

Highland Environment Forum : Marine Environment

23rd September 2015, SNH HQ, Great Glen House, Inverness

Agenda

Attendees:

Roger Cottis
Rebecca Fretwell, Transport Advisor
Kenna Chisholm, RSPB
Cllr Audrey Sinclair
Cllr Matthew Reiss
Kenny Taylor, SWT
Stephen Moran, HBRG
Peter Cunningham, WREN
Sara Nason, Sea Change
Donna-Claire Hunter, Envirocentre
Noel Hawkins, SWT Living Seas
James Merryweather
Don O'Driscoll, John Muir Trust
Ben Leyshon, SNH
Tamara Lawton, SNH
Mike Pedder
Ellie Maclennan, HC Ranger

Drew McFarlane Slack, SLE
Shona Turnbull, HC Marine planning
Judith Bullivant, RSPB
Karen McEwen, Fishvets
George Hogg, SNH
Mike Kendall
Wendy Geary, Marine Scotland
Janet Ullman, Highland Seashore Project
Callum Ullman, Highland Seashore Project
Jane Grant, Scot Hatch
Kathryn Logan, MFP
Janet Bromham, HC Biodiversity Officer
Nicole Wallace, HC Planning and Development
Angela Mercer, Wild Lochaber
Tom Piper, Crown Estate
Rhona Hargrieve

Introduction and launch of Highland Biodiversity Action Plan

George Hogg (SNH), Highland Environment Forum Chair

George welcomed everyone to the Forum and provided an update on the Highland Community Planning Partnership - which works together to deliver the Highland Single Outcome Agreement for Scottish Government and which covers a wide work remit including for example - Highland and refugees, reducing inequality, community safety, community empowerment and which (uniquely in Scotland) also has a section on the environment. An update on the environmental Single Outcome Agreement was circulated with the meeting's papers.

George also introduced 'Highland Nature: The Biodiversity Action Plan' which constitutes a very significant body of work by volunteers, public bodies and others collectively to deliver both biodiversity and wider inequalities related outcomes.

Presentations

See www.highlandenvironmentforum.info for full presentations

1) **Scottish Seas: Some highlights and issues:** Mike Kendall

Mike Kendall introduced the wide range of habitats to be found around the Highland coast, highlighting their importance for plants and animals, which can be of international significance and remain some of the cleanest in Britain.

The biggest threat to maritime species is climate change, with its accompanying increase in temperature and acidification, which affects species distribution and characteristics such as shell development.

Mike also highlighted the absence of data on many aspects of the marine ecology, which makes it more difficult to determine change, and the importance of research and long term monitoring.

2) **The Highland Seashore Project: Involving people:** Janet Ullman assisted by Callum Ullman



Project Activity	Funding Target	Outcome
<i>Survey Workshops</i>	9	14 (1 still to do)
<i>Surveyors recruited</i>	90	90
<i>Number of new records via HBRG to NBN</i>	450	Approx 800+
<i>Seashore experts</i>	7	10
<i>Interpretation items</i>	10	13
<i>Biodiversity/Sea-life Events</i>	21 events 420 participants	21 events 1,106 participants
<i>Seashore Roadshows</i>	8 Roadshows 1,000 participants	8 Roadshows 2,528 participants
<i>Arts and Culture Seashore Festivals</i>	8 Festivals 1,000 Participants	12 Festivals Presently 3,168
<i>School Arts Competition</i>	200 Entries	724 Entries
<i>Facebook Photo competition</i>	50 Entries	21 Entries 2,500 views in one week Winner had 901 views

Janet's
talk

highlighted the many successes of the Highland Seashore Project, and the wide range of people who have helped to bring about that success. Events have included seashore surveys, walks, talks, family fun mornings, to sand sculptures and storytelling on the beach, rock pooling, geology, art and seashore roadshows An identification guide, posters and the seashore families game have all produced and received with enthusiasm.

See <http://www.highlandbiodiversity.com/seashore.asp> for full details of the project.

3) **Scallop ranching: sustainable food production:** Jane Grant, Scot Hatch

Jane introduced the scallop ranching approach to scallop production, highlighting the importance of a local nursery production for increasing success in both survival percentages and profit. Scot Hatch are currently fund raising to do this, and have to raise £200,00 to match £186,000 from HIE.

At present the scallops are hatched in Bergen (from Scottish breed stock), returned to Scotland and then reared in lanterns and tray stacks for four months until they are c.40mm, when they are released to the seabed. The scallops are harvested at 4 or 5 years old, and will have spawned at sea several times during this period.

See <http://www.scothatch.com/videos.html> for videos on Scot Hatch's work.

Panel discussion

Concern was raised about the destruction of seabed habitats caused by scallop dredging. It was noted that this did not only destroy seabed species, but also the seabed silt itself leading to changes in ecosystem chemistry.

It was noted that there is a continued need to raise awareness of the damage caused.

Jane Grant comment that there is also a need for an investment in alternative approaches - such as scallop ranching, and for the granting of several orders in order to protect a producer's scallop stock from outside businesses coming in and removing an entire area of production.

It was noted that there was perhaps some increase in government awareness of the importance of the seabed, including maerl beds.

4) **Scottish Marine Planning:** Wendy Geary, Marine Scotland

Marine planning is a new area of statutory planning, which aligns with terrestrial planning and will provide a framework for regional regulation and decision making. This will be undertaken by 11 marine planning partnerships covering the marine regions and responsible for the area from high water mark to 12 nautical miles from the coast.

The Scotland's National Marine Plan lays out the the statutory regulations covering Scottish seas and contains within it 11 marine regions - the Scottish Marine Regions Order came into force in May 2015, and their regional plans are intended to produce more detailed regulations appropriate to their area. The regional guidance lays out the approach that partnerships are expected to follow, including guidance on the participatory process that should be undertaken, and expected achievements. It is expected that these will vary from region to region.

Panel Discussion

Concern was expressed at how local authorities would be able to resource this work at a time of financial constraint. It was also noted that Highland has three marine regions within the local authority area - more than other Scottish local authorities.

Wendy noted that it is intended to roll out the setting up of partnerships in order to reduce pressure. At present the aim is that will all be started by 2020 (this may change).

Matthew Rhys - asked whether the proposed offshore windfarm off Caithness - could be good for boosting fish stocks. Mike Kendall noted that 'no take zones', can boost sport fishing - e.g. cape canaveral - and if they are big enough they can boost commercial fishing.

Workshops reports

1) Marine Planning Partnerships: Using the Moray Firth as an example participants will discuss how people can get involved in the process. Led by Kathryn Logan (MFP)

The workshop acknowledged that the marine environment is a common asset/resource that affects everyone, and that there is an opportunity now to engage and shape how the Marine Planning Partnerships will evolve in the future.

Points raised:

- the importance of planning a governance hierarchy from the outset
- the importance of getting participation in the process beyond the core agencies involved
- the value of short term working/stakeholder groups
- the need to remember that it is a long term process
- the potential to use community fora/surgeries to develop planning (similar to terrestrial development planning process)
- involve community councils
- look for positive benefits
- bring planning options to public attention - through workshops etc
- link engagement with existing local events
- appoint someone to be responsible for public engagement and input to the plan
- use local newspapers to canvas opinion
- express the planning process in ways that people can relate to

2) Marine Litter Strategy: Is there potential for Highland Environment Forum involvement and/or opportunities for communities to develop relevant projects? Led by Tamara Lawton, Ben Leyshon (SNH)

Principle to follow:

That marine litter isn't someone else's problem and that we all have role to play in helping to address it.

With a note that the 'polluter pays' approach is sound, but that it can be difficult to identify who the polluter is.

Approaches to reducing litter:

1. Awareness

- school visits - including working with eco schools
- events, leaflets
- show the results of littering - eg seabird deaths, micro plastics
- Across Highlands take four photos a year in the same spot to show litter - link this to the Great British Beach Clean

2. Campaigns

- pick up 3 pieces of litter each time you visit a beach
- mark fuel barrels, so that owners can be identified if they are dumped (already being undertaken by a harbour on Skye)
- 'fishing for litter' to encourage fishing boats to collect litter
- make the Scottish Marine Litter Strategy relevant to people
- meet with fishing industry representatives

3. Change of practice

- move to biodegradable plastics
- increase recycling, improve disposal facilities
- make supermarkets accountable for packaging
- use packaging to trace the polluter
- give waste a value

Recommendation: Establish a small HEF working group to further develop practical actions

3) Looking ahead: Is there potential for a new Highland Seashore project? Led by Janet Ullman, Janet Bromham (THC)

This workshop was attended by 12 people and all those present thought there was tremendous potential for a future project building on the success of the current Seashore Project. They wanted to see a continuation of the current project with more surveying, more workshops and more festivals.

- It was thought the next project could focus on Marine Heritage and Culture, primarily natural heritage, building on the relationship that has been developed with museums and heritage centres around Highland.
- Those present also thought that its geographical scope could move into deeper water.
- Many thought that the project could develop the concept of local ownership of the seabed by identifying those communities who wish to know more about this, and giving these communities the tools to lobby for protection of their patch. This could be run as a parallel process to the changes in marine legislation and it would be important to keep interested communities abreast of this so that they are well placed to take advantage of policy changes (compare to community woodlands). It was suggested that this is particularly important in West Highland, which is not scheduled to have a Marine Plan in the near future.
- Awareness raising was a key theme, and several people suggested the project could run a marine bus to engage with Highland schools – this approach has been very successful elsewhere.
- A future project may be able to incorporate elements of the discussion from the other two workshops, which focused on marine litter and the changing policy scene.

Future project ideas summary:

- Move the focus to looking at offshore marine life
- Develop links with maritime culture and heritage
- Look at empowering local communities to take more local ownership of area - e.g. Arran. Identify which communities might be interested - and provide resources to find out about their coastal areas.
- Have a marine bus - to visit schools and communities
- Continue to build school links
- Consider the potential to link to marine litter ideas

The aims of the Highland Environment Forum are to:

- Foster and coordinate activity on environmental matters, both within and at the Highland level.
- Take forward relevant actions identified in the Single Outcome Agreement, and be a valuable source of practical advice on the joint delivery of SOA outcomes.
- Identify and respond to emerging environmental agendas, and provide a link between local groups and national strategies, action plans and reporting procedures.
- Raise awareness and promote good practice on environmental issues across Highland.