

Agenda

Highland Invasive Species sub-group.

2-4pm. Monday 24th June 2013

SEPA Office, Dingwall.

1. Welcome

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| John Parrott | Coille Alba (Chairman) |
| Jonathan Willet | Highland Council |
| Simon McKelvey | Cromarty Fisheries Trust |
| Lyn Bryden | Cromarty Fisheries Trust/ Dingwall Environment Group |
| Gunnar Scholtz | North Highland Mink Project |
| Julie Bhatti | SEPA – River Basin Management Coordinator A&B |
| Corinna Mertens | SNH |
| Mike Stretch | BEAR Scotland |
| Kiera McKnight | Network Rail |

Kiera McKnight, Corinna Mertens and Mike Stretch were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Apologies

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Ken Knott | Forestry Commission Scotland |
| Steve North | SNH |
| David O'Brien | HBRG |
| Lucy Ballantyne | Lochaber Fishery Trust |
| Barbara Macritchie | NTS – Balmacara |
| Ken Knott | Forestry Commission Scotland |
| Ullie Wenzel | BTCV - Scotland |
| Peter Nairne | Scotland Transerv |

3. Approval of minutes, matters arising

Action Points 27/8/12

AP5. JW to submit the updated 2013-16 Highland INNS Strategy to the next meeting.

Delayed until the October meeting.

AP6. JW to submit Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment paper to the next meeting.

Delayed until the October meeting.

Action Points 4/3/13

AP1. Check, Clean, Dry Signs. GS to distribute to the Fisheries Trusts to the west and Cromarty FT to pick theirs up. **Discharged.**

AP2. Possible SRDP Application made by Network Rail. BMcR to find out the details.

Ongoing KMcK to chase up.

4. Standing Item Questions/ Comments

INNPS. No funding for the next FY.

Mink. Non-existent up north but lots in Wester Ross. However it looks like Moray, Tayside and Cairngorms will be the priority areas. There is a new device that gives an alert to your mobile if the trap has been sprung. This could save a lot of checking time. Gunnar's contract ends in August and it is uncertain what will happen to his post after this.

Rhododendron. CM mentioned the Rhoddy problem in Glen Beasdale and the need for control of the infestation on the railway side.

AP1. CM and KMcK to meet regarding this issue.

Network Rail.

AP2. KMcK to facilitate meetings with INNS sub-group members and the relevant project managers.

AP3. KMcK to investigate NR INNS Standards.

AP4. JW to ask Niall at GBINNS about any contact they have had with NR.

5. HIS Forum 2013

AP6. JW to confirm venue.

AP7. JW to confirm the speakers and an agenda.

6. Updating the 2009-12 Highland INNS Strategy

Ongoing.

7. Japanese Knotweed Threat Assessment

Ongoing.

8. AOCB

Gunnera is starting to spread in Lochalsh, grows by the side of the road in Dornie.

David O'Brien has undertaken research into the survival of amphibians in the Ballachullish ponds and it seems that the non-synthetic poison (derived from Chrysanthemums) used is not as toxic to vertebrates as first thought.

The funding of INNS projects is being discussed by SNH and also in an SRDP consultation. There may be a separate scheme put in place specifically to facility multi landowner/ stakeholder bids over a large geographical area.

9. DONM

22/10/13. 2pm SEPA.

Standing Items – Organisation Updates.

1. Mink Project

Mink catches March to June 2013: 5 Wester Ross (Dundonnell, Isle Ewe, Lochcarron, Kyle), 2 Beaully and 3 Lossie.

Quality Sightings: Loch Broom, Gruinard, Applecross, Aigas, Moray coast, Loch Ness

Intense trapping: Broom/Lael for 3 weeks, Kyle of Sutherland for 3 weeks

Raft checks: Coigach/Assynt negative

High density on Spey: Carrbridge / Grantown / Nethybridge, one possible scat

MinkApp is evolving, more online submission of checks are coming in, Aberdeen Uni employed a student to work on database maintenance

Fishery Trusts on Ness and Beaully and Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie are in the process of taking more mink work on across their catchments

A device called Mink Police has been developed in Denmark

<http://www.minkpolice.dk/> once that has been trialled and approved in the UK it could help trapping in remoter and inaccessible areas.

The EU Life+ bid from RAFTS and SNH fell through, both are working on an interim solution until something more long-term has been organised. At this point in time we don't know what's going to happen. The mink work will hopefully continue to some extent thru trusts or other local organisations.

2. Highland Rhododendron Project

The project is currently in abeyance waiting to see what will be happening with the SRDP.

3. Cromarty Catchment

More mink traps have been put out. One Mink was shot dead by a bailiff and another caught on the Alness. No other sightings. Balsam control, very little left on the Conon. TCV now starting to look for it. GH at Balnagown was sprayed in June, a few areas were missed but will be re-treated. JK stem injection is working well on the Peffery and Balnagown. White Butterbur may be becoming an issue. *Rudbeckia* or Coneflower is a major issue on the lower reaches of the Conon.

4. Lower Ness INNS Project

- GH treated in several sites around Inverness - population already much reduced.
- HB a few weeks late, with cool spring; no flowering yet.
- JK - not yet assessed; treatment scheduled for late Aug/Sep as usual.
- funding this year is mainly from SEPA and SNH (yet to be confirmed).
- LCF spent their ££ on play-parks
- concerned about funding for FY 14/15

5. FC Update

North Highland Forest District INNS:

Most rhoddy work (first clearance) in the north has been completed. Some work on adjacent ground being delivered by both NTS and TCV (most helpful and very much appreciated!). Work at the moment is concentrated on planning the follow up and final clearance of mature bushes to be completed over the next 6 months or so.

Japanese Knotweed is being controlled as and when found/required, with the majority being around Strathpeffer (very small areas).

Mink trapping is being undertaken on the NFE in conjunction with Gunnar (he's doing all the hard work), but no catches as yet this year (as far as I'm aware).

That is pretty much all at the moment (most clearance was complete before Christmas 2012). Graeme Findlay/ Ken Knott.

6. Lochaber FT Update.

Mink: We are running three practical days to help any mink volunteers who have been having issues/not catching as many mink as expected. We have volunteers all across Lochaber, some in the more remote areas aren't detecting any mink. Others are having more action. We're still getting results in from our first year.

Crayfish

We are soon to start our annual monitoring of Ballachullish quarry to check the success of the crayfish eradication. We trap for 200 trap nights (20 traps for 10 nights) to see if any are caught. Last year we only caught eels and are hoping for similar this year!

Knotweed

We are having some real success in some areas, with huge knotweed stands reduced to a few weak plants, but are still finding new stands. The most method of spreading knotweed still appears to be strimming along roadsides, and we'd be interested to know if anyone is having success in talking to the contractors doing the roadside cutting and getting the message over.

7. GB INNS Local Area Group Update

Tenth Non-Native Species Stakeholder Forum

The aim of the meeting was to look at progress of the GB Strategy since its launch 2008.

- Welcome and introduction from Welsh Government –Outline of progress made in Wales through Ecosystem Resilience and Diversification funding. Progress on spp. Such as American Mink, Water Primrose, Top Mouth Gudgeon, Check Clean Dry bilingual signage, crayfish plan and control of Killer Shrimp in Cardiff Bay. Recognition that invasive species survey needs to be better.

- There was an update on progress with the GB INNS Framework Strategy – see attached for more info.
- **Prevention** – Development of risk analysis framework to predict and prevent species from coming into GB including rapid risk assessment methodology. More work needed on pathway Action Plans and prioritisation.
- **Early detection, surveillance, monitoring and rapid response** - Non native species information portal established, alert mechanism established. Rapid response protocol in place seven rapid responses carried out. Contingency plan produced for Asian hornet, others to follow.
- **Legislation** – WANE Act Scotland. Scotland leading the way. Recognition that powers of access to control INNS in rest of GB a limitation. Ban on sale of 5 aquatic plants in England and Wales from 2014. Law Commission review of Wildlife Law in England and Wales. UK input to EU instrument on INNS.
- **Awareness and understanding** – Be plant wise, Check Clean Dry campaigns. NNSS website 8-10,000 hits per month this year. 66 id sheets. Only partial progress on codes of practice
- **Mitigation, control, eradication** – JK biocontrol agent released into sites around GB Ruddy duck eradication almost complete. 100 = local action groups

GB not the best in the world but leading the way in EU.

EU Legislation Update

- This is a legislative tool to prevent unintentional introduction across Europe, build co-operation across Europe, target species of European concern.
- May include bans on possession, use, exchange, release of spp., pathway actions plans and analysis.
- Countries may be able to apply for derogations. This would mean countries don't have to eradicate spp. But would have to control and prevent spread.
- Proposal is due to be adopted shortly before transmission to Council and Parliament and then consultation with member states to establish.
- May be a list of spp. of European concern outside legislative framework so that it can be easily amended/updated.

The theme of the day was very much horizon scanning and prevention, early detection, rapid response and control/eradication. Mainly concerned with new and damaging species and stopping them from establishing in GB.

8. Nairn

No update.

9. Giant Hogweed

GH on the River Wick was mapped with 12 volunteers. Every plant has been sprayed but the volunteers are keeping an eye on the area to make sure plants have not been missed. The work is funded by SNH and the Caithness Countryside Volunteers were also involved. JP made mention of an experiment controlling GH through grazing with Blackface Sheep in Aberdeenshire. This was on BBC Countryfile.

The spraying in Munloch, Inverness and Balnagown is continuing. The Nairn's upper reaches are being sprayed.

10. Network Rail

KMcK was just in the post and getting up to speed. She said that there is an off-track manager for every section, but these managers doesn't always work in a coordinated fashion. There is a hazard directory for each section and the INNS plants there will be mapped. KMCK kindly offered to facilitate communication for key projects that needs Network Rail liaison. JP said that once the contacts were made it was reasonably straightforward to get access permission, although this was restricted to when the trains weren't running and the H&S was understandably strict.

11. RBPM

They have been looking at gaps in delivery of the supplementary plan. Funding is the main issue. In 2015 there will be a targets review. Unless the remit of the RBMP and the status of INNS in affecting a rivers ecological status (riparian vegetation doesn't really count) then this may not be a key driver for INNS projects.

Invasive non-native species Supplementary Plan to the RBMPs is reaching completion. It has been developed in conjunction with Scottish Government and SNH (as overall habitat lead co-ordinator). The main thrust of the Plan is to identify gaps in strategic delivery covering the hierarchy of prevention, rapid response, control and eradication. Key actions are identified within the plan and SEPA are asking habitat lead organisations to agree and sign up to these actions. There will be no formal consultation period since it is aimed at a restricted audience only, but will go through the usual internal quality review here at SEPA before publication, anticipated to be mid-September.

2013 is also a very important year for RBMP, not only are we checking progress against targets in the first planning cycle, we're also gearing up for the 2nd planning cycle. Report on Current Condition and Challenges for the Future is due to be published at the end of this year and this document identifies the significant water management issues for Scotland for the 2nd cycle. INNS are currently identified as a significant water management issue, however, there are ongoing issues with identifying impacts of riparian INNS on water bodies. Morphology tools are developing and we're using more external survey data (especially from RAFTS) to improve our knowledge of coverage BUT the presence of riparian INNS on their own will not cause downgrades in ecological status. This is because of the way they are weighted within morphological tools and how much "capacity" they use up in a water body. More research is required into the actual impacts riparian INNS have on in-stream structure and function to determine the level of impact.

Scottish Government meeting this June to discuss the next round of EU LIFE funding (2014-2020). Six themes this round, Environment and Resource Efficiency, Environment Governance and Information, Biodiversity, Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, Climate Governance. The overall shape has not been finalised as yet but expressions of interest have been submitted in order to shortlist for meeting with European Commission this autumn – this will ensure that Scotland's interests are well-represented in the next round.

12. TCV

No update. Ullie Wenzel is on maternity leave and her cover is about to come into post.

13. BEAR Scotland.

BEAR now manage the trunk road network in the North. They are committed to control of INNS on their landholding and welcome collaborative projects for strategic control.

The aims of the Highland Invasive Species Group were agreed as follows:

- To bring together the key players and take stock of the situation regarding invasive non-native species in Highland;
- To raise awareness and spread good practice;
- To identify any major gaps and prioritise key areas for future work; and
- To work together to secure new resources and funding.

Sub Group Remit.

The Forum agreed that biosecurity issues and the securing of funding for the projects discussed at this meeting are of key importance. It also agreed that the sub-group should continue and seek to secure funding to deliver the projects it has detailed.