

Meeting of SCTEAG
Monday 5th October, 7.30 pm via Zoom

1. **Present:** Ade Stokes (chair), Peter Roberts, Chris Pendlebury, Roddy Murray, Alan Drever, Catherine de Vries, Tim Godfrey, Dorothy Jackson (notes)

Roddy Murray was welcomed to the group.

2. Chair's update

Ade has taken on the Chair role on a trial basis, and if all goes well he will continue on a permanent basis in the New Year. He will represent the SCTEAG at the Board of the Trust as a guest. The group thanked Ade for taking on this role.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Approved

4. Matters arising

a. Beach Clean Week

The Marine Conservation Society-led Beach clean week in the week of 18th September was quite successful, with plenty of activity reported, and there may have been other activity which we did not know about. Beaches on the east and west coasts of Sleat were cleaned, and the beach at Camusdaraich is now very clean thanks to Tim's work. The rubbish from there is in a trailer at Aird car park needing removal.

In the absence of council skips due to COVID19, options include hiring a skip commercially (expensive), or asking the Contractor at the new shop, who have a skip on site, to assist. Otherwise continue using domestic waste bins. The Armadale garage could be contacted re disposal of a drum of waste oil. Tarskavaig is also looking for a skip for their beach clean, but the volume of material collected is too much to transport across the peninsula to the shop skip. Tarskavaig propose to contact the councillors and WHFP. In addition, Catherine will contact companies to ask for assistance, as the costs of skip hire are too high for us.

b. Hydro

Kenny Nicholson is now appointed, as project officer, and progress is being made towards launching a community share offer.

c. Invasive non-native plant species

Dorothy has shared information materials compiled by SLEF to see if this could be used as a basis for the proposed leaflet. The four key species are *R.ponticum*, *Gunnera*, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.

Ade will circulate more information on these species. Roger noted that Rhododendron's latin name has reverted to *R. ponticum*. Consultation with landowners will be necessary. Gorse and brambles are invasive, but are native. Gorse bushes act as shelters and grazing protection for tree seedlings which eventually grow up and shade out the gorse. The species supports a wide range of insects, and flowers benefit pollinators. Bramble becomes invasive in open sites where there is disturbance, but especially the flowers and fruits are valuable for wildlife. At Kinloch extensive, thick brambles are protecting self-sown tree seedlings from deer grazing.

It was decided the leaflet should focus on non-native species. Eradicating these species is a long term undertaking, requiring time and effort. We should concentrate on one or two species and focus on a small area. If not eradicated, the species will continue to spread. The site has to be visited in successive years to deal with regrowth and seedlings.

d. Funds

Roddy updated the group about a meeting between HIE, Martin MacGillivray and Mike Shucksmith. Roddy, John Duncan MacInnis and Mhairi are looking into funding sources from HIE and Highland Council. Roddy will be able to advise if there are projects needing funding. It was agreed that Catherine would look into costs of buying a good number of litter pickers for future beach cleans.

e. Bee talk

Catherine will approach the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (CEO Gill Perkins), or Kate Malone (Conservation Officer) in Golspie, re potentially giving a talk to the community or school, as the great Yellow Bumble bee has been sighted on Sleat. The EAG to make a poster to alert residents and visitors to this iconic species on Sleat.

f. White-tailed eagles at Tormore

WTEs are on the territory, but there is no current information on whether they have constructed a new nest, as it has not been possible to survey the whole block following destruction of the old nest in a storm.

g. Fish farms

Roger updated the group on fish farming in the wider area. The two fish farms north of Staffin are being taken forward, but if they cannot obtain organic status they have said they will sell on to a conventional company. Seal shooting has now been stopped nationally but acoustic deterrent devices are still a problem for cetaceans. The MOWI farm at Loch Hourn, which lies on a wild salmon migration route, is planning to double in size,

Sleat Community Trust currently does not have a position on open cage fish farming. Several countries are now moving into land-based salmon production in closed containers.

Dorothy to circulate a recent Guardian article on the problems of open cage fish farming.

h. Peatland restoration

The next phase of the project has been put forward to 2022, due to a heavy work load at the Lochaber Fisheries Trust which administers the Peatland Action funding. The Scottish Government has pledged £11 million for peat restoration.

5. Covid-19 restrictions & 2021 calendar

Restrictions are likely to continue into the new year. However, events can continue via zoom, and socially distanced environmental activities can be publicised and undertaken, e.g. the recent beach clean.

Ade will put together a spreadsheet to assist planning for activities so that we are ready to go when restrictions are eased.

6. SCT Newsletter contributions & other ideas to promote the Group & its activities

Ade will contact Eleanor about short articles in the newsletter to raise the profile of the EAG, keep in touch with community, and flag up interesting things coming up. The first article to be about the recent beach clean. The EAG is open to everyone, and community members may be interested to get involved in practical actions, if not sit on the committee.

SCTEAG's presence on the SCT website also needs updating.

7. Skye Climate Action update

Dorothy gave a brief update on the work of Skye Climate Action, which is available in detail via the SCA newsletter or website www.skyeclimateaction.org. The Broadford Coop is trialling a collection bin for single use plastic. Alan noted that this is normally only for polythene. Ade was invited to participate in Scotland's Climate Assembly, but was not selected. However, he may be able to access discussions and submit comments. Ade to circulate further information.

8. Food sustainability

Local food supply systems are needed to build sustainability on Sleat, in the context of COVID and the Climate Emergency. Dorothy noted that Skye Climate Action is trying to encourage local groups around Skye to do this, but does not have capacity to set up a structure. There is a great deal of interest in this topic.

Catherine noted that Roddy and other local people are sharing their surplus vegetable produce, which is much appreciated locally. Based on his long experience of growing vegetables, Roddy is happy to help out in an informal advisory capacity and for possible workshops on growing vegetables suggested contacting West Highland College to see if they could provide tutors to provide instruction and training. He also suggested giving some thought to the provision of equipment which growers could hire. Applications for funding for both training and equipment could be considered through some of the available funding sources discussed with HIE.

Other individuals around Sleat are interested in community growing/food projects. Possibilities of seed sharing, including via the Atlas Arts Zine Library (there is one in the shop) and involving the local gardening group. Catherine to approach individuals in the community to see how the ideas could be taken forward.

9. Tormore Volunteers

Tormore Volunteers continue to meet on the second Sunday of the month, working on potting up seedlings, planting trees, strimming etc.

10. Community Woodland Association annual conference

Nobody was available to attend this.

11. Next meeting

Monday 23rd November, 7.30 pm via Zoom