

## **Sleat Community Trust Environment Advisory Group**

Minutes of 29th March 2021, 7.30 pm via Zoom

### **1. Attendance**

Ade Stokes (chair), Roger Cottis, Tim Godfrey, Peter Roberts, Roddy Murray, Ryan Dziadowiec, Catherine de Vries, Alan Drever, Veronica Barrington, Dorothy Jackson (minutes)

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting – Approved**

### **3. Matters Arising**

- Collection of the beach clean station is now possible. Dorothy is awaiting information re collection point and dimensions of the station.
- Cycle Network: Catherine has talked to Mike Hyatt. The funds available aren't sufficient for improving cycle ways on Sleat, but signs making motorised vehicles aware of cyclists could be erected. Mike is contacting the Community Council and working on face to face meetings with the community.
- Frog spawn sightings: Several members reported frog, toad and newt spawn. Send in sightings for Roger to collate and forward to Highland Biological Recording Group.
- Great Yellow bumble bee: No sightings so far although queens of *Bombus lucorum* (White-tailed BB) are out of hibernation.
- Roadside tree flailing update: Catherine has drafted a letter to Highland Council, which will be endorsed by Woodland Trust. Ryan will also contact the council about flailing at Achnacloch. Dorothy has written to the Portree-based road management officer re flailing of native woodland trees on her property. Alan has requested information from Donald Macleod (Forestry Scotland) about permissions needed for cutting native woodland. At Camuscross flailing of infected ash trees will spread ash dieback disease. A survey should have been conducted before flailing.

### **4. Community Growing**

With COVID restrictions easing, Ade will put those who have expressed interest in the garden share scheme in touch with each other. Catherine will check out the offer of short-term possibilities at a small plot near the pier.

Leaflets to be displayed in the new Armadale Stores lobby. Dorothy to finalise leaflets and ask Eleanor to print 20 of each and A3 posters.

Community growing space at SMO: waiting for Dòmhnall Angaidh to respond when college activity resumes in the summer. There is interest in getting the big Hanna repaired, but so far just for college use to reduce its food waste. SMO possibilities to be reviewed in June. It is hoped that leaflets in the shop will encourage people to suggest other convenient community growing spaces.

### **5. Invasive Non-Native Plant Species**

Ade has produced a composite 'base map' covering most of Sleat and showing the results of his visual survey of *Rhododendron ponticum*. The proposed traffic light system was agreed:

- Red: established and widespread. Action dependent on land owners otherwise contain.
- Amber: immature and sparse. Roadside removal recommended.
- Yellow: some plants largely confined to private land. Monitor for spreading.
- Green: no plants observed.

The meeting thanked Ade and felt the map is a very good start. Additional locations of *Rhododendron ponticum* were noted. The map can be overlaid with maps of the other three species, based on input from SCTEAG initially and community members after the information leaflet has been circulated. This will identify key areas/ hot spots to tackle across Sleat. Maps to be shared with FEI and CDLT.

While glyphosate injection capsules are available, the preference is for mechanical eradication of *R. ponticum* : lever and mulch or hammering the bud ring, which must be repeated annually to ensure eradication. Alan recommended the Tree Popper tool which provides enough mechanical advantage to prise a tree out of the soil. As seeds last up to 10 years in the soil, a long-term control programme is needed. When plans firm up, SCTEAG can train volunteers. Roger noted that during eradication, any other holts should be noted and reported to Roger. Alan noted that quite generous grants to landowners are available for eradication, including working with volunteers, and that the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative is running three seminars on [1<sup>st</sup> April](#), [6<sup>th</sup> April](#) and [13<sup>th</sup> April](#).

Peter and Catherine reported positive responses from FEI and CDLT. Both estates are happy to collaborate when our plans firm up, and to have their logo on the information leaflet. CDLT is two years into a Japanese knotweed eradication programme, has been removing *Gunnera* seed heads and is tackling *R. ponticum* in the gardens.

## **6. Beach cleans**

- Spring beach clean: the Council skip is still available, but there is likely to be heavy demand. Catherine will coordinate a beach clean after 26th April when restrictions are relaxed, prioritising Ardvassar bay and then Ostaig bay.
- Dorothy reported on the Skye Community Litter Project (contact Jennie Chapman at [skyelitterpick@icloud.com](mailto:skyelitterpick@icloud.com) or via Facebook) which encourages individuals and groups to adopt an area to keep free of litter. Each adopted area will be mapped to highlight those areas that are being cared for and those where there are gaps. Adopters will receive equipment and a hi-vis vest. Peter suggested education was also needed, e.g. a standardised small notice on cleared laybys along the lines of "Take your litter home so that ..... doesn't have to clean up your litter." Dorothy will write a short article for the next SCT newsletter, in time for the Great British Spring Clean 28<sup>th</sup> May-13<sup>th</sup> June.

## **7. Tormore Hydro**

The site visit is agreed for 1st April. Roger to attend. Awaiting final arrangements from Kenny Nicholson. They will provide the marking tape or spray. Advance EAG reconnaissance to be carried out by Roger / Ade.

## **8. Skye & Raasay Infrastructure Plan**

Suggestions raised at last meeting were put to the SCT Board. Since then there has been some engagement with Community Councils and wider consultation appears underway. The contact in the Council is the Ward Manager, Willie MacKinnon. Roddy has sent in the proposal for an upgraded livestock mart and an abattoir; he will report back. Dorothy circulated the report of the first consultation meeting about the plan. Anyone is free to put forward ideas that will be put into the system. SCTEAG members are encouraged to read the report and contribute their ideas individually to the consultation if they wish, at <https://consult.highland.gov.uk/kse/event/36021/form/36021>

## **9. Shop planting**

Catherine has sent an e-mail with her thoughts and ideas to a separate email group. She will meet with Phil Knott on wildflower planting.

## **10. Staycation impacts / mitigations**

- Paddy MacKay will draft / cost information signs publicising local facilities to encourage visitors to behave responsibly.
- Jane McDermott has recommended that Grazings Committees are consulted on signage and suggested that honesty boxes are also considered to help towards the upkeep of local facilities and infrastructure e.g. at Aird car park.
- HC is employing 10 Countryside Rangers for this holiday season including 2 for Skye, probably to be deployed in the north and west of the island to cover tourist hot-spots. However, there may be an opportunity to link up in some way.
- Roddy reported that Skye Connect, SAC Consulting, Scottish Crofting Federation and the National Farmers Union are collaborating on a project to enable crofters and farmers to interact with visitors to make them appreciate the land better and to tread more carefully. Four pilots are proposed on Skye, including with the Aird and Tarskavaig grazing committees. Roddy will keep us updated.

## **11. Waste Food Recycling**

SCT is progressing a funded proposal to develop an anaerobic digester at SMO to generate energy as well as compost. Dorothy noted funding from the National Lottery Fund is available to support waste food recycling. Peter suggested that the SCT project includes an aspirational link to community growing. Ade to raise at next SCT board meeting.

## **12. Events**

SCTEAG meetings and events may be possible June/July. To review at next meeting.

## **13. Date of next meeting: 10th May, 7.30 pm**