

Sleat Community Trust Environment Advisory Group

Minutes of meeting on 8th March 2022, 7:30 pm, via Zoom

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ade Stokes (Chair), Alan Drever, Tim Godfrey, Catherine de Vries (minutes)

Apologies: Evelyn Roe, Peter Roberts, Dorothy Jackson, Roddy Murray, Sheana Roberts, Veronica Barrington, Lisa Pook

Evelyn will sadly be leaving the group as she is moving away from the area.

2. Previous minutes

No changes.

3. Matters arising

Beach clean station – Jennie Chapman has been contacted about offering it to Community Litter Project volunteers elsewhere on Skye but no interest received. There is therefore no home for this and it is currently stored by the side of the shop. It would be good to make a decision on this soon.

Peatland restoration. Completion now delayed by a month due to machinery fault and repair parts delay. It is now due to be completed by the end of April. Alan expressed his concern that once again, operations were extending into the breeding season, especially concerning our White-tailed Eagles, which are going to have to be specifically monitored for potential impacts.

There is possibly going to be an opportunity for a community visit to see peatland restoration operations.

Timber will be removed by lorry, next week, from the side of the track. It is being bought by Norbord.

Seaweed farming – Ade to talk to Mark de Vries (carried forward).

4. Winter talks

Vanessa Charles and Martin Hynd's talk on "Exploring our hidden world: diving for citizen science" was considered excellent and received a very positive response from those who attended (around 28). Rob Ware is trying to get the talk onto the SLEF website but is having difficulty loading the full version. Link to be shared with EAG and people who missed the talk when a solution is found.

Next talks – Alan wondered if Roger would be keen to give an update on the South Skye Seas Initiative (SSSI). Ade will contact him to find out if he could present sometime towards the end of March or April.

5. Environment Policy update

Catherine is working on finalising the draft Environmental Policy. Dorothy had suggested that we include ethical financing and ensure that bank accounts, investments and pension schemes are not with organisations that fund fossil fuels or are linked to rainforest destruction. It was agreed that this is a good idea. Catherine will aim to send a final draft to Ade by 22nd March so he can circulate amongst Board members before the board meeting on 29th March.

6. Rhododendron control progress

The last volunteer day was a success with seven volunteers covering the 4-mile stretch from Duisdale to Skulamas. Around 50 – 60 plants were removed.

The next volunteer day will be held on Sunday 20th March when roads will still be relatively quiet before the summer ferry timetable starts and also before the under-storey grows too tall. It is planned to tackle the old road and the stretch of main road from Toravaig to Camuscross. Alan also suggested looking at the

Tarskavaig loop road as it is particularly important to remove rhododendrum from areas of native woodland.

7. Voluntourism update

Beach clean – we need to target a specific day or two. It is understood that a Highland Council van is driving round the Tarskavaig loop road and collecting beach rubbish. Flora MacLean has offered to find contact details for the van and send on to Ade.

Ostaig beach was suggested as a possible venue as it would be appropriate for young fit people and is particularly scenic. If there is not enough work at Ostaig then volunteers could easily move on to Armadale and Ardvasar.

Invasive Species

Ade mentioned that there is a significant amount of *Buddleia* in Tormore and perhaps this could be tackled by volunteers. Ade to do a site visit to check the accessibility of the location and check for other invasives e.g. Rhododendron.

If anyone has anything to add to the list for Voluntourism please let Ade know.

8. AOCB

Carbon Neutral Island Project – an email about this was circulated by Ade to SCTEAG members. The aim is to support six islands to reach Carbon Neutral by 2040. There is a series of webinars during week commencing 14 March 2022, which will provide island communities with an opportunity to learn more about the project.

Development for Nature

Highland Environment Forum (HEF) is asking for assistance in identifying local priorities for a 'Developing with Nature' guidance document to help planners and developers deliver biodiversity benefits across Highland. They are looking for responses by 25th March. If individuals can respond at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/consultation-developing-nature-guidance>

Alan highlighted the webinar by HIEF about deer which is particularly pertinent since Sleat has the highest population of deer on Skye. Those interested will need to register via the HIEF website.

Next season's talks

Alan suggested that we start the season earlier, for example in November, which would enable us to host up to five different talks throughout the winter.

It was agreed that a talk on Native Woodland would be a good idea. Alan will pursue a contact from the Alliance for Scotlands Rainforest.

Catherine will get in touch with Gill Perkins, the CEO for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust who has previously been in touch with the school to highlight the presence of great yellow bumblebees in Sleat.

9. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 12th April via Zoom