LBAP process, although 90% had recognised that links between themselves and the LBAP process was of importance.

LBAPs were asked to:

- describe their interaction with LPs in general.
- and for each habitat or species (covered by a UK BAP) which they had prioritised locally (ie had an LSAP/LHAP for), describe the level of contact they had had with the UK LPs.

In general, results indicate the situation is unsatisfactory despite a significant number of LPs suggesting LBAP Partnerships could help them achieve BAP targets.

Any discrepancy in the results could be attributed to a lack of understanding of what is actually meant by the term 'Lead Partner'. As mentioned previously, a Lead Partner organisation is the body responsible for a particular HAP or SAP. Within that LP organisation there is a nominated individual who is the key officer or co-ordinator for said HAP or SAP, and should be the person to whom all enquiries are directed. For example, Butterfly Conservation is the LP organisation for the pearl-bordered fritillary SAP, whilst Nigel Bourn is the LP key officer for the SAP.

In Scotland, an approach I've encouraged (at LBAP Officer Network meetings, and at the SBF's LBAP/LP seminar in October) to help free some of the perceived information blockages are 'speed-updating' sessions. This allows each LP key officer to informally bring everyone up-to-date with their HAP/SAP, following by a period of networking opportunities.

However, in Scotland contact between LBAP Partnerships and LP organisations has generally been good at a local level. At the SBF LBAP/LP seminar in October it became apparent that communication issues were as much within the LP organisation itself, rather than between an LP organisation and an LBAP Partnership i.e. between the LP key contact for a particular HAP/SAP, and the local contact of that same LP organisation that sit on the LBAP Partnership. For example, outcomes of research management for a particular SAP needs to get from the SAP key contact, to local staff, for them to pass it on to the LBAP Partnership. The LBAP Partnerships really value the contact they have with LP organisation, but the real support would come from a freer information flow from the LP key contacts regarding HAP/SAP advice and information (could be with respect to targets, or practical management). It is hoped that once BARS (Biodiversity Action Reporting System) is mainstream there will be a greater and more productive liaison between LP organisations and LBAP Partnerships – perhaps BARS will also enable better information flow within LP organisations.

Further recommendations to Lead Partners

- Provide interpretation of the importance of the HAP/SAP in the LBAP area.
- Ensure national targets and actions are up-to-date (using the UKBAP website), against, which local targets can be set.
- Report progress of the plans through BARS.
- Consider using the outcomes of the 2002RR and LBAP audits to identify which LBAPs should be taking forward actions for national species and habitats.
- Make forward work programmes available on the UKBAP website and update contact details on the website.

Further recommendations to LBAP partnerships

- As part of future review, should consider preparing action plans for all national and local habitats and species in their area where action is relevant.
- Use BARS and LP key contacts to access information and advice on status, appropriate actions and targets.
- Consider making available all audits, checklists of ranked priorities and action plans in electronic format on the UKBAP website.
- Report progress of their LBAP through BARS.

In summary...

- The outcomes of the 2002 Reporting Round highlighted that neither quality nor quantity of interaction had been adequate, although LPs did state the importance of co-ordinated action by LBAP Partnerships in achieving BAP targets (especially in relation to habitats). These links will be queried again in the 2005RR, so any changes will be noted.
- A constraint, indicated by LPs, to BAP implementation was that the local-national links were insufficient. This has always been understood to be an LBAP/LP blockage, or an SBF/Network blockage, but there is a genuine need for LPs to look more closely at their own internal communication mechanisms.

Notes from the LBAP/LP seminar can be found on the Scottish Biodiversity Forum website – www.scotland.gov.uk/biodiversity

The development of the new BARS system (Biodiversity Action Reporting System) would hopefully help to address the issues raised. The system is now up and running and can be found at:

www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

1. Question was raised about the involvement of young people (particularly school age) and how within the syllabus there needs to be more emphasis on Scottish wildlife and our own natural history. Seems within young people today they have more knowledge of the species present within the Amazonian rainforests.

Response

There was agreement that this was a serious issue and repeated invitations to the Dept of Education to become involved had been given. This has now been taken up and there is interaction taking place now.

2. Given that 2007 is the Highland Year of Culture was there not an opportunity to celebrate the biodiversity of the area as part of this activity.

Response

Agreement that this was an ideal opportunity and one which should not be missed.

3. Feeling that having 8 separate LBAPs was unmanageable and there was a need to prioritise on an annual basis.

Response

Several responses were given to this issue. Suggestion was made that there was a need to start with an audit to identify local priorities, making reference to the UK list. In addition consider what is urgent at a local level and try to target rapid decline of species/habitats at the edge of their local range. 'Quick wins' were also suggested as these often have a 'spin of' benefit to habitats overall condition and balance.

It was also highlighted that sometimes even when a habitat is in good condition species numbers can decline due to other factors, there is therefore a need to look at 'species specific' actions.

4. Are there any plans to do anything about the rising number of ticks?

Response

At present there is a lack of available funding to monitor the increase and there is a need to undertake basic monitoring and recording of tick numbers. Without robust supporting information it is extremely difficult to lobby for additional funding.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVE – Kenny Taylor, Chair of Cairngorms LBAP Partnership

The local biodiversity process in the Cairngorms has been going since 1997 and the Cairngorms LBAP was published in November 2002.

Kenny is also a member of the Ross & Cromarty (East) Biodiversity Group. In Ross & Cromarty (East) the biodiversity process has been underway for just under 2 years and the LBAP was launched in July 2004.

The Cairngorms is hugely documented. It is important in a global context. Kenny gave an overview of the biodiversity importance of the Cairngorms which includes:

- The uninhabited mountain core
- Great expanse of native woodland
- Inch marshes nature reserve - containing important plants, damselflies, butterflies, osprey
- River Spey – very important for salmon
- Moorland – issues around numbers of red deer
- Villages and straths – wildlife is very important to the people of Badenoch & Strathspey.
- Farmland – best place in Britain for waders

The production of the Cairngorms LBAP involved 6 public meetings and involvement from a wide variety of people. There was desire to focus on habitats. A steering group of 19 partner organisations was set up. There is a wider steering group and a management group including the Councils. There is a full time member of staff – Stephen Corcoran.

Kenny outlined some of the current projects which are running within the region. These include:

- Highland Red Squirrel Group – great cone hunt
- Ospreys at Boat of Garten
- Capercaillie Project
- Upland Grain scheme
- Pearl mussels on the Spey
- Aspen project

He also highlighted that the key to the success of projects like these and to the LBAP is to:

- Engage with the local community (landowners and community groups)
- Look beyond 'your own patch'
- Source funding to undertake projects

In Ross & Cromarty (East) a local biodiversity steering group was set up. The driver was Janet Bromham with support from Peter Beattie of SNH. Kenny was involved closely in the drafting of the Ross & Cromarty (East) LBAP. Resources available for the production of this LBAP were limited and there was a short time frame.

Ross & Cromarty (East) is very much influenced by the sea, with the Moray Firth dolphins and seals in the international frame with a CSAC for both these species in the area. Farmland and the history of human involvement is also a very important for

biodiversity in the area, with birds such as the tree sparrow and plants such as corn marigold. There is a great expanse of woolly fringe moss on Ben Wyvis and fragmented woodland sites. Biodiversity is on our doorstep with rivers running through our villages and towns. The Ross & Cromarty (East) LBAP is also habitat based.

Overarching themes:

- How to raise awareness
- Challenges in terms of outreach
- How to involve the wider community
- The pressures of development
- Biological recording – resources for this is an issue
- Climate change – we need recording in order to understand the impacts
- Connections and interactions

WORKSHOP SESSIONS – OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

Biological Recording

Facilitators: Ro Scott & Murdo MacDonald

Whilst specific project proposals were not evaluated, some of the following points indicate issues which could be addressed through project development.

Local Records Centre

- There was no discussion of the plans for a Local Records Centre in Highland, as a data mobilisation exercise is currently underway between Scottish Natural Heritage and the Highland Biological Recording Group.

Need for biological recording

- The serious problem of under-recording in Highland for taxa other than vascular plants, birds, and a few other groups should be addressed.
- Despite the development of the National Biodiversity Network (an Internet-based repository of all UK biological records) there is a clear need for a local entity to assemble, verify and interpret the data submitted.
- The process of linking taxon records to GIS data in a standard form was agreed to be essential, but the use of some potentially useful resources was limited by copyright.

Sources of data

- The various software options for gathering data from the wider recording community in Highland were discussed. Excel is widely used, and Recorder 2002 will accept data in Excel or text files.
- It was recognised that many agencies and companies (e.g. those involved in preparing Environmental Impact Assessments for developers) collect biological data but at present there is no established route to assemble these in one place. This would be desirable, but it was noted that there are difficulties at present in obtaining data from bodies not funded from public sources.
- There was agreement that casual records obtained e.g. from tourists reporting at TICs or from other non-specialist sources were valuable as a means of raising awareness and involvement in the practice of biological recording, but that these would need some quality control before inclusion in a dataset used to inform decisions.

Education and training

- It was recognised that the encouragement of children in biological recording is very important, and the role of Highland Council and other Rangers was commended.
- Concern was expressed at the lack of continuity of this opportunity after S2 in the formal school curriculum.
- There is a lack of appropriate expertise in some taxa among the wider community. This should be addressed through training days such as those organised for this year by Butterfly Conservation of the identification of butterflies and moths.

Biodiversity and Wildlife Tourism

Facilitator: Bill Taylor

A group of 10 addressed this issue. They were asked to prioritise the 69 Actions identified by Amanda Bryan from the 7 LBAPs. These were amalgamated to take account of duplication and this gave a total of 43 Actions.

Each participant was given the list of 43 Actions, and within the various habitat based sub-groups they were asked to prioritise the top 3 for taking forward. This was done using a scoring system:

The following results were produced:

Category	Priority	Action
Sea and Coast	1	Support communities wishing to help manage their marine and coastal environments, such as stabilising the dune systems and improve habitats around the shoreline.
	2	Raise public awareness by encouraging wildlife tourism viewing opportunities and interpretive facilities at key areas.
	3=	Raise awareness of marine life and issues through wildlife tourism projects, from boat trips/ferries.
	3=	Support and promote green tourism businesses associated with the sea and coast, and encourage wildlife watching facilities to adhere to standard codes of good practice.
River, Loch and Wetland	1=	Restore semi-natural ponds and wetlands to tie in with the new public footpath network.
	1=	Support /promote green tourism businesses linked with these habitats.
	2	Investigate the possibility of a visitor centre to provide information about the fisheries, other wildlife and heritage of a loch, and guidance to promote responsible access.
Forest and Woodland	1	Improve existing public access to woodlands, and develop new measures to support the provision of walks, trails and interpretation targeted to a wide variety of users. Encourage links with the tourist industry to provide quality woodland recreation opportunities.
	2=	Support, manage and monitor the impacts of recreation within woodlands, and encourage forms of recreation that raise awareness of biodiversity, such as photography, wildlife recording and discussion.
	2=	Encourage land managers to find out more about the flora and fauna on their land, and to integrate the conservation and enhancement of local wildlife with commercial objectives.
Croft and Farmland	1	Create/demonstrate genuine socio-economic benefits from biodiversity by enhancing links with tourism and local marketing of produce.
	2	Assist crofters and farmers to reinstate species-rich grasslands by controlled grazing and / or cutting practices, linked with a long term land-use plan that will encourage wildlife and domestic biodiversity, be an attraction to visitors and produce valuable natural / organic outputs.
	3	Raise environmental awareness through fostering links between farms and schools generally, enhancing access and agri-tourism projects.
Mountain and Moor	1	Set up joint projects to deliver managed access to hills

		through existing tracks and enhanced car parking arrangements.
	2	Raise awareness of the plant life and birdlife on hills amongst locals and visitors to the area.
	3	Raise awareness of this habitat through controlled appropriate access to sites and good quality interpretation at sites.
Built Environment	1	Link features such as woodlands (currently separated from settlement edges by fields) to the settlements by new green corridors, extend existing paths and create hides to offer better viewing facilities for wildlife watching.
	2	Review the extent of access routes linking settlements with wildlife areas that could be visited with minimal disturbance.
	3	Encourage the responsible use of paths and avoidance of sensitive footpaths by cyclists and horses.

The priority 1 actions were then assessed against each other and any priority 2 actions were added in if they were felt to be sufficiently important to rank above some of the priority 1s. The following list is of the actions that the workshop considered to be of greatest relevance to delivering biodiversity actions through wildlife tourism at the Highland wide scale. These are ranked.

Create/demonstrate genuine socio-economic benefits from biodiversity by enhancing links with tourism and local marketing of produce.
Assist crofters and farmers to reinstate species-rich grasslands by controlled grazing and / or cutting practices, linked with a long term land-use plan that will encourage wildlife and domestic biodiversity, be an attraction to visitors and produce valuable natural / organic outputs.
Improve existing public access to woodlands, and develop new measures to support the provision of walks, trails and interpretation targeted to a wide variety of users. Encourage links with the tourist industry to provide quality woodland recreation opportunities.
Support communities wishing to help manage their marine and coastal environments, such as stabilising the dune systems and improve habitats around the shoreline.
Set up joint projects to deliver managed access to hills through existing tracks and enhanced car parking arrangements.
Encourage land managers to find out more about the flora and fauna on their land, and to integrate the conservation and enhancement of local wildlife with commercial objectives.
Raise awareness of the plant life and birdlife on hills amongst locals and visitors to the area.

Note: The final action was considered to be generally important although the action given related to the mountain and moor category only

Coastal Management

Facilitators: George Hamilton & Alice Brown

Three key priority areas were identified by this group. These included:

1. Economic assessment of coastal shellfish habitats/species within the Highlands focusing on areas known for shellfish gathering. Such an assessment would provide the basis on which to consider the need for regulation of shellfish gathering, stock assessment and the retention of value locally.
2. Biodiversity Challenge
How do you encourage family participation in coastal activity, appreciate the habitat and the species within these environments. Raise awareness and interpretation.
3. Marine litter and pollution
Encourage greater protection of the coastline – work with fishing industry, marine tourism operators, private boat owners and the agricultural sector. A particular example with the agricultural sector could involve piloting of reed bed purification systems to tackle farmland run off. This would be on a small scale and where appropriate.

Local Delivery – Wish List to Reality

Facilitators: Nicole Wallace & Lloyd Gudgeon

Key Issues

Many of the participants of this group were unaware of the BAP process, had not contributed to the development of a BAP plan and were keen unsure how to get involved in delivering local actions and make links with LBAP groups.

Local LBAP groups were unsure how they linked with Highland Biodiversity Steering Group.

Mixed views regarding the production of the Biodiversity Action Plans – not enough focus on key actions for species and habitats i.e gap regarding the UK priority habitats and species and formal link with HAPS and SAPS.

Many general actions and awareness raising actions highlighted in the plans and although this is important it should not be the main focus of the plans.

Difficult for local groups to deliver actions for large scale habitat/species recovery e.g. moor land – don't have necessary experience, capacity or information.

Not enough links made with other BAP groups to action cross border activity

Concern that the project might loose focus over time i.e. plan produced but little support to deliver actions. How can we sustain community interest?

How can local groups/organisation weight up the value of land e.g. what's important and why if a local officer is not available - Need champions

Lack of new ideas - need to develop new ways of learning from each other

BAP groups can't continue to work in isolation, must make social and economic links to deliver benefits for highland biodiversity.

High dependence on volunteers- volunteer fatigue

Not many BAP reps present in this workshop - gap in participants knowledge regarding the BAP process and where the process is at.

How will HC implement its own biodiversity objectives – One full time post not enough to service this need let alone local actions. Biodiversity initiative seen as under resourced.

Actions - how do local groups want to proceed?

Need to address the fact that many people in the local community are either not aware of or have not taken part in the BAP process. Need additional promotion and publicity so folk know about the plans, the LBAP groups and actions needed?

Refresh the steering group; invite local reps onto this group.

Create and support a Highland Biodiversity network (real and virtual).

Awareness raising still recognised as an important action. Reach out to folk not previously involved. – Can the ranger service help?

Highlight the importance/significance of Highland for its habitats and species – must work on a highland wide scale to safeguard/enhance the local biodiversity resource.

Training and information provision - for local groups. Close the existing information gap; identify areas where local groups could work together:

- Co-ordinate activity on biological recording
- Tackle cross boundary issues e.g. mink, squirrels etc
- Signage for toad/adder crossing
- Control unnecessary verge cutting

Link local actions to HAPs and SAPs

Link the delivery of the BAP area committees /community planning, existing deer management group's partnerships etc

Provide additional resources – finance, manpower etc to deliver local actions, avoid volunteer fatigue. Secure posts for each local areas – similar to 7 access officer recently recruited by HC.

Build political commitment - link to local committees etc

Formalise link with Education – get local natural history back into the classroom. Use exiting resources e.g. HC ranger service, SNH, initiative such as the Wester Ross Fisheries Trust, Action 4 Sustainability and the Biodiversity Game etc.

Run another conference to boost networking and develop local links. Use outcome of this to inform any future bids.

Develop better link with agencies

Note: ongoing commitment from local groups and organisation to continue their involvement in the BAP process.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

- Invitations will be sent to key partners in the near future for a meeting towards the end of April to initiate the formation of a broader Highland Biodiversity Partnership to take forward future action.
- Rather than inviting everyone here, key invitees will be identified to take this process forward.
- The newly formed partnership can consider the outcomes of today and how to take them forward.
- This could be through partnership working, a bid for European funding based on the themes from Amanda Bryan's report and the workshop outcomes and linking in with other programmes such as community planning and the UK BAP lead partners.

Councillor Ross thanked all of the speakers for their interesting and informative presentations, the facilitators for running the workshops and all of the delegates for giving up a Saturday to attend what he felt had been an extremely useful and informative day that pointed a way forward for future Biodiversity activity within the region.

A formal report on the proceedings will be produced and circulated to all delegates and also be put on the website:

www.highlandbiodiversity.com

"Biodiversity, the planet's most valuable resource, is on loan to us from our children"

Useful websites

Abriachan Forest Trust	www.abriachan.org.uk
Bat Conservation Trust	www.bats.org.uk
Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)	www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk
Biodiversity Scotland Website	www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk
Biodiversity Stories	www.biodiversitystories.co.uk
Biological Recording in Scotland	www.brisc.org.uk
Black Isle Partnership	www.blackisle.org
Botanical Society for the British Isles	www.bsbi.org.uk
British Dragonfly Society	www.dragonflysoc.org.uk
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	www.btcv.org
British Trust for Ornithology	www.bto.org
Butterfly Conservation Scotland	www.butterfly-conservation.org/bcuk/scotland
Cairngorms National Park	www.cairngorms.co.uk
Caithness & Sutherland Trout Angling Group	www.fishing-highland.co.uk
Caithness.org	www.caithness.org
Community Toolkit	www.communitytoolkit.org.uk
Crofters Commission	www.crofterscommission.org.uk
Deer Commission for Scotland	www.dcs.gov.uk
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs	www.defra.gov.uk
Eco Schools	www.eco-schools.org.uk
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	www.fwag.org.uk
Forestry Commission Scotland	www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland
Forward Scotland	www.forward-scotland.org.uk
Friends of the Moray Firth Dolphins	www.loupers.com
Froglife	www.froglife.org
Grounds for Learning	www.gflscotland.org.uk
Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust	www.whaledolphintrust.co.uk
Highland Biodiversity Project	www.highlandbiodiversity.com
Highland Biological Recording Group	Link from www.highlandbiodiversity.com
Highland Birchwoods	www.highlandbirchwoods.co.uk
Highland Red Squirrel Group	www.highlandredsquirrel.co.uk
Highlands & Islands Enterprise Network	www.hie.co.uk
Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board	www.visithighlands.com
International Otter Survival Fund	www.otter.org
Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust	www.isleofeigg.org
John Muir Trust	www.jmt.org
Joint Nature Conservancy Council	www.jncc.gov.uk
Knoydart Foundation	www.knoydart-foundation.com
Life Peatlands Project	www.lifepeatlandsproject.com
Mammal Society	www.mammal.org.uk
Marine Conservation Society	www.mcsuk.org
Moray Firth Partnership	www.morayfirth-partnership.org
National Biodiversity Network	www.nbn.org.uk
National Farmers Union of Scotland	www.nfus.org.uk
National Trust for Scotland	www.nts.org.uk
North Highland Forest Trust	www.nhft.org.uk
Paths for All	www.pathsforall.org.uk
Plantlife	www.plantlife.org.uk
RSPB Scotland	www.rspb.org.uk/scotland

Scottish Agricultural College	www.sac.ac.uk
Scottish Biodiversity Forum	www.scotland.gov.uk/biodiversity
Scottish Crofting Foundation	www.croftingfoundation.co.uk
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	www.sepa.org.uk
Scottish Executive	www.scotland.gov.uk
Scottish Native Woods	www.scottishnativewoods.org.uk
Scottish Natural Heritage	www.snh.org.uk
Scottish Ornithologists Club	www.the-soc.fsnet.co.uk
Scottish Rural Property & Business Association	www.srpba.com
Scottish Water	www.scottishwater.co.uk
Scottish Wildlife Trust	www.swt.org.uk
Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations	www.slcvo.sitekit.net
Skye & Lochalsh Horticultural Development Association	www.horticultureskye.co.uk
Skye Data Atlas	www.bambi.demon.co.uk/skyedata/
Skye the Island & Lochalsh	www.skye.co.uk
Soil Association	www.soilassociation.org
Sutherland Partnership	www.sutherlandpartnership.com
The Association of Salmon Fishery Boards	www.asfb.org.uk
The Highland Council	www.highland.gov.uk
The Tourism and Environment Forum	www.greentourism.org.uk
The Woodland Trust Scotland	www.woodland-trust.org.uk
Trees for Life	www.treesforlife.org.uk
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	www.ukbap.org.uk
Wild Skye	www.pacarras.net/gm1/
WWF Scotland	www.wwf.org.uk/core/about/scotland.asp