

ANNEX A – CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

A1 INTRODUCTION

One of the prime aims within the project brief stated that the consultant will be required:

“ to carry out as wide a consultation as possible throughout the Western Isles to ascertain the views of the public with regard to 3 draft biodiversity action plans”

We decided that the thrust of our approach would be to engage the communities in a series of three community workshops located in key island locations strategically placed to best cover the spread of the islands (Castlebay in Barra, Nunton on Benbecula and Stornoway on Lewis).

It was recognised, however, that it can be difficult to achieve a high attendance at community meetings for a number of reasons:

- lack of awareness of meeting;
- poor publicity;
- conflicts with other meetings/attractions;
- not a priority for people;
- time of year;
- general apathy.

To address these possible reasons why people might not attend the engagement process was divided into into two phases:

Phase 1 – Initial Consultation and Preparation for the Workshops

Phase 2 – Western Isles Visit and the Workshops

The core method used to engage communities in the process of reviewing and commenting on the first set of Western Isles Biodiversity Plans was three community workshops, held at different locations on the Western Isles (see above). The method for undertaking the workshops can broadly be broken down into two parts. The first phase was in the lead up to the workshops which involved general preparation including the production of material and visual aids for the workshops. It was at the first stage that initial contact was made with identified partners in the plans to advise them they were included in the plans and to provide the opportunity for them to comment on their role. The second phase was the actual visit to the Western Isles to hold the workshops. During the three day visit to the Isles, the opportunity was taken to meet with some partners and Steering Group members on an *ad hoc* basis. An *impromptu* visit was also made to the Castlebay Community School to introduce the students to the habitat and species plans. The two phases are discussed in further detail below.

A2 METHODOLOGY

A2.1 PHASE 1 –INITIAL CONSULTATION AND PREPARATION FOR THE WORKSHOPS

In order to try to maximise the attendance at, and the benefits from the community workshops (and overcome the barriers listed above) we divided this phase into 3 tasks:

Task 1: Initial Partner Consultation –aimed at discussing the plans in depth with those organisations and/or individuals identified as important in delivering the actions.

Task 2: Publicising and Communicating on the Plans and Workshops – aimed at raising awareness and encouraging attendance at workshops.

Task 3: Workshop Preparation – aimed at designing as stimulating and interesting a presentation and engagement process for the 3 biodiversity plans.

A2.1.1 TASK 1.1 - INITIAL PARTNER CONSULTATION

Each of the partners identified in the three plans were contacted by telephone. Partners were agencies or other organisations that had been identified in the Action Plans as groups that could help the recognised lead agency to implement a particular action¹. The purpose of the call was to inform each of the partners that they had been included in a plan and to determine if they would like to review the plan and provide comments on their role. The following groups were contacted:

In relation to the Great Yellow Bumblebee LBAP:

- Mr Murdo McDonald as a representative of the Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society;
- Mr Brian Lowe of Curracag - the Western Isles Natural History Society;
- Ms Anne Marie Smout of Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC);
- Mr Bob Wemyss of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT);
- Mr Ian Cairns and Mr Wilson McKinlay of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC);
- Mr Jamie Boyle of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

In relation to the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan:

- Ms Rona Womersley of the Southern Isles Amenity Trust (SIAT);
- Mr John Risby of the Forestry Commission;
- Mr Bob Wemyss of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT).

In relation to the Saline Coastal Lagoons Habitat Action Plan:

¹ Please note that it was not necessary to consult with the lead agencies as all were included on the Western Isles Biodiversity Action Steering Group and had been involved in the process of the developing the plans from an early stage. Some identified partners were also Steering Group members and if this was the case they were not contacted, with the exception of the RSPB. The RSPB was contacted in relation to setting up a meeting during the visit to the Western Isles. The meeting did not go ahead but the RSPB requested to make comments in lieu of the meeting. The RSPB has therefore been included in the partner list.

- Mr David McCleod of the Crofters Commission;
- Mr Bob Wemyss of SWT;
- Mr Jamie Boyle of RSPB.

A summary of the partner responses are provided in *Section 3* of the report.

A2.1.2 TASK 1.2 - PUBLICISING AND COMMUNICATING ON PLANS AND WORKSHOPS

Invitations

Invitations were sent out to a list of individuals and organisations that had been provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES). Invitations included background information on the LBAPs and included details of the location and time of the workshops. The invitations to organisations were sent by email and invitations to individuals were mailed out. In a number of cases where no response was received invitation letters were followed up with a telephone call nearer the date of the workshops to encourage attendance or gain feedback.

Press Release

A press release was produced and issued to the following papers:

- The Stornoway Gazette
- West Highland Free Press
- The Hebridean
- Grampian Television
- The Scotsman
- The Herald
- Press and Journal
- Press Association
- Am Paipear
- Guth Bharraigh

The headline of the press release extended an invitation to the community to ‘Safeguard local habitats and species’. It described the draft plans and the biodiversity action process which was being implemented on the islands and stressed the importance of involving communities in the process of developing the plans. It provided all of the details regarding each of the workshops and described the purpose of the workshops, *ie.* to engage communities in the process of biodiversity planning and action and to help the Steering Group refine the current suggested actions and develop additional community based actions.

The press release was also featured on BBC Radio Scotland and Radio nan Gaidheal and Anne MacLellan from CnES did a promotional feature on Radio nan Gaidheal.

A copy of the press release is included at the end of the Annex.

Web Page

It was considered that the existing Comhairle Biodiversity web site would be an ideal vehicle for publicising the future workshop programme and raising public awareness with regard to the 3 specific biodiversity action plans. It was also felt that producing an interesting publicity release on the workshops would help retain interest in the web site and further promote the topic of biodiversity throughout the Western Isles.

The web site text that was generated included a summary of the draft plans, links to each of the original action plans and a comment sheet that would enable visitors to the site to provide comments on any or all of the 3 plans if they so desired. This was felt to be particularly helpful if those visiting the web site were unable to attend the workshops. An additional benefit of using the web site as a communication tool for the biodiversity plans is that this will continue the engagement process with the wider community so sustaining a degree of momentum with the initiative.

A2.1.3 TASK 1.3 - WORKSHOP PREPARATION

It was decided that in order to make the workshops interesting, to try to capture the imagination of those attending and to stimulate discussion that some colourful displays would be needed.

It was agreed with the CnES that the production of three colourful posters, one for each plan, would be beneficial in helping to provide visual access to the plans at the workshops, and to provide a stimulus for thought and discussion.

Three A1 posters were designed and included:

- descriptive details on the particular habitat or species (including colour photographs);
- a summary of the key threats to these;
- possible actions that community members could get involved in to help protect or enhance the habitat or species.

In addition to the colour posters, two further A1 posters were produced for each of the Plans. One provided further background details on the habitat or species, information on why they should be protected and listed verbatim the draft actions as set down in each plan. The other provided visual and verbal prompts, including specific questions designed to provoke thoughts and comments regarding the draft actions as follows:

Action

- Is it feasible?
- Is it suitable?
- Will it address the threats?

Who

- Do you think this is a suitable organisation?

- Do you know other groups that may be able to help?

Priority, Timescale

- Do you agree with the stated priority and timescale?

Anything else?

- Is there something else that you can suggest?
- Something that you or your family could do?
- Something that your community could get together to do?

Fact sheets were developed for each of the plans which provided a summary of all of the information on the posters so that when the workshop attendees broke into smaller groups to discuss the plans (see below) they had the necessary information to underpin discussions.

Finally a short introductory presentation was prepared to provide workshop attendees with an initial overview of the purpose of the workshops and some background of how the LBAPs fit into the wider international and national Biodiversity strategy. The purpose of the introduction was to make it clear to all who attended the workshop that the process that they were involved in was important and necessary for the protection of biodiversity on all levels, from a local level through to an international level.

A2.2 PHASE 2 – WESTERN ISLES VISIT AND THE WORKSHOPS

This phase was divided into 2 tasks:

- **Task 2.1: Pre-Workshop Meetings** – aimed to be one to one consultation meetings on the plans with some key stakeholders.
- **Task 2.2: The Workshop Process** – aimed at running the 3 community workshops to maximum effect.

A2.2.1 TASK 2.1 - PRE-WORKSHOP MEETINGS

The workshops were held over three days from the 15th December to the 17th December 2003 starting in Barra, then Benbecula and finishing in Stornoway. The workshops were held in the evening. During the day the opportunity was taken to arrange meetings with partners, Steering Group members or other interested members of the public (*ie.* any stakeholder in the plans) to discuss the Action Plans and also general biodiversity issues on the Western Isles. Meetings were held with the following individuals:

- David Bowman: Head Teacher Castlebay Community School;
- Teachers and pupils at Castlebay Community School;
- Jonathan Grant former Ranger on Barra;
- David Muir Scottish Crofting Foundation;
- Ian Cairns Scottish Agricultural College;

- Yvonne Richardson Crofter's Commission.²

Meetings were held around an informal structured agenda that broadly covered the following:³:

- the three specific habitat and species plans in a free ranging discussion;
- biodiversity planning in a more general context for the Western Isles;
- the challenge of gaining more community involvement in the process.

The outcomes of the meetings are discussed in *Annex B* of the report.

Castlebay Community School

Experience has shown that it often proves difficult to encourage younger people and the youth in general within communities to come out and attend community meetings and workshops. It was considered important, therefore, to take the opportunity of some available time on Barra to use the workshop format into the local school and seek to raise awareness about the local biodiversity on the islands and to engage young people of different age groups in the evaluation of the two habitat and one species action plans.

We spoke with four different groups of students of varying sizes, age groups and for varying lengths of time. Depending on the time available and the number and the age group of the students present, we either provided information for each of the habitats and the one species using the posters or we invited students to look at the posters and in groups write down their thoughts on post-it notes. For one particular small and older group, we had a round table discussion of each of the plans. The outcome of our meetings with the students and written comments provided by the students are presented, verbatim, in *Annex C*.

A 2.2.2 TASK 2.2 - THE WORKSHOP PROCESS

The workshops were run in two halves. During the first half of the workshop attendees were invited to walk around and view the posters that were set up in different areas of the room according to each plan. During the second half of the evening attendees split themselves into break-out groups, one for each plan, to discuss the plan actions in detail.

Initially as people arrived at the workshop they were invited to walk around the poster displays in order to familiarise themselves with the plans, while they waited for others to arrive. When it was evident that most attendees had arrived, all were invited to sit down for a short introductory presentation. The purpose of the presentation was to:

² We met with Yvonne Richardson at the same time as meeting Ian Cairns at the SAC offices in Stornoway.

³ Our meeting with David Bowman the head teacher did not cover these broad issues due to the nature of his role. Our meeting with Mr Bowman covered issues relating to environment and sustainability issues in the school curriculum.

- introduce the concept of an LBAP and provide an overview of how the LBAPs and the process of producing the plans fit into a national and international biodiversity context;
- outline the purpose of the evening and make it clear how outcomes of the evening would be fed back into the LBAP process;
- explain to the attendees how the workshop would run and how we intended the evening to progress.

Part 1

After the presentation the attendees were invited to re-visit the poster displays on each of the Local Biodiversity Plans. Attendees were encouraged to talk to each other and formulate thoughts relating to the presentation material. Post it notes and pens were provided and attendees were encouraged to write down any thoughts that occurred to them after reading the posters. The emphasis at this stage was directed towards their immediate thoughts with regard to the overall plan and the proposed actions and suggested partners. The post-it notes were stuck on to a separate sheet of flip-chart paper next to the posters. After this process which took between 30 and 40 minutes, attendees were invited to take a break for coffee.

Part 2

During coffee the chairs and tables were rearranged into three separate groups. Upon completion of the coffee break the group was asked to break up into three groups, one for each plan, to discuss the plan actions in detail. They were asked to read the plan actions and review the comments that had been written on the post-it notes and from these, firstly determine if the group had any comments on or was broadly content with the list of draft actions and then secondly, determine if there were further actions that they believed should be included in the action list. As an additional point we asked groups after they had finished brainstorming and discussing these points, to put their minds to thinking about ways that communities in the Western Isles could be better engaged in the LBAP process. The group chose a scribe whose task it was to make a list of the summary points of the discussions on a piece of flip chart paper for the purposes of presenting the key points to the workshop group as a whole. During this stage we circulated between the tables providing assistance or clarification if a group had become stuck on a particular point. We also ensured that important points that we were hearing were being recorded so that nothing was missed.

After each group was satisfied that they had discussed all of these and had recorded the summary points on the flip chart sheet, one member from each group presented the key points made by the group with respect to the current actions, proposed actions and means of engaging the wider community. During the presentations, we took further notes to pick up on any extra points that were brought up but hadn't been put down on the flip chart sheet.

Following the group presentations a very brief feed-back session was held where the key points of the evening were summarised and all were thanked for their inputs. The purpose of workshop was reiterated again and it was made clear how the comments

on the existing actions and the additional suggested actions were to be fed back into the LBAPs.

The workshop in Barra was run somewhat differently from the workshops in Benbecula and Stornoway. This was due to the limited number of attendees at the Barra workshop. Three individuals attended the workshop in Barra and it was decided that the chosen format for running the workshop was not appropriate for that number of people. Instead a round table discussion was held to discuss the three plans in turn.

After each of the workshops the post-it notes and the flip chart sheets were collected and these have been recorded, verbatim, in *Annex C*.

A2.3 ANALYSIS OF OUTPUTS

All the information from individual consultations and the workshops was analysed in the context of the existing draft plans and against the background of best practice with regard to conservation. It has been possible to include almost all the proposed actions as additions to existing actions or as new actions in the revised action tables detailed in the Executive Summary (see *Section 1*). Where it was considered that a proposed action, whilst benefiting the specific species or habitat in the plan, could have disbenefits for nature conservation in other ways it was not included and this has been identified in the text after the proposed action in *Section 4* of the report. The revised action tables in the Executive Summary also identifies who it is suggested should be responsible for a particular new or amended action and includes the priority and the timescale for the action.

APPENDIX A1 – PRESS RELEASE

SAFEGUARDING LOCAL HABITATS AND SPECIES

Do you feel inspired to help preserve and regenerate some of the semi-natural broadleaved woodland in your local area? Do you feel there are actions you could help with to save salty lagoons with their rare stoneworts, seagrasses and colourful seaweeds together with burrowing sea anemones and rare sea cucumbers? Perhaps ways to protect and manage the endangered Great Yellow Bumblebee captures your imagination.

The Western Isles Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Steering Group is inviting communities of the Western Isles to attend evening workshops in December where local biodiversity action plans concerning these issues will be presented and discussed. Three local plans have been developed and need your input:

- native woodlands habitat action plan – a plan to preserve and regenerate remnant areas of native woodlands in the local area;
- saline (coastal) lagoons habitat action plan – a plan to maintain and enhance coastal lagoons of which the Western Isles has over 40% of the UK's total habitat;
- great yellow bumblebee species action plan – a plan to protect and expand the range of this nationally scarce species.

Community ideas and local knowledge are invaluable to making local action plans work. Everyone is encouraged to attend and to contribute their ideas and support for actions to deliver these plans.

Cllr Angus Nicholson, chair of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, said “the Council is keen to get local people involved in actions to protect and preserve their environment and its natural plants and animals. This is a great chance for people to get personally involved in local biodiversity action planning. It’s often simple actions that can make all the difference.”

Workshops are to be held on Barra on Monday 15th December at the Castlebay Secondary School commencing at 7.00pm, on Benbecula on Tuesday 16th December at Nunton Steadings commencing at 7.00pm and in Stornoway on Wednesday 17th November at the County Hotel commencing at 7.00pm.

Local experts were called in to draft the 3 plans and they have identified a number of potential actions that would help to deliver the plans. Many of the identified actions rely on initiatives at an individual or community level. The local expert on Great Yellow Bumblebees, Bill Neil, said “Traditional management of machair helps to maintain the current population of the Great Yellow Bumblebee. If opportunities are taken to retain the wonderful expanse of summer flowers and support traditional and organic crofting this would help considerably in supporting and enhancing the species”

Other actions require co-operation between local experts, government, organisations and communities. Forester Jon Hollingdale said “There is great potential to encourage natural regeneration of semi-native woodlands, to protect and expand both the area of trees and the habitat they provide for a wide range of other species.”

All of the key actions require motivation and further ideas to make them happen. Marine biologist Sue Scott said: “The coastal salty lagoons are rare and undervalued habitats vulnerable to the impacts of road building and

pollution from run-off and other sources. Some lagoon habitats with their seagrasses, tassleweed and stoneworts are very beautiful and could feature in wildlife tourism initiatives.”

The list of actions are not yet complete and community comments and ideas are required which could help to modify the list of current actions to make each more effective. It is hoped that entirely new actions will also be discussed and developed.

If you would like further details on the workshop evenings, the LBAPs and biodiversity issues generally in the Western Isles please visit the Comhairle biodiversity website at <http://www.w-isles.gov.uk/biodiversity/index.htm>.