

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

Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021, 7.30 pm via Zoom

### **1. Attendance, apologies and absences**

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

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

### **3. Matters Arising**

Beach clean station. Currently in Ullapool awaiting collection when travel is permitted. Carried forward to next meeting

Catherine has a contact for buying litter pickers at a good price. Beach clean possibly end March.

Cycle Network - no update yet.

### **4. Community Growing**

A good range of responses resulted from the article in the Trust newsletter and the poster, comprising

- 1 x garden
- 1 x garden & community growing volunteer
- 2 x community growing volunteer
- 1 x land offer
- 1 x growing pots / seedling trays offer

Ade has thanked them and will keep them posted about the lockdown hiatus. The people interested in garden sharing can be put in touch with each other at the COVID-appropriate time. It was decided to wait until the end of lockdown for another round of publicity. Leaflets can be put in the lobby of the new Armadale stores.

The site next to the polytunnel in Tormore forest needs drainage work doing, and may be more suitable for crops that don't need daily attention, e.g. trees.

Ryan (for SMO) and Peter (for EAG) are in contact with Dòmhnall Angaidh. As soon as students are back and can meet, Ryan will take student activities forward. SMO's location has the advantage of being central and close to the primary school.

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

Dorothy circulated the latest revision of the leaflet. Lisa Pook at Clan Donald gardens responded positively to Catherine's approach about working together. The Clan is already tackling some invasive plants. EAG will approach the FEI Land agent to see if FEI also wish to be involved, making it a Sleat-wide project. Clan Donald and FEI will be invited to review the leaflet to indicate their involvement, with logos. Peter and Catherine to follow up.

Ade will compile a map of known locations of the four species for the next EAG meeting, with a view to establishing a boundary of core areas for containing the species. Small groups of people would be able to carry out eradication outside the containment boundary (apart from Japanese knotweed for which landowners should seek professional advice) to prevent further spread. This approach suits our available resources.

Apart from at Kilmore burn, Himalayan balsam is on the Tormore house drive and across the road in Tormore Forest.

## **6. Tormore Hydro**

EAG had been unaware that there was a Feed-in Tariff eligibility cut off in September. Without this subsidy support, the scheme would not be financially viable. While clearly unfortunate, all agreed that installation works needed to therefore commence during the breeding season.

Ade will find out when the first day of the groundworks will be and set up a virtual meeting with Kenny, Roger and Alan beforehand to provide background on the fragility of the remaining riparian habitat and its soils. On the first day, the report produced by Alan and Roger with grid references should be used. Some trees need to be remarked. The decided route can then be staked with all involved present, including the digger driver, and marked with red forestry tape indicating sensitive areas.

## **7. Skye & Raasay investment plan**

Skye & Raasay residents are invited to contribute projects to this plan, which has 62 projects so far. Roddy identified that crofting and agriculture are missing, and proposed that projects to rehabilitate the livestock mart and set up a local slaughterhouse should be included. A mobile abattoir might also be suitable. Ade and Roddy will bring these proposals to the SCT board meeting, along with EAG requests for projects on marketing local food, improved public transport - particularly buses during the tourist season when people can't get onward travel from Armadale, and a food waste recycling scheme.

## **8. Shop Planting**

DB Wood Mastercrafts has supplied six planters. Hard standing close to the shop entrance may be suitable for a tree, with the area behind the building potentially suitable for a wildflower meadow. Several other ideas have been suggested re the planting scheme. Ade will propose to SCT Board that Catherine will be the central contact point to coordinate ideas and inputs.

## **9. Staycation impacts / mitigations**

SCT Board have requested EAG ideas on dealing with camper / motor home detritus if there is another staycation holiday season. Ade has consulted Paddy MacKay (Visit Sleat) and Rob Ware to see if there are any wider plans in place and although there are longer term ambitions (covered under item 7) there is nothing that will help in the short term.

It was agreed that the best solution is to erect signage in appropriate locations directing people to local shops, waste / recycling points, local toilets and nearest moho waste disposal sites.

To move away from extractive tourism, it was suggested that local shops should be promoted to mobile home owners, who otherwise make little contribution to the local economy. Catherine to check what the status of the shop is as a tourist information point. The Visit Sleat leaflet could also promote support for local shops, and the ferries may still have space for leaflets and posters to advise visitors on local amenities.

## **10. Waste Food Recycling**

The recent Highland Good Food Conversation identified food waste recycling as one of the key issues to increase production and consumption of healthy local-grown food throughout the Highlands. A subgroup is working on community and school food waste schemes, including using 'Big Hanna' composters. Through HGFC and Skye Climate Action, Ryan and Dorothy heard that an engineer was coming to repair the Big Hanna at Portree High School, and Ryan has asked SMO whether the engineer can, on the same visit, look at the SMO Big Hanna, which has been broken since last year.

Further discussion is needed on how to put the SMO food waste scheme on a stable basis for the future and involve the community, as well as link up to the proposed local food growing scheme.

The ban on biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill was postponed from 2021 to 2025. So, by 2025 food waste recycling schemes must be up and running.

## **11. 2021 Events**

Carried forward to next meeting

## **12. AoB**

Concern was expressed about Highland council's flailing of trees along roadsides, which has caused widespread damage, and makes a mockery of tree planting goals. SLEF is trying to get the Council to be more discriminating. Catherine will contact the roads department.

The Bat Conservation Trust proposes to set up a Skye bat group. Roger/SLEF has done bat training and surveys, and may be able to resume later this year, COVID-19 permitting.

Please report the date of any sightings of frogspawn in ponds to Roger, as well as sightings of the rare Great Yellow bumble bee. Queens will be out first, they are very large and pale yellow, and have been sighted at the west end of Tormore Forest.

Roger/SLEF is running a badger instruction course with three students. Other mammals will follow. Badgers are currently in Lochalsh and used to be in Sleat as evidenced by many old setts. The Gaelic place names Broc-bheinn and Bracadale may refer to badgers.

## **13. Next meeting: 29th March 7.30pm**