

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

**Western Isles
Biodiversity Action Plan
Community
Consultation**



Final Report

June 2005

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Biodiversity Action Plan
Community
Consultation**

Final Report

For and on behalf of
Natural Capital Ltd.

Approved by:

Signed:

Position:

Date:

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH RATIONALE

The purpose of the study was to engage the communities of the Western Isles to ascertain the views and opinions of the local people on actions set down in four draft species plans and one draft habitat action plan. The plans were drafted by the Western Isles Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group as part of the second phase of developing the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The plans are:

- Cereal Field Margins Habitat Plan
- Corncrake (*Crex crex*) Species Plan
- Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*) Species Plan
- Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) Species Plan
- Irish Lady's-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*) Species Plan

Six workshops were held on the Western Isles in March 2005 to review the draft plans. At the workshops people were encouraged to provide comments on the proposed actions and also to suggest additional actions. Further consultations were undertaken with key partners identified in the draft plans by telephone prior to and during the workshops and with other stakeholders during the visit to the Western Isles. Awareness raising 'mini-workshops' were also carried out at four primary schools across the islands to introduce the children to the latest LBAPs.

Where appropriate, the action tables included in the draft plans have been revised to incorporate community comments on existing actions and additional actions for each plan. Also included is a table of additional actions that can be applied to all the plans. The revised action tables are presented below and are included in the Executive Summary of the report. Details of comments raised by partners, community members and other stakeholders are included in the remainder of the report.

1.2 REVISED ACTION TABLES

1.2.1 TABLE OF PROPOSED ADDITIONAL ACTIONS – APPLICABLE TO MORE THAN ONE PLAN¹

The promotion of traditional crofting land management (and in particular cropping and cattle) is fundamental to the conservation and enhancement of all the species and habitats, which are subject to the plan. There are several important actions that apply to more than one plan.

Action	Priority	Timescale	Lead/ Partners
Format of the LBAP			
Include a section in the LBAP that summarises and addresses cross-cutting issues (i.e. traditional crofting, which benefits more than one species/habitat).	High	Short	CnES
A “Guide to Good Land Management for Biodiversity” was suggested as a useful publication and a means of turning the LBAP work into a useful tool for crofters and other land managers. It would be a short (2 page?) document that would distil out the key land management points, mention the LBAP species and signpost to the plans.	High	Medium	CnES
The plans should reflect the differences between the north (Lewis and Harris) and south islands, which have significant differences in habitats and land management practices. This could be done by referencing the key target areas for particular actions and including clearer references to the differences across the Western Isles in the introduction of each plan, where applicable.	Medium	Short	CnES
Policy			
Investigate increasing the length of the Croft Entrant Scheme.	Medium		
Investigate agri-environment payments that include financial support for advice and assistance for crofters with their paperwork.	Medium		
Increase the payments for traditional “stooking” of crops to truly reflect the extra work and time involved and thereby provide a realistic incentive.	High		
Introduce a scheme whereby the working of inactive crofts is passed over to neighbours so that they stay in good management.	Medium		

¹ High priority actions are shown in bold

Action	Priority	Timescale	Lead/ Partners
Site Safeguard and Management			
Include a rigorous goose management scheme in all plans that require cereals to be managed in the traditional way (i.e. those that require late cutting, stooking).	High		
Promote and financially assist the use of seaweed application as a traditional land management tool for grassland and for cropped areas.	Medium		
Encourage and promote cattle farming as this is not only beneficial because cattle make good 'conservation grazers', but an increase in cattle requires an increase in fodder and so would go hand in hand with increasing cereal production.	High		
Ensure that the Bull Hire Scheme continues. This is a priority as it ensures that keeping cattle on the islands remains viable.	High		
Support the development of township herds as a means of keeping cattle on the islands.	Medium		
Include actions to monitor and combat coastal erosion	Medium		
Communications and Awareness Raising			
Integrate LBAP work more into the school curriculum. This could include annual bird/plant surveys in secondary school science classes.	Medium		
Include crofting education in schools to raise awareness of the benefits to local wildlife and to encourage future crofters.	Medium		
Utilise widely read local papers, such as Am paipear (and other similar resources) for awareness raising and publicising the LBAP work e.g. "Dunlin Diary" and "Corncrake Corner"!	Medium		
Promote sharing of crofting knowledge and best practice (and seed) between the Uists and Lewis and Harris.	Medium		
Advice and support for a Western Isles "brand", which capitalises on the wildlife and traditional, low-input management of the islands and would help to market and support crofting and conservation management.	Medium		
Promote the conservation of the species to tourists, for example through booklets in Bed and Breakfasts (BnB) and training days for BnB landlords/ladies.	Low		
Make direct contact to crofters and townships rather than only producing leaflets (as a more effective means of awareness raising).	Medium		
Creation of a general "Biodiversity of the Western Isles" booklet aimed at the general public.	Medium		
Ensure that data collected regarding land-use and biodiversity (by organisations such as the Macaulay Institute, the SAC and other researchers) are collated and kept on the Western Isles and fed back to the community	Medium		

1.2.2 CEREAL FIELD MARGINS²

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVES
1	Policy and Legislation					
1.1	Better distinguish between systems of arable cropping on the basis of their conservation value, including the area of margin relative to crop and the proportion of fallow.	SEERAD SAC	High	Short	SNH, CC, SCF	2,6
1.2	Regularly evaluate the attractiveness of all incentives for cereal production in the light of ongoing policy changes.	SEERAD SAC	High	Short	SNH, CC, SCF	2,3
1.3	Include practical options for small scale cropping and locally-grown seed within the menu for Land Management Contracts.	SEERAD	High	Short	CC, SCF	3
1.4	Consider the environmental value of cropped land in decisions involving development applications.	CnES	Medium	On-going	SEERAD, CC	3
1.5	Where pesticide application is considered an issue , provide training for Spraying Contractors and others to ensure that pesticides are applied responsibly and that awareness of the value of species diversity of the field margin is raised. Comply with FEPA code.	WIE	High	Short	SAC, LANTRA	5
1.6	Ensure extensive cropping options using local seed have a high priority within agri-environment schemes. This will include local priority ranking recommendations.	CnES	High	Short	SEERAD, SNH, SAC, RSPB	2
1.7	In Lewis provide financial and advisory support to enable crofters to move away from sheep into cropping.	CnES SEERAD	High	Medium-Long	SAC, SCF	2,3
2	Site Safeguard and Management					
2.1	Ensure no loss where machair cropping / fallow contributes to the Community interest on Natura sites.	SNH	High	Ongoing	SEERAD	6
2.2	Address management techniques, which are detrimental to cereal field margin management.	SNH	Medium	Medium	SEPA, RSPB	4,5
2.3	Encourage uptake in agri-environmental schemes.	SEERAD	High	Medium	SNH, SAC	2

² Revisions to the table of actions are shown in bold/blue

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVES
2.4	Prioritise funding support to applications which involve the establishment of contracting services and machinery rings.	WIE	Medium	Short	CNES, CC	3
2.5	Ensure good availability of local seed (as seed bought in from the mainland does not grow well in the Western Isles).		High	Medium-Long	SAC, SEERAD, CnES, SCF	3
2.6	Encourage and promote an increase in cattle (as opposed to sheep) as this will create a demand for cereals as fodder.	SCF	Medium	Medium-Long	SAC, SEERAD, CnES	2,3
3	Advisory					
3.1	Incorporate the use of cereal cover crops in the reseeding and establishment of new grassland i.e. cereal sown alongside grass seed.	SAC	Medium	Medium	SEERAD, SNH	3,4
3.2	Carry out on- site practical demonstrations to develop skills in the establishment and husbandry of cereal crops.	CnES SAC	High	Medium-Long	SAC , WIE, SNH, CNES	4
4	Monitoring and research					
4.1	Evaluate the various obstacles to increased small-scale cereal production.	SEERAD, SAC CnES	High	Short	SAC , SCF	3
4.2	Monitor the area and number of parcels cropped in the relevant Natura sites.	SNH	High	Short - Medium	SEERAD	1,6
4.3	Monitor the area and number of parcels cropped in the wider former Machairs ESA as schemes transfer to RSS.	SEERAD SAC	High	Short-Medium	SNH	1,2
4.4	Monitor the area of cropping within the Western Isles, by SEERAD Area Office area, using the annual agricultural census results and aerial photography. Aim to link in with aerial survey being carried out by other organisations such as SNH.	CNES SAC	Medium	Medium-Long	SEERAD, SNH	1
4.5	Survey and catalogue the arable weeds (and NVC weed communities) found on the Western Isles.		Medium	Medium-Long	BSBIVC	-
5	Communications and publicity					
5.1	Draw up a targeted programme to raise awareness and for communication of best practise to crofters.	CnES SCF	Medium High	Medium-Long	SNH, SCF , CnES , RSPB, SEERAD	2,3,4,5
5.2	Draw up a targeted programme to raise awareness in schools of the benefits of traditional crofting for the LBAP habitats and species .	CnES	Medium	Medium-Long	SNH, SCF, SAC	-

Overarching Revisions to the Cereal Field Margins Plan:

The following three actions require changes to the plan, which consultation has suggested would make it better reflect the local situation in the Western Isles in terms of types and methods of cropping.

- Broaden the plan to include the whole crop and not just the margins (as little pesticide is applied on the Western Isles, the body of the crop also can host interesting arable weeds).
- Broaden the plan to include other crops, not just cereals, as other crops support arable weeds too.
- Include rare crops, such as Black Oats, as a conservation priority in themselves.

Suggested addition to the background information in the plan:

- Include reference to rare arable weeds that grow on the Western Isles and make reference to these species in the plan so that people can see which plants are the focus of conservation effort. Records can be found in *"The Flora of the Outer Hebrides"* (1991) R J Pankhurst and J M Mullin (eds).
- Clarify the widths and management of margins required and list these in the plan (perhaps relating it to the various agri-environment schemes available).

1.2.3 CORN BUNTING

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
1	Policy and Legislation					
1.1	Promote the use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers. Promotion and improvement of Government mechanisms for agricultural support, which benefit the corn bunting. Develop guidance on the use of the schemes for habitat management.	SAC	High	Medium	SEERAD, SCF CnES, SNH, RSPB	2, 3
1.2	Seek a more cautious and targeted use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers on farmland. Include financial support for seaweed application as this will cut down on the need for pesticides.	SEERAD	Medium	Medium	SAC, SCF	2, 3
2	Site Safeguard and Management					
2.1	Encourage land managers adjacent to existing sites to “stook” crops.	RSPB	Medium	Long-term	SNH, SAC, SEERAD, SCF	2, 3
2.2	Further research may be needed to develop agri-environment prescriptions to encourage crofting agriculture on the Uists and Benbecula to maintain a winter grain supply for this population.	SNH	Medium	Long-term	SEERAD, CnES, RSPB	2, 3, 4
2.3	Encourage and enhance local seed production (for sowing) and thus ensure that seed mixtures used on the machair are of local provenance.	SEERAD	Medium	Medium	SAC, SCF, CnES, RSPB, Land Managers	2, 3

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
2.4	Encourage traditional harvesting through financial incentives for community owned binders and other machinery.	SEERAD	Medium	Medium	SCF, CnES, SAC	2,3
3	Advisory					
3.1	Produce an awareness leaflet and promotional material for all interests including information on how to distinguish it from other farmland birds .	SNH	High	Medium	BRISC, SCF, CnES RSPB, SWT, Curracag	2, 3 ,4
3.2	Advice to landowners on appropriate management for corn buntings and other farmland birds.	RSPB	High	Medium	SAC, SNH, SCF	2, 3, 4
3.3	Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC.	SAC	High	Long	SNH, SCF, SEERAD, RSPB	2, 3
4	Monitoring and Research					
4.1	Map the current range of the corn bunting in the Western Isles.	RSPB	High	Short	SNH	1
4.2	Agree and establish a programme of annual survey and monitoring, building on the monitoring already underway by the RSPB. Ensure that collected data are fed back to the community (for example through articles in the local paper).	SNH	High	Long	RSPB	1
4.3	Further research may be needed to develop agri-environment prescriptions to encourage crofting agriculture on the Uists and Benbecula to maintain a winter grain supply for this population.	RSPB	Medium	Short	BRISC, SNH	2, 3
4.4	Investigate the potential for corncrake/great yellow bumblebee management to benefit corn bunting and add additional appropriate measures to the plan (e.g. planting knapweed).	RSPB	Medium	Short	SNH	2, 3

1.2.4 CORNCRAKE

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
1	Policy and Legislation					
1.1	Promote the use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers to ensure 'corncrake friendly' management of the machair and crofting habitat.	SAC, SNH, RSPB	High	Medium	SEERAD, SCF, CnES, WIE	2, 3
2	Site Safeguard and Management					
2.1	Encourage land managers adjacent to existing sites to introduce 'corncrake-friendly' maintenance techniques.	CnES, SNH, RSPB	Medium	Long-term	SCF, SAC, SEERAD,	2, 3, 4
2.2	Identify potential new areas of suitable habitat, particularly in Lewis, and encourage 'corncrake friendly' management in these areas. Apply existing habitat management guidelines to these new areas. Include non statutory designated sites and non crofts (i.e. graveyards, woodlands etc.) in areas that attract payment for corncrake friendly management. These areas should also be included in monitoring (see action 4.1)	SNH, RSPB	Medium	Long-term	SAC	2, 3, 4
2.3	Ensure that grazing regime is suitable for corncrakes. Further promote corncrake friendly' mowing methods, and agri-environment schemes that benefit corncrakes. Seek payments for specific corncrake areas to be fenced off, rather than the whole croft. Provide incentives for mowing contractors to cut later (as many crofters use contractors).	SEERAD	Medium	Medium	SAC, SCF, CnES, RSPB, Land Managers	2, 3, 4
2.4	Liaise with Cat Protection League to raise awareness of the danger cats pose to corncrakes and work to lower the cost of neutering to reduce the number of cats.		Low	Medium		2,3,4

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
2.5	Consider and make provision for the possibility that rats and crows are a threat to corncrakes.		Medium	Medium		
3	Advisory					
3.1	Maintain production of leaflets and promotional material for all interests including information on how to recognise corncrake by song and actions that community members can undertake themselves.	SNH, RSPB	High	Medium	BRISC, SCF, CnES, SWT, Curracag	2, 3, 4, 5
3.2	Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC, RSPB and SNH.	SAC	High	Long	SNH, SCF, SEERAD, RSPB	2, 3, 4
3.3	Develop a mechanism to discuss positive management of the machair for the corncrake and the bumblebee with the crofting community. Priorities for positive management to be identified.	SAC	High	Medium	SNH, SEERAD	2, 3, 4, 5
4	Monitoring and Research					
4.1	Continue programme of annual survey and monitoring on machair and neutral grassland. Expand programme to include all corncrake habitat (e.g. graveyards and woodland), not just crofts. Ensure results of all survey work is fed back to the community.	SNH, RSPB	High	Long		1
4.2	Map the current range of corncrake in the Western Isles and ask public to report all records.	SNH, RSPB	Medium	Short	BRISC,	1

1.2.5 DUNLIN

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
1	Policy and Legislation					
1.1	Promote the protection and benefits of Natura 2000 designations to land managers to ensure suitable management of habitat. Develop guidance on the use of the schemes for habitat management i.e. Lewis Peatland Management Scheme.	SNH	High	Short	SEERAD, CnES, SAC, RSPB	2, 4
2	Site Safeguard and Management					
2.1	Predator control such as mink, ferret, feral cats and hedgehog in all areas of Western Isles. Expand current projects (Uist Wader and Hebridean Mink) that are in place.	SNH,	Medium	Long-term	CnES, SAC, RSPB, SEERAD	2, 4
2.2	Manage off road vehicle access to sensitive habitats to avoid disturbance to nesting birds.	Land Managers SNH only on SSSIs	Medium	Long-term	CnES, RSPB, SCF Land Managers	4
2.3	Ensure the potential effects on dunlin are given high priority when considering wind farm proposals in peatland areas where the birds are known to nest.	CnES	High	Short-Medium		2,4
3	Advisory					
3.1	Talk to communities about benefits of machair and upland moor habitats	SNH SAC	High	Medium	CnES, SCF, SAC , SNH , RSPB, SWT, Curracag	2, 4
3.2	Distribute leaflets to all grazing clerks about land management such as muirburn and grazing. Arrange one to one meetings with crofters to talk about management issues.	SNH SEERAD SAC	High	Medium	RSPB, SNH	2, 4

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
3.3	Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC.	SAC	High	Long	SNH, SEERAD, RSPB	2, 4
3.4	Develop a mechanism to discuss positive management of the machair for waders with the crofting community. Priorities for positive management to be identified.	SAC	High	Medium	SNH, SEERAD	2, 4
4	Monitoring and Research					
4.1	Agree and establish a programme of survey and monitoring on machair and neutral grassland following predator control measures.	SNH	High	Long	RSPB	1, 3
4.2	Monitor proposed developments in upland areas and effect on wader populations	SNH	Medium	Short	RSPB	1, 3
4.3	Collate and publicise existing research into the effects of wind farm developments on dunlin. Where none exists undertake research.	SNH	High	Short-Medium	RSPB	1,3

1.2.6 IRISH LADY’S-TRESSES ORCHID

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
1	Policy and Legislation					
1.1	Use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers to promote farming and crofting involving periodic heavy grazing by cattle, particularly in the winter.	SAC	High	Medium	SEERAD, CnES, SNH, RSPB	1,2
1.2	Liaison with SEERAD and RSPB on corncrake friendly farming schemes to try to ensure that incentives do not negatively impact on known or possible Irish Lady’s-tresses sites. See Appendix 1.	SNH SEERAD RSPB, SAC	High	Medium	CnES	1,2
2	Site Safeguard and Management					
2.1	Ensure farmers and crofters are aware of the benefits to the orchid of a) summer grazing breaks b) grazing by cattle c) periodic very heavy grazing especially through the winter months. Links to 3.1. Features a), b) and c are potentially beneficial at sites where the orchid may exist but is, as yet, undetected.	SCF, SNH	High	Long-term	SNH, SAC, RSPB, SEERAD, CC, CnES	1,2
3	Advisory and Awareness Raising					
3.1	Ensure all agricultural and environmental advisors have a copy of this Action Plan and that they have access to specialist advice. See Appendix 1.	SNH CnES	High	Long-term	SAC, SEERAD, RSPB	1,2
3.2	Develop an ‘orchids and biodiversity’ course on all types of orchid in the Western Isles for farmers, crofters and all other interested parties	SNH CnES	High	Medium	Curracag, RSPB, PL, SCF, SEERAD, SAC, SIAT, BSBIVCR	3

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
3.3	Arrange circulation of exhibition on links between traditional farming and crofting in relation to the conservation of Irish lady's-tresses orchid.	SNH CnES	Medium	Short	SNH, SEERAD, SAC, RSPB, SCF	2, 3
3.4	Liaise with CalMac to investigate the possibility of placing information boards on the ferries to Barra promoting Irish Lady's tresses to tourists.	CnES, SNH	Medium	Medium		2,3
4	Monitoring and Research					
4.1	Maintain a dossier/database of Irish lady's-tresses orchid records in the Western Isles. The information is sensitive and access should be restricted, see Section 6.	SNH, CnES	High	Long	Curracag, BSBIVCR SIAT, PL BRISC	4
4.2	Monitor at least one summer grazed and one non summer grazed population for population stability and balance of flowering, vegetative and underground forms.	SNH	High	Short - medium	SEERAD, SAC CnES	5
4.3	Manipulate two established well grazed populations 1) by excluding summer grazing, 2) by creating increased winter trampling. Ideally combine a) and b) for a third population	SNH	High	Short - medium	SEERAD, SAC CnES	6
4.4	Visit former sites of the orchid. Numbers of detectable plants in bloom on one visit are unlikely to indicate population size. Activity could be by contractors, volunteers or a mix e.g. with contractor showing features of vegetative plants.	SNH	Medium	Medium	Curracag, BSBIVCR, PL SIAT, BRISC, SEERAD, SAC, CnES	7
4.5	Search suitable habitats at locations with no records, especially on North Uist. Activity could be by contractors or volunteers.	SNH	Medium	Medium	Curracag, BSBIVCR SIAT, PL BRISC, CnES	8

	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY	TIMESCALE	PARTNERS	OBJECTIVE
4.6	Search areas for newly appearing plants where soil has been disturbed (e.g. by the laying of pipelines) in the first and second year following the event	Curracag	Medium-low	Long	BSBIVCR SIAT, PL, SNH , CnES	8
4.7	Identify sites a) with very low soil fertility or b) by lochs, where the composition of the sward is not or minimally affected by presence/absence/intensity of grazing.	SNH	Medium	Short - medium	SEERAD, SAC CnES	9
4.8	Liase with other organisations nationally and locally on 2 joint research projects 1) to examine presence/absence and details of the sexual reproduction system and 2) ability or otherwise of root fragments to grow into plants.	SNH	Medium	Short - medium	SAC, CnES PL	10

Suggested addition to the background information in the plan:

- Add climate change to possible threats
- Simplify the plan to ensure that non-scientist can understand it.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 THE BRIEF

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) is the lead agency of the Western Isles Local Biodiversity Action Steering Group. The Steering Group was set up to coordinate the development of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the Western Isles (see *Section 2.3.1*). Two habitat plans and one species plan have been drafted, consulted upon and completed to date:

- Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan;
- Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan;
- Great Yellow Bumblebee (*Bombus distinguendus*) Species Action Plan.

The completed action plans identify objectives and targets for maintaining and enhancing the particular habitats and species and contain a set of actions that were amended after community consultation (conducted December 2003), to achieve these targets.

A second phase, of five action plans was drafted in 2004. The plans were as follows:

- Cereal Field Margins Habitat Plan
- Corncrake (*Crex crex*) Species Plan
- Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) Species Plan
- Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*) Species Plan
- Irish Lady's-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*) Species Plan

The Steering Group wanted to again engage local communities in the Western Isles in the development of these five actions plans and commissioned Natural Capital Ltd. to facilitate community workshops to achieve this task and to gain feedback from local people on the actions in the plans. The aims of the workshops were to:

- *ascertain the views of the public as to whether the actions suggested in the draft habitat and species plans will achieve the stated objectives and targets;*
- *encourage local groups and individuals to bring forward additional actions;*
- *seek the agreement of the local groups and individuals to participate in implementation of the action plans.*

2.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.2.1 BIODIVERSITY

The United Nations describes biodiversity as:

The variability among living organisms from all sources, including land based and aquatic ecosystems, and the ecosystems of which they are part. These include diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems. Diversity is the key to ensuring the continuance of life on Earth. It is also a fundamental requirement for adaptation and survival and continued evolution of species³.

The Scottish Executive describes it more simply as ‘*the total variety of all living things that surround and sustain us*’.⁴

Biodiversity was a major theme at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The emphasis on biodiversity at the earth summit grew in response to the general recognition and scientific evidence that biological diversity was decreasing around the world and that goods, services and life, as we enjoy it, were reliant on the variety and sustainable variability of genes, species, populations and ecosystems. Objectives and actions were developed within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to address the global loss of biodiversity. The Convention required national governments to develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. In 1994 the United Kingdom completed its biodiversity strategy and by 1995 had a comprehensive list of species and habitats that are important in the UK and require protection. Costed action plans were developed for each of these species and habitats.

The LBAP process is one of the key means of achieving and delivering biodiversity objectives in Scotland.

Recently biodiversity has been further pushed up the agenda with the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act, 2004 and the launch of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, 2004, which have brought significant changes for the local delivery of biodiversity conservation in Scotland. The act places a formal duty on public bodies and office holders in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity where consistent with the exercising of their functions.

2.2.2 LOCAL AGENDA 21 AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The development of Local Biodiversity Action Plans also sits within the policy context of Local Agenda 21. Agenda 21 was another key outcome of the Earth Summit in 1992, which set out a plan for sustainable development plan for every country in the world. Its essential focus was social and economic development

³ UN Convention on Biodiversity Article 2

⁴ Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2001), *The Influence of Local Biodiversity Action Plans in the Unitary Authority LA21 Process and Community Planning*. Ekos Ltd for Scottish Executive.

that did not undermine the integrity of the world's environment. Importantly, Agenda 21 established the now well developed themes of engaging communities and fostering community ownership of development initiatives to ensure long term success.

At the earth summit a mandate was given to local authorities worldwide to prepare a Local Agenda 21 Strategy. In 2000, the CnES formally began preparing a Local Agenda 21 strategy known as the Quality of Life Initiative. This strategy was developed around 14 themes of sustainability. One theme encompasses the principle of community participation and engagement expressed throughout Agenda 21. It states that '*All sections of the community are empowered and encouraged to participate in decision making*'. Another of the 14 themes states that, '*The diversity of nature is to be valued and protected*'.

Biodiversity management and community involvement are important parts of the wider Local Agenda 21 process.

2.2.3 BIODIVERSITY PLANNING IN THE WESTERN ISLES

In the Western Isles, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group led by the CnES is responsible for the development of the LBAP for the Western Isles. Shortly after the Western Isles Biodiversity Action Steering Group was formed the Steering Group initiated a biodiversity audit in the Isles. The purpose of the audit was to identify species and habitats which are of UK or local conservation concern and to provide the group with baseline information on which to prioritise further action.

Another priority for the Steering Group is to engage the community in the biodiversity action process. As a first stage this involved working towards an understanding of what community members understood and thought about biodiversity *ie.* why it was important to them and what they thought were priorities for biodiversity. To do this the Steering Group organised three community workshops on the Isles of Barra, Benbecula and Lewis, in February 2002, to discuss biodiversity issues in relation to economy, society, quality of life and environmental conservation. It was clear from these community workshops that groups attending the meetings clearly understood the direct and indirect links between biodiversity and quality of life. People spoke of personal satisfaction and enjoyment that biodiversity can provide, such as the sound and the smell of the sea. It was recognised that people choose to live in the Western Isles because of its unique and beautiful environment. It was understood that biodiversity is important for the economy of the Western Isles which relies on industry, tourism, recreation and crofting. It was also recognised by local people that it was important to protect and enhance biodiversity for its own inherent value.

After the completion of the biodiversity audit and the community workshops the Steering Group initiated the next stage: the development of LBAPs for Native Woodlands, Saline Lagoons and the Great Yellow Bumblebee. These plans were drafted and consultation with the wider community carried out in December 2003, addressing in particular their views on the actions and how they would fulfil the objectives and targets set out in the plans. The three plans were then

completed, including any changes to existing actions or additional actions suggested by the community during the consultation process.

The next stage of the LBAP process involved the drafting of a further five LBAPs, cereal field margins, corn bunting, corncrake, dunlin and Irish Lady's-tresses orchid. The Steering Group wished to maintain and enhance community involvement in the biodiversity process and Natural Capital was employed to engage communities of the Western Isles to harvest their thoughts and opinions on the draft plans, with specific regard to the 'Suggested Actions' in each plan.

2.3 APPROACH

A full methodology for the study is provided in Annex A. This section provides a brief outline of the approach used to engage the communities of the Western Isles.

Six community workshops were used to engage communities in the process of reviewing and commenting on the first set of Western Isles Biodiversity Plans. The workshops were held in the evenings (7.30-9.30pm) across the Western Isles; on Barra, South Uist, North Uist, Harris and Lewis (two workshops). A spread of locations over a two week period was chosen to provide people from across the islands an opportunity to attend and to offer more than one chance to attend. The workshop dates and locations were:

- Monday 14th March – Cabarfeidh Hotel, Stornoway;
- Tuesday 15th March – Shawbost Community School, Lewis;
- Monday 21st March – Castlebay School, Barra;
- Tuesday 22nd March – Kildonan Museum, South Uist;
- Wednesday 23rd March – Carinish Hall, North Uist;
- Thursday 24th March – Sir E Scott School, Harris.

In each of the Local Biodiversity Action Plans, 'partners' – agencies, organisation and local groups – have been identified as support agencies (to assist the lead agency) to implement each of the LBAP actions. A list of partners was agreed with CnES and representatives were contacted (either by phone, or face to face interview) to determine if they were content with the role that had been identified for themselves within the plans i.e. whether they thought the role identified for them was sufficient, appropriate and/or feasible. They were also given an opportunity to comment on the contents of the plans.

Working from a list provided by the CnES, the following key partners were contacted (see Section 3 for the summarised outputs from these consultations):

- Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC);
- Botanical Society of the British Isles Vice County Recorder (BSBIVC);
- Crofter's Commission (CC);
- Curracag – Western Isles Natural History Society;
- Plantlife Scotland;
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB);
- Scottish Agricultural College (SAC);
- Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF);

- Scottish Executive Environment & Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD);
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH);
- Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT);
- Southern Isles Amenity Trust (SIAT);
- Western Isles Enterprise (WIE).

In addition to the workshops and partner interviews two experts were contacted regarding the Irish Lady's-tresses plan to capitalise on their particular knowledge and experience of the orchid on the Western Isles. The outcome of these consultations has been summarised in Annex E.

Whilst on the Western Isles a number of primary schools were visited to raise awareness among young people of the LBAP and the species and habitat in the plans. During the week 'mini-workshops' were held at four primary schools. A summary of these school visits is included in Annex D.

All the information collated through the consultations and workshops has been used in the development of the revised actions tables presented in the Executive Summary (see Section 1.2).

2.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Natural Capital would like to thank everyone who attended the workshops on Barra, North and South Uist and Lewis, as well as the staff and pupils of Eoligary Primary School, Carinish Primary School, Sir E Scott Primary Department and Stornoway Primary School. We would also like to acknowledge the following individuals who gave up their time to meet with us while we were on the islands:

- Mr John Love, SNH
- Mr Iain D MacLeod, SCF
- Mrs Ena McNeill, SCF
- Mr Colin MacPhail, SAC
- Mrs Katherine Mathis, SIAT
- Mr David Muir, SCF
- Mr Bill Neill, Curracag

2.5 LAYOUT OF THE REPORT

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Section 3: Presents the outcome of consultations with the partner organisations

Section 4: Presents the outcomes from the community workshops, summarising the comments made on the proposed actions and new actions suggested.

Section 5: Presents lessons learnt from the project in terms of community consultation and summarises suggestions for future consultation.

The main report is supported by a number of annexes:

Annex A: Provides a detailed methodology, including advertisements and press releases

Annex B: Provides a reference list of consultees

Annex C: Presents a record of attendees and raw outputs from the workshops

Annex D: Summarises the school visits, outlining the format of the 'mini-workshops', the responses from the children and ideas for future projects with schools.

Annex E: Summarises the consultations with experts on the Irish Lady's-tresses

3 OUTCOME OF PARTNER CONSULTATIONS

A list of the partners who were consulted is included in Annex B. Most consultees not only commented on their role in the plans, but also made more general comments as to the contents of the plans and the suitability of the actions. In a number of cases more than one representative of each organisation was consulted. The comments provided by each partner organisation have been summarised below. Where suggestions for new actions were made, these have been included.

A number of partner organisations are also on the LBAP steering group and felt that they had been closely consulted during the drafting of the plans and therefore did not have any further comments to add, these organisations were Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC).

3.1 BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND (BRISC)

BRISC is listed as a partner in the Irish Lady's-tresses plan and the corn bunting plan and Anne Marie Smout, the Chairperson of BRISC was consulted. Ms Smout advised that BRISC only has a few members in the Western Isles and that her knowledge of the species as they occur on the islands is limited. Therefore in terms of input, BRISC will most likely be able to offer advice e.g. on recording methodologies, mapping etc.

Comments on the actions

Irish Lady's-tresses orchid

- 4.1 BRISC could provide general advice on the maintenance of an Irish Lady's-tresses dossier.
- 4.5 As BRISC has limited representation on the Western Isles, it is unlikely that they will be able to provide much hands-on support in terms of "*searching for suitable habitats at locations with no records*", again they could provide advice on recording best practice.

Corn Bunting

- 3.1 BRISC is happy to advise/assist in the production of an awareness leaflet in terms of the general identification of the species (BRISC consider other organisations such as the RSPB are better placed to advise on local information concerning the species)
- 4.3 BRISC do not feel they are an appropriate partner for this action (i.e. research into the development of agri-environment prescriptions to encourage traditional crofting)

3.2 BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE BRITISH ISLES VICE COUNTY RECORDER (BSBIVCR)

The BSBIVCR is listed as a partner in the Irish Lady's-tresses plan. Richard Pankhurst, the chairman of the Scottish Committee of the BSBI and Vice County Recorder for the Western Isles was consulted. He felt that in general the BSBI is an underused resource in terms of the development of LBAPs. SNH is listed as the lead partner for many actions, but in reality it will sub-contract the work out to the BSBI. As Vice County Recorder he holds a database of botanical records for the Western Isles, which is a resource that is available in re-drafting the plans and implementing the actions.

Comments on the Plans

Irish Lady's-tresses orchid

Mr Pankhurst felt the plan was comprehensive and therefore he did not have any major comments to make. He did not feel that the Irish Lady's-tresses had a serious conservation problem and felt that the main issues for the Irish Lady's-tresses orchid was to raise local awareness of the species and thereby encourage local involvement in its conservation.

Cereal Field Margins

Mr Pankhurst thought that the plan did not fully reflect the particular circumstances of the Western Isles. For example, because pesticide use on the islands is limited, arable weeds are found throughout the crop and not just at the margins, so the whole crop should be included in the plan. Also, arable weeds are not just associated with cereals and other crops should be included in this plan too.

Although not mentioned in the cereal field margins plan, Mr Pankhurst had read and made comments on the plan. As the Western Isles is a good place for a number of uncommon and rare agricultural weeds (e.g. Northern Knotgrass, Saxifrages, Red Nettle etc.) there should be more focus on these weeds in the plan.

The crops themselves can also be rare and this is not mentioned in the plan. Black Oats, for example are specific to the Western Isles and unusual varieties of grain are used, which in themselves deserve conservation effort.

Suggested Actions

- Broaden the plan to include the whole crop and not just the margins.
- Include rare crops, such as the Black Oat as a conservation priority in themselves.
- Include other crops, not just cereals as they support arable weed too.
- Survey and catalogue the arable weeds found on the Western Isles as well as any NVC weed communities.
- Check "The Flora of the Outer Hebrides" (1991) R J Pankhurst and J M Mullin (eds), for a record of arable weed species that are known to occur on

the islands and make reference to them in the plan, so that people can see which plants are the focus of conservation effort.

3.3 CURRACAG

Curracag, the Western Isles Natural History Society, is listed as a partner in all four species action plans and as a lead in the Irish Lady's-tresses plan. Bill Neill, a member of Curracag and a local wildlife expert was interviewed about the proposed actions in the plans. In general, Curracag is happy with their inclusion in the plans, but consider that their input will be largely advisory, due to limited membership and resources.

Comments on the Actions

Corn Bunting

- 1.1 The RSS is too complicated. There needs to be support for crofters in putting together schemes.
- 1.2 The increasing use of NPK fertiliser is also worrying. Maybe this action should read "seek a more cautious and targeted use of pesticides *and artificial fertilisers* on farmland"
- 2.3 Who will check that the seed mixtures used are in fact of local provenance?

Corncrake

- 4.2 Who is going to feedback the data collected in this mapping exercise to the public? It would be good to have a report in the local paper updating locals.

Dunlin

- 4.1 Monitoring dunlin is important as there is not that much information yet on where they are nesting on the islands.

Irish Lady's-tresses orchid

- 4.4 Curracag may have members interested in visiting former sites for the orchid. Curracag will need to put a note in the newsletter to get members involved. Also will need someone to co-ordinate the data (Curracag do not have that capacity). It is important that any data collected is kept on the islands (this doesn't always happen at the moment).

Suggested Actions

- Produce one "land management for biodiversity" and information leaflet. One really good leaflet is better than several (one for each species) and just focussing on one leaflet also means it is more likely to get done!

3.4 PLANTLIFE

Plantlife is listed as a partner in the Irish Lady's-tresses orchid plan. Dr Deborah Long, Plantlife Scotland gave comments on the plan and Plantlife's current and planned work regarding the orchid.

Plantlife is currently producing a UK (Scotland and Northern Ireland) dossier on Irish Lady's-tresses, which will be published on their website <http://www.plantlife.org.uk>. The publication date is as yet unknown, but the dossier will be in place before 2006, which is the target date for the Western Isles orchid dossier (see action 4.1 of the plan). Plantlife also have a project underway looking at herbarium records for the orchid and this data could feed into the Western Isles dossier.

Dr Long pointed out that objective 7 of the plan, to *"assess whether some populations have become extinct."* will require the capacity for long-term surveying. As the orchid is known to survive dormant underground for up to seven years, sites would have to be visited every year for at least this length of time in order to be able to say if an orchid has become extinct or not. The sites of orchids would need to be marked (either physically or using GPS reference) to allow accurate annual surveying.

Plantlife recommended that the BSBI would be a vital partner in fulfilling objective 8 of the plan, to *"assess the balance between newly discovered populations and possible local extinction in known broad geographic areas. Examine suitable areas/islands with no records."*

Comments on the Actions

Plantlife is happy with their role as partner in a number of the actions in the plan, although due to limited resources their involvement will be limited to providing advice.

Irish Lady's-tresses orchid

- 3.2 Plantlife are generally involved in the applied management side of botany and would not generally be involved in, developing educational courses on orchids and biodiversity. They would, however, be able to offer advice in terms of optimal management for the orchid.
- 4.1 The dossier Plantlife is currently compiling for Irish Lady's-tresses will cover the Western Isles and will be available on their website. Ecological data and habitat information will be included, but the location information will not be available on-line.
- 4.2 Plantlife is currently piloting an annual monitoring project looking at Irish Lady's-tresses on Colonsay and Barra. The idea is to train volunteers to do the monitoring and if successful it could feed into the further sites on the Western Isles.
- 4.4 The BSBI is likely to be a key partner for this action (*to visit former sites of the orchid*). Plantlife will be able to offer advice, but probably not manpower in the short-term.
- 4.6 *"Searching areas for newly appearing plants where soil has been disturbed in the first and second year following the event"* should be

confined to areas close to existing Irish Lady's-tresses sites as it is not yet known if the orchid reproduces by seed and if it only reproduces vegetatively it is unlikely that it will be found far from existing sites.

- 4.7 Plantlife is currently involved in a project with Dr Richard Gulliver looking at vegetative reproduction and is in liaison with Aberdeen University regarding a research project looking at sexual reproduction of the orchid (Scotland-wide).

3.5 ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS (RSPB)

Martin Scott of the RSPB has had a key role in the LBAP as he wrote the plans for the bird species. He mentioned that the three bird species were already priority species for the RSPB and that they have always done a lot of work on the corncrake and they are currently doing work on the corn bunting. He also commented that the RSPB organisation as a whole is becoming more aware of the significance of BAP species and the process as a whole.

Mr Scott commented that he felt the crofting groups should be more involved in the LBAP process, especially with their place on the Western Isles. He also mentioned that greater input to, and attendance at, meetings by SEERAD would be very beneficial.

In order to engage the local community as much as they should be, Mr Scott stated that you have to go out to each village/community as people won't travel out to meetings. He mentioned that when the RSPB had been going around Lewis they had gone to four or five different areas in order to get good turnouts, but this is obviously very time consuming.

Comments on the Plans

Cereal Field Margins

Mr Scott was content with the standard of the plan for cereal field margins, and didn't have any major objections to make. Mr Scott considered the timescales to be realistic.

Irish Lady's-tresses

Mr Scott commented that the plan may seem overcomplicated to those with a limited knowledge base. He would therefore recommend writing them in such a form so as to be easy to understand by the general public. He also mentioned that the plan did not contain any information on how to recognise or identify the orchid, which again limits its benefit for the local people.

Suggested Actions

- Simplify the Irish Lady's-tresses plan in order to make it more accessible to the general public.
- Involve crofting groups more.
- Travel to individual communities in order to involve the local community.

3.6 SCOTTISH CROFTING FOUNDATION (SCF)

The SCF has been identified as partner in all five plans and as a lead in the Irish Lady's-tresses plan. Three representatives of the SCF were interviewed from across the Western Isles, which gave a breadth of views on the plans. The comments made have been collated and summarised below.

It was pointed out that there is considerable duplication of the actions across the plans and so many of the comments made for one are applicable to others too and therefore one overall plan would be a good idea, as suggested by other consultees.

Unless otherwise stated below SCF was happy with their role in the plans. As they do not have huge resources of time or money, their input as a partner will often be in an advisory capacity.

Comments on the Plans

One general issue raised was the fact that researchers, such as the Macaulay Institute etc. often come and gather information on land management and the environment on the Western Isles, but they often do not feedback, so the information is lost to the islands. The SCF produce a quarterly paper and they could gather and disseminate the research findings to crofters.

Given the recent hurricane and the potential that storms and the associated coastal erosion could become more frequent, the SCF would like to see more measures to address the issue of coastal erosion.

Suggested Actions

General Issues

- There is no mention of seaweed as a traditional land management tool in the plans. The application of seaweed could be of great benefit as it replaces artificial fertilisers and pesticides and is therefore also compatible with organic production. There is some grant support for seaweed application on crops in the ESA prescriptions, but none for applying it to grassland. Applying seaweed shelters the ground and stabilises the sand allowing the grass to grow up, providing bird cover earlier.
- Land Management Contracts are to be reviewed in 2007 and it would be a good opportunity to get local prescriptions included
- Educating school children about crofting would be a good way of raising awareness and encouraging the next generation into crofting/conservation. There could be a day a week in schools when there is a lesson about the countryside and crofting, including site visits to crofts.

Cereal Cropping and Goose Management

- Availability of suitable cereal seed is a potential issue, particularly this year as a number of seed stocks were lost to the hurricane. Bought in seed does not grow well on the islands so continued supplies of local seed is a priority issue.

- The payments for stooking need to be higher than the current levels in the Land Management Contracts (which are £150/ha for stooking, compared to £40/ha cropping without stooking) to truly reflect the extra time and effort required to do the work.
- Pesticides are not much used in the Uists and Barra and so this was not thought to be a critical issue.
- The management of geese is a serious issue in many areas as their numbers have risen considerably in recent years and they can devastate cereal crops. The geese have been a major factor behind the switch from stooking to silage. Until an effective goose management programme is in place it will be difficult to persuade people to increase cereal cropping and make stooks (which leave the crop exposed to the geese) rather than silage. It was pointed out that there is a lack of younger people with the shooting skills to manage the geese effectively and that more needs to be done to keep the levels of these birds down.

Cattle

- Given that cereals are generally grown for cattle fodder, encouraging an increase in cattle should go hand in hand with promoting increased cereal production. Cattle are also a useful animal for conservation grazing and their use is being encouraged by SCF. Currently there is a lot of hay being bought in and there is a definite need for more winter fodder. Need to encourage 'township herds' (as they have on the Isle of Skye). Also need to think about support for the provision of winter housing as this is expensive. Otherwise cattle have to be transported to the mainland for over wintering.
- Ensuring that the Bull Hire Scheme continues is a priority in terms of ensuring that keeping cattle is viable on the islands.
- Support the development of "township herds" as a means of increasing the number of cattle on the islands.

Cereal Field Margins

- 1.1 SAC would be a good lead organisation to, *"better distinguish between systems of arable cropping on the basis of their conservation value."*
- 1.2 SAC would be a good lead organisation to, *"regularly evaluate the attractiveness of all incentives for cereal production in the light of ongoing policy changes."*
- 2.3 SCF would be a good partner organisation to, *"encourage uptake in environmental schemes."*
- 4 Monitoring and Research would best be carried out by SAC on behalf of the Council.
- 5.1 The Council might not be the best lead for, *"drawing up a targeted programme to raise awareness and for communication of best practise to crofters."*, the SCF could be a more appropriate lead.
 - It would be good to clarify the widths and management of margins required (perhaps relating it to the various options in agri-environment schemes) in the plan.

Corn Bunting

- 1.1 SEERAD should be the lead in *“promoting the use of Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers and the promotion and improvement of government mechanisms for agricultural support.”* as they will be implementing the CAP reform.
- 2.2 RSPB (as well as SNH) would be a good lead organisation for *“further research into developing agri-environment prescriptions to encourage crofting agriculture on the Uists and Benbecula to maintain a winter grain supply.”* The SCF could be included as a partner for this action.
- 3.1 RSPB (as well as SNH) would be a good lead for *“producing an awareness leaflet and promoting material for all interests”*.

Corncrake

- 3.3 The inclusion of an action that appears to be specific to the bumblebee seems a little odd in the corncrake plan.

Dunlin

- 3.1 SAC would be a good lead organisation to take forward *“talking to communities about the benefits of machair and upland moor habitats.”* as they know benefits needed for Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS).
- 3.2 SEERAD would be a good lead for *“distributing leaflets to all grazing clerks about land management such as muirburn and grazing”* as they deal with common grazing regulations and SNH may be better as just a partner.
 - The SCF want to encourage better use of rough grazing and so would like to see more in the RSS for these areas.

Irish Lady’s-tresses

- 2.1 SNH would be a good additional lead (to join the SCF) in ensuring farmers and crofters are aware of the benefits to the orchid of particular land management regimes. The SCF should be either a joint lead or just a partner given their limited resources.
- 3.3 SCF could be included as a partner in this action to *“arrange circulation of exhibition on links between traditional farming and crofting in relation to the conservation of Irish-Lady’s-tresses.”*

3.7 SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT (SEERAD)

SEERAD is listed as a partner in all the plans, and identified as a lead in the plan for cereal field margins. Niall McPherson was contacted and commented that he did not have much involvement in the plans other than the cereal field margins plan. Mr McPherson didn't have any general suggestion as he felt the plans seemed to be pretty complete. He commented that he wasn't involved in many of the plans as they are more to do with agri-environmental schemes. The actions that SEERAD lead on tie in with work that they are already doing so there are no problems with their role in the plans.

Mr McPherson felt that some of the timescales may be a little too short for some of the other partners, where as their time frame is of suitable length as their work is currently ongoing.

Mr McPherson mentioned that the local community possesses a lot of knowledge, partly due to the long duration that the Environmental Agriculture schemes have been up and running (10-15 years), and because of this in built knowledge biodiversity is high on the agenda. He felt that the Scottish Agricultural College representative did a lot of good work in involving the local community and the local Biodiversity Officer also did a good job in promoting awareness, by running workshops.

Mr McPherson also commented that there is a good range of individuals represented on the LBAP partnership and so most areas are well covered. At first the Steering Group took control and was quite select but now it is opened up to the whole partnership so there is a wide knowledge base.

He talked about the nature of the work being a slow process and that having a new LBAP officer means that it is slow just now but should speed up as they gain experience. They hope to have visits from other like-minded organisations to share knowledge and expertise. Mr McPherson is involved in all the plans but due to time constraints he has had little input apart from the one that SEERAD leads on, and because of this SEERAD have had little input to the process.

3.8 SOUTHERN ISLES AMENITY TRUST (SIAT)

SIAT is listed as a partner in the Irish Lady's-tresses plan. Katherine Mathis of SIAT was interviewed and also attended the North Uist workshop. SIAT currently only has a skeleton committee of just four people and so will find it difficult to contribute significantly at present. However, they are keen to be involved and would like to remain listed as a partner in this plan.

4 OUTCOME OF THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the community workshops was to engage local communities in the biodiversity initiatives currently taking place on the Western Isles, as led by the Western Isles Biodiversity Action Steering Group. A key objective of the workshops was to ascertain the views of the public on the specific actions that had been identified in each of the plans. The actions, listed at the back of each plan, are the 'how to' of each plan, i.e. how the objectives and targets stated in the plans are to be achieved and as such are key to the success of the plans. The facilitated workshops provided a forum for community members to come together to consider these actions (see Annex A for the workshop methodology).

A discussion of the outcomes of the workshops is given below in Section 4.2 (see Annex C for a full record of the outputs from each workshop), which summarises the comments on existing actions and the suggested additional actions.

4.2 COMMENTS ON EXISTING ACTIONS AND SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

Generally there were very few objections to the suggested actions in the plans. Where comments were made, they generally queried the most appropriate organisations to be involved or the priority status to be given to the action. By far the most common suggestions made were additional actions, the vast majority being in effect 'sub actions' of the existing actions in the plans. There were some notable exceptions to this, such as the need for goose management to be included in the plans that seek to encourage traditional cropping.

One reoccurring theme was that many people at the workshop felt that there was considerable overlap between the schemes and that the actions in one could very well be applied to the other and therefore there is an element of repetition between the plans. Tables 1.1-1.10 below present comments on the actions and list suggested additional actions for each of the five action plans. Table 1.11 summarises a list of suggested actions, which apply to more than one plan, reflecting the number of cross-cutting issues.

Another reoccurring comment was that the plans varied in how well they reflected the local situation on the Western Isles. For example, the cereal field margins plan was felt by some not to reflect local conditions, which made it more difficult for the community to engage with the plan.

There were also a number of repeated comments relating to consultation itself and the particular importance of consulting with the crofting community and engaging with young people and schools. As these issues relate to the process of consultation rather than the specific LBAPs, they are discussed separately in Section 5.

Table 1.1: Revised Actions Table for Cereal Field Margins Plan

	Action	Comments and Amendments
1	Policy and Legislation	
1.1	Better distinguish between systems of arable cropping on the basis of their conservation value, including the area of margin relative to crop and the proportion of fallow	Include SAC as a lead.
1.2	Regularly evaluate the attractiveness of all incentives for cereal production in the light of ongoing policy changes	Include SAC as a lead.
1.3	Include practical options for small scale cropping and locally-grown seed within the menu for Land Management Contracts	
1.4	Consider the environmental value of cropped land in decisions involving development applications	
1.5	Training for Spraying Contractors and others to ensure that pesticides are applied responsibly and that awareness of the value of species diversity of the field margin is raised. (comply with FEPA code)	This action was considered irrelevant to Lewis as no spraying contractors operated there.
1.6	Ensure extensive cropping options using local seed have a high priority within agri-environment schemes. This will include local priority ranking recommendations.	
2	Site Safeguard and Management	
2.1	Ensure no loss where machair cropping / fallow contributes to the Community interest on Natura sites	
2.2	Address management techniques, which are detrimental to cereal field margin management.	

	Action	Comments and Amendments
2.3	Encourage uptake in agri-environmental schemes	RSS is too complex for small-scale crofts – township crofts are better for these schemes as there are more habitat types, so more points are awarded and more money received.
2.4	Prioritise funding support to applications which involve the establishment of contracting services and machinery rings	This is a good idea but machinery needs to be tailored for the size of the crofts and the type of land.
3	Advisory	
3.1	Incorporate the use of cereal cover crops in the reseeded and establishment of new grassland i.e. cereal sown alongside grass seed.	
3.2	Carry out on-site practical demonstrations to develop skills in the establishment and husbandry of cereal crops	SAC should lead not SNH
4	Monitoring and research	
4.1	Evaluate the various obstacles to increased small-scale cereal production	SEERAD and SAC should lead not CnES
4.2	Monitor the area and number of parcels cropped in the relevant Natura sites	SAC lead
4.3	Monitor the area and number of parcels cropped in the wider former Machairs ESA as schemes transfer to RSS	SAC lead
4.4	Monitor the area of cropping within the Western Isles, by SEERAD Area Office area, using the annual agricultural census results and aerial photography. Aim to link in with aerial survey being carried out by other organisations such as SNH.	SAC lead
5	Communications and publicity	
5.1	Draw up a targeted programme to raise awareness and for communication of best practise to crofters	This action must incorporate an education drive in schools and be changed to a high priority. The SCF would be a better lead.

Table 1.2: Additional Actions for the Cereal Field Margins Plan

	Action
1	Broaden the plan to include the whole crop and not just the margins.
2	Include rare crops, such as the Black Oat as a conservation priority in themselves.
3	Include other crops, not just cereals as they support arable weed too.
4	Survey and catalogue the arable weeds found on the Western Isles as well as any NVC weed communities.
5	Check “The Flora of the Outer Hebrides” (1991) R J Pankhurst and J M Mullin (eds), for a record of arable weed species that are known to occur on the islands and make reference to them in the plan, so that people can see which plants are the focus of conservation effort.
6	Ensure good availability of local seed as seed bought in from the mainland does not grow well in the Western Isles. Alternatively investigate viable seed sources beyond the islands.
7	Clarify the widths and management of margins required (perhaps relating it to the various options in agri-environment schemes) in the plan.
8	Encourage and promote an increase in cattle farming as opposed to sheep farming. If there are more cattle there will be more cereals grown for fodder.
9	In Lewis provide financial and advisory support to enable crofters to move away from sheep into cropping.
10	Broaden the plan to include all arable crops not just cereals. This will enable more crofters to identify with it.
11	Promote communication and sharing of knowledge (e.g. crofting best practise) and seed between the Uists and Lewis & Harris.
12	Policy – include start up costs in scheme payments (particularly important in Lewis and Harris as there is a lack of machinery and infrastructure for cereal cropping).
13	Increase the length of the Croft Entrant Scheme
14	Payments should include financial support for advice and assistance for crofters with their paperwork.

Table 1.3: Revised Actions Table for the Corn Bunting Plan

	Action	Comments
1	Policy and Legislation	
1.1	Promote the use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers. Promotion and improvement of Government mechanisms for agricultural support, which benefit the corn bunting. Develop guidance on the use of the schemes for habitat management.	Many crofters know how to manage the land but the main help needed is financial support.
1.2	Seek a more cautious and targeted use of pesticides on farmland.	Incorporate financial support for seaweed application into this action as this will cut down on the use of pesticides.
2	Site Safeguard and Management	
2.1	Encourage land managers adjacent to existing sites to “stook” crops	
2.2	Further research may be needed to develop agri-environment prescriptions to encourage crofting agriculture on the Uists and Benbecula to maintain a winter grain supply for this population.	RSPB should joint lead with SNH
2.3	Encourage and enhance local seed production (for sowing) and thus ensure that seed mixtures used on the machair are of local provenance.	
3	Advisory	
3.1	Produce an awareness leaflet and promotional material for all interests including information on how to distinguish it from other farmland birds	RSPB should joint lead with SNH
3.2	Advice to landowners on appropriate management for corn buntings and other farmland birds	
3.3	Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC.	

	Action	Comments
4	Monitoring and Research	
4.1	Map the current range of the corn bunting in the Western Isles.	
4.2	Agree and establish a programme of annual survey and monitoring	Monitoring is already carried out by the RSPB
4.3	Further research may be needed to develop agri-environment prescriptions to encourage crofting agriculture on the Uists and Benbecula to maintain a winter grain supply for this population.	
4.4	Investigate the potential for corncrake/great yellow bumblebee management to benefit corn bunting and add additional appropriate measures to the plan (e.g. planting knapweed).	

Table 1.4: Additional Actions for the Corn Bunting Plan

	Action
1	Promote and encourage traditional harvesting methods e.g. use of a community owned binder and finances for the labour involved.

Table 1.5: Revised Actions Table for the Corncrake Plan

	Action	Comments and Amendments
1	Policy and Legislation	
1.1	Promote the use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers to ensure 'corncrake friendly' management of the machair and crofting habitat	Include WIE and Soil Association as partners.
2	Site Safeguard and Management	
2.1	Encourage land managers adjacent to existing sites to introduce 'corncrake-friendly' maintenance techniques.	Encouragement could be done via public meetings with an umbrella group consisting of representatives from each organisation involved.
2.2	Identify potential new areas of suitable habitat, particularly in Lewis, and encourage 'corncrake friendly' management in these areas. Apply existing habitat management guidelines to these new areas	Include the creation of corncrake friendly habitats in new areas.
2.3	Ensure that grazing regime is suitable for corncrakes. Further promote corncrake friendly' mowing methods, and agri-environment schemes that benefit corncrakes.	Many crofters use contractors for mowing, which means that many crofts in one area are mown at once for efficiency for the contractor. If you want your crop mown then it must be done when the contractor is in your area and many mow too early to be corncrake friendly mowing.

	Action	Comments and Amendments
3	Advisory	
3.1	Maintain production of leaflets and promotional material for all interests including information on how to recognize corncrake by song and actions that community members can undertake themselves.	Action should be lead by local community groups with advice from SNH and RSPB.
3.2	Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC, RSPB and SNH.	
3.3	Develop a mechanism to discuss positive management of the machair for the bumblebee with the crofting community. Priorities for positive management to be identified.	There is general confusion from many sources as to why this action has been included in the corncrake plan. It should be linked in with corncrake conservation or removed.
4	Monitoring and Research	
4.1	Continue programme of annual survey and monitoring on machair and neutral grassland.	There has been a corncrake survey carried out in the Uists –the results should be made available. All areas of corncrake habitat should be included not just the crofts e.g. graveyards, woodland.
4.2	Map the current range of corncrake in the Western Isles and ask public to report all records.	

Table 1.6: Additional Actions for the Corncrake Plan

	Action
1	Include payment schemes for corncrake management in non-designated areas and areas not in crofts.
2	Ensure dissemination of corncrake information to people in areas outside the designations.
3	Liase with the Cats Protection League to raise awareness of the danger cats pose to corncrakes and lower the cost of neutering or reduce the number of cats.
4	Pay for specific crake areas to be fenced rather than whole croft (as now).
5	Consider and make provision for the possibility that rats and crows are a threat to corncrakes.

Table 1.7: Revised Actions Table for the Dunlin Plan

	Action	Comments and Amendments
1	Policy and Legislation	
1.1	Promote the protection and benefits of Natura 2000 designations to land managers to ensure suitable management of habitat. Develop guidance on the use of the schemes for habitat management i.e. Lewis Peatland Management Scheme.	
2	Site Safeguard and Management	
2.1	Predator control such as mink, ferret, feral cats and hedgehog in all areas of Western Isles. Expand current projects (Uist Wader and Hebridean Mink) that are in place.	The hedgehog problem must stay in the public eye and more awareness should be raised about the danger of introduction of exotic species.
2.2	Manage off road vehicle access to sensitive habitats to avoid disturbance to nesting birds.	Put up more signs during nesting season
3	Advisory	
3.1	Talk to communities about benefits of machair and upland moor habitats	Utilise the Am Paipear for awareness raising e.g. "Dunlin Diary"! SAC should lead.
3.2	Distribute leaflets to all grazing clerks about land management such as muirburn and grazing	Generally agreed that leaflets are not an effective method for contacting crofters. It would be better to have one to one meetings. SEERAD would be a better lead as they deal with common grazings. SNH should be a partner.
3.3	Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC.	

	Action	Comments and Amendments
3.4	Develop a mechanism to discuss positive management of the machair for waders with the crofting community. Priorities for positive management to be identified.	
4	Monitoring and Research	
4.1	Agree and establish a programme of survey and monitoring on machair and neutral grassland following predator control measures	If possible incorporate surveys into the science curriculum in the local schools to raise awareness.
4.2	Monitor proposed developments in upland areas and effect on wader populations	There was concern that there was no mention of the wind farm developments in this action. It should be included for site safeguard.

Table 1.8: Additional Actions for the Dunlin Plan

	Action
1	Conduct research into the effects of wind farms on dunlin.
2	Integrate the LBAP into the latest CAP reforms to ensure that crofters benefit financially for dunlin friendly management.
3	Promote dunlin conservation to tourists e.g. booklets in B&Bs.

Table 1.9: Revised Action Table for the Irish Lady's-tresses Orchid Plan

	Action	Comments
1	Policy and Legislation	
1.1	Use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other incentives to land managers to promote farming and crofting involving periodic heavy grazing by cattle, particularly in the winter.	
1.2	Liaison with SEERAD and RSPB on corncrake friendly farming schemes to try to ensure that incentives do not negatively impact on known or possible Irish Lady's-tresses sites. See Appendix 1.	
2	Site Safeguard and Management	
2.1	Ensure farmers and crofters are aware of the benefits to the orchid of a) summer grazing breaks b) grazing by cattle c) periodic very heavy grazing especially through the winter months. Links to 3.1. Features a), b) and c are potentially beneficial at sites where the orchid may exist but is, as yet, undetected.	SNH would be a good joint lead
3	Advisory	
3.1	Ensure all agricultural and environmental advisors have a copy of this Action Plan and that they have access to specialist advice. See Appendix 1.	
3.2	Develop an 'orchids and biodiversity' course on all types of orchid in the Western Isles for farmers, crofters and all other interested parties	
3.3	Arrange circulation of exhibition on links between traditional farming and crofting in relation to the conservation of Irish lady's-tresses orchid.	SCF could be included as a partner

	Action	Comments
4	Monitoring and Research	
4.1	Maintain a dossier/database of Irish lady's-tresses orchid records in the Western Isles. The information is sensitive and access should be restricted, see Section 6.	This action seems to go against raising awareness in the Western Isles.
4.2	Monitor at least one summer grazed and one non summer grazed population for population stability and balance of flowering, vegetative and underground forms.	
4.3	Manipulate two established well grazed populations 1) by excluding summer grazing, 2) by creating increased winter trampling. Ideally combine a) and b) for a third population	
4.4	Visit former sites of the orchid. Numbers of detectable plants in bloom on one visit are unlikely to indicate population size. Activity could be by contractors, volunteers or a mix e.g. with contractor showing features of vegetative plants.	This could be carried out by a ranger who guides volunteers.
4.5	Search suitable habitats at locations with no records, especially on North Uist. Activity could be by contractors or volunteers.	
4.6	Search areas for newly appearing plants where soil has been disturbed (e.g. by the laying of pipelines) in the first and second year following the event	
4.6	Identify sites a) with very low soil fertility or b) by lochs, where the composition of the sward is not or minimally affected by presence/absence/intensity of grazing.	

	Action	Comments
4.7	Liaise with other organisations nationally and locally on 2 joint research projects 1) to examine presence/absence and details of the sexual reproduction system and 2) ability or otherwise of root fragments to grow into plants.	

Table 1.10: Additional Actions for the Irish Lady's-tresses Orchid Plan

	Actions
1	Add climate change to possible threats.
2	Place information boards on the ferries to Barra promoting the Irish Lady's-tresses to tourists.
3	Include a financial incentive for Irish Lady's-tresses friendly management.
4	Simplify the plan to enable non-scientific people to understand it.
5	Involve more crofting groups.

Table: 1.11 Table of Additional Actions that are applicable to more than one plan

	Actions
1	Include crofting education in schools as part of advisory and awareness raising.
2	Promote and financially assist the use of seaweed application as a traditional land management tool. While this does occur in ESA areas it is not provided for grassland management.
3	Increase the stooking payments to take account of the additional work that it generates.
4	Include a rigorous geese management scheme in all plans that require cereals to be managed in the traditional way e.g. those that require late cutting, stooking and seed left. (This action was considered fundamental to any scheme that requires traditional crofting methods)
5	Encourage and promote an increase in cattle farming as opposed to sheep farming. If there are more cattle there will be more cereals grown for fodder.
6	Ensure that the Bull Hire Scheme continues. This is a priority as it ensures the viability of keeping cattle on the islands.
7	Support the development of township herds as a method of keeping cattle on the islands.
8	Plans should be split into the north and south islands to account for the differences in habitats and crofting practices.
9	The creation of a section of the LBAP that summarises cross cutting issues.
10	Suggested publication – “Guide to Good Land Management”. This would be a short document aimed at crofters. It would be a master plan that refers to the individual BAP’s.
11	Advice and support for the production of a Western Isles “brand” that would help market Western Isles produce.
12	Creation of a general “Biodiversity Booklet” that is in non scientific language and appeals to the general public.

	Actions
13	In Lewis provide financial and advisory support to enable crofters to move away from sheep into cropping.
14	Identify and map areas of machair left on Harris and Lewis.
15	Introduction of a scheme that ensures the working of inactive crofts is passed over to neighbours so that they can be managed properly.
16	Better monitoring of scheme entrants to make sure prescriptions are being adhered to.
17	Make direct contact to crofters and townships for awareness raising as opposed to leaflets.
18	Awareness raising – include sections in Am Paipear for the various plans as this is the most widely read newspaper.

5 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section summarised some of the lessons learnt and workshop feedback regarding community consultation and engagement.

5.1 WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

Encouraging people to attend consultation events is always difficult and feedback from locals suggested that an element of apathy and “workshop fatigue” was a problem in some places on the islands. Attendance at the LBAP workshops varied considerably - two out of the six workshops did not run due to a lack of participants, which perhaps reflects these difficulties.

Another issue, noted by a number of people attending the workshops, was that only a relatively small sub-set of the local community was attracted to the events – in particular very few crofters attended the meetings. Given the importance of crofting to the delivery of the five plans, it was generally felt that better engagement of the crofting community was important to the success of the plans.

A few people came to the workshops to learn about the habitats and species and did not feel comfortable engaging in the consultation process as they felt their knowledge levels were too low to make a valid contribution. The workshop process does rely on people having a reasonable knowledge and awareness of, if not the specific habitats and species, then at least land management and crofting before they arrive at the event.

5.2 FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

There were a few main messages relating to community engagement and communication that were fed back from the consultation workshops and these are summarised below:

- Talking to crofters face-to-face was generally thought to be a far more effective way of raising awareness and engaging them in the LBAP process than producing and distributing leaflets.
- An event specifically targeted at the crofting community, linked into something of more directly benefit/interest, such as the Rural Stewardship Scheme, would be a more effective way of encouraging attendance.
- People generally felt that there needed to be more feedback about what is done regarding the LBAP (such as results of bird surveys and other research), to keep enthusiasm going for projects and keep awareness raised. Having regular articles in widely read local newspapers was a suggested mechanism for this feedback.
- It was felt important that schools were included in the process. Ideas included a regular class on crofting and wildlife, getting secondary schools involved in annual monitoring programmes and having more site visits to local wildlife-rich sites.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

The following recommendations for future consultations are tailored to meet the aspirations of workshop attendees and address some of the causes of low attendance at the consultation events.

- Start the build up to consultation workshops early to allow time to raise awareness of the habitats and species well in advance so that people feel more informed and able to contribute when the workshops are announced and are therefore more motivated to attend. Ideas include:
 - Locally publicised site visits (such as dawn chorus walks and guided botany days looking at Western Isles specialities)
 - Articles in the local paper about particular species and habitats – what they are, where they are found, what threats there are etc.
 - Publicise all the plans on the website – have articles on each of the species/habitats and have the draft plans available for download, prior to running formal consultations. Advertise the website in newspaper articles so that people know where to look.
- Have a greater educational element to the consultation process, perhaps through short talks by experts on the day introducing each plan (e.g. by those that write the plans, SNH, RSPB, local experts etc.).
- Consult on fewer plans at once – or else consult on a suite of issues (such as promoting cereal farming, traditional stooking) that impact on more than one plan. It was found that covering five plans was often difficult in the workshops, due to the numbers of people attending and the amount of time it takes to get to grips with each species/habitat.
- Target consultation to ensure a greater mix of people are involved. This may mean that in addition to workshops and school visits, there are visits to crofts by the SCF (or another suitable representative) to raise awareness and gather views on the plans.

ANNEX A

Consultation Methodology

A1 INTRODUCTION

The prime aims for the consultant stated within the project brief were:

“To facilitate discussions with the Western Isles public on the second phase of draft habitat and species action plans, in particular to;

- 1. Ascertain the views of the public as to whether the actions suggested in the draft SAP's and HAP will achieve the stated objectives and targets*
- 2. Encourage the involvement of young people and schools in the process*
- 3. Encourage local groups and individuals to bring forward additional ideas*
- 4. Seek the agreement of local groups and individuals to participate in the implementation of the action plans.”*

The key vehicle for community engagement was a series of six community workshops in strategic locations across the islands (Castlebay in Barra, Kildonan in South Uist, Carinish in North Uist, Tarbert on Harris and Stornoway and Shawbost on Lewis to cover both sides of the larger island). To fulfil the second aim of the brief it was decided to set up four school visits located on different islands (Eoligarry School on Barra, Carinish Primary on North Uist, Sir E Scott Primary Department on Harris and Stornoway Primary on Lewis)

The method for undertaking the workshops can broadly be broken down into two parts. The first phase involved general workshop preparation and the initial contact was made with partners in the plans to advise them they were included in the plans, provide them with electronic copies of 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 two separate visits to the Isles, the opportunity was taken to meet with some partners and Steering Group members on an *ad hoc* basis.

A2 METHODOLOGY

A2.1 PHASE 1 – EMAIL AND TELEPHONE 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 three tasks:

TASK 1: PARTNER CONSULTATION

Each of the partners identified in the three plans was contacted initially by email informing them that they had been included in the plans, inviting them to the workshops and providing them with electronic copies of the relevant plans. They were then contacted by telephone to discuss their roles in the plans and record any comments or changes that they had. In some cases meetings were set up with partners who were available at the time of the visit to the islands and their comments were recorded then. Partners were agencies or other organisations that had been identified in the Action Plans as groups that could help the, or lead the implementation of a particular action. The following groups were contacted: A list of partners contacted is given in Annex B.

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

TASK 2: PUBLICISING AND PROMOTING THE WORKSHOPS

Invitations

Invitations were sent out with the initial consultation email 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

Advertisements and Press Release

An advertisement and press release were produced. Initially, due to time constraints, only the advertisement was placed in the public notices section of the Stornoway Gazette. This was to ensure that the early Lewis workshops were advertised in time. The following week features were placed in the Stornoway Gazette and the Hebridean as well as an advert and feature in the West Highland Free Press. Posters advertising the events were also put up in various well-visited locations by staff members of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The press release was also featured on BBC Radio Scotland and Radio nan Gaidheal

A copy of the advertisement and press release are included at the end of this annex.

TASK 3: WORKSHOP PREPARATION

It was agreed with the CnES that the production of five 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.

Five A2 posters were designed and included:

- descriptive details on the particular habitat or species (including colour photographs)
- their current status
- a description of why they were declining
- a summary of the key threats to these
- a summary of protective measures

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 they had the necessary information to underpin discussions. Enough fact sheets were produced to allow attendees to take them home if they wished.

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

This phase was divided into three tasks:

TASK 2.1 – FACE-TO- FACE MEETINGS

Meetings had been set up with partners before travelling to the islands according to their availability. The meetings were informal and gave partners and interested individuals the chance to comment on:

- the actions in the plans;
- their roles in the plans;
- general biodiversity issues on the Western Isles;
- how to encourage attendance at these workshops and other of a similar nature.

Meetings were held with the following individuals:

- Iain D MacLoud, SCF;
- Bill Neill, Curracag;
- David Muir, SCF, LANTRA;
- Colin MacPhail, SAC Advisory Services;
- Ena McNeill, SCF, Crofter;
- Katherine Mathis, SIAT.

TASK 2.2 – THE WORKSHOP PROCESS

The six 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 offered tea and coffee and invited to walk around the poster displays in order to familiarise themselves with the plans. 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:

- provide an overview of how the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar were producing and consulting on their LBAPs
- 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.

After the presentation the attendees were invited to re-visit the poster displays on each of the Local Biodiversity Plans for approximately fifteen minutes. Attendees were encouraged to talk to each other and formulate thoughts relating to the presentation material.

After this initial time was up the attendees were asked to split into a number of groups (dependant on the number present) and comment on the list of draft actions in a particular plan. The plans were chosen depending upon their relevance to the area and attendees preferences. It was ensured throughout the whole process that each plan gained adequate coverage.

People were also asked to determine if there were further actions that they believed should be included in the action list. Attendees were also asked to comment on how they felt 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. Natural Capital provided assistance and/or clarification if a group had become stuck on a particular point and ensured that important points were recorded so that nothing was missed.

After each group was satisfied that they had discussed the plan, one member from each group reported back 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, further notes were made to pick up on any points that hadn't been recorded on the flip chart sheet.

In some cases there were not enough attendees at the workshop for this format to be followed (Stornoway, five attendees, Shawbost, five attendees) and so a round the table discussion format was adopted. The attendees were still given approximately fifteen minutes to view the plans, have general discussion and formulate thoughts. After this time the attendees conducted a round the table discussion about each plan and key points from the discussion recorded on a flip chart sheet by a chosen scribe. The plans were again chosen according to their relevance to that area and the attendees preference. Additional notes were also taken to ensure no point was missed.

TASK 2.3: PRIMARY SCHOOLS WORKSHOPS

During the visit to the Western Isles the opportunity was taken to visit several primary schools across the islands to raise awareness of biodiversity among the children and also gain their ideas on schemes and actions to help the species and habitats included in the plans. In total, four primary schools were visited, Stornoway Primary in Lewis, Eoligarry Primary in Barra, Carinish Primary in North Uist and Sir E Scott Primary Department in Harris. Slightly different workshop formats were used for each school depending upon the age and number of children present.

Stornoway Primary – 14th March 2005

At Stornoway Primary the workshop was integrated into the launch of biodiversity posters, developed for schools by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar from the previous three action plans on the great yellow bumblebee, native woodlands and saline lagoons. Fifty children, of ages nine and ten, were involved in the workshop. The class was split into two with each group of twenty-five children taken in separate sessions. Each session started with general questions about biodiversity, did they know what it was and why it was important

etc? The children were then further divided into two groups of approximately twelve or thirteen and two plans discussed with each.

It was decided to leave out the cereal field margins plan and use the Irish Lady's-tresses, dunlin, corn bunting and corncrake plans, as it was thought that the children would more easily identify with these. With each plan the children were asked if they knew what the bird or plant was. There was then a brief discussion about where it lived, what it ate, what might threaten it and what they could do to help. The children's ideas were written down on a flip chart sheet.

Eoligarry Primary – 21st March 2005

Eoligarry Primary was selected to visit as opposed to Castlebay Primary as it is located in the middle of the area where the Irish Lady's-tresses orchid is mainly found. There were twenty-nine pupils involved in the workshop, split into two sessions, P1/2/3/4 and P5/6/7.

Again each session was started with general questions about biodiversity and its importance to us as well as biodiversity of the Western Isles. Then, with the younger children (P1-4), the corncrake, dunlin and Irish Lady's-tresses orchid plans were introduced. The children were asked if they knew what they were, if they had seen (or heard) them and if they knew what might harm them and what they could do to protect them. Their ideas were written down on a flip chart page. The children were then asked to think of ways to spread the word about biodiversity.

With the older children the corncrake plan was introduced and the preferred habitat and requirements of the species discussed. The children were then split into three groups and asked to write down any threats to the corncrake and suggestions for protecting them. After approximately fifteen minutes they reported their ideas back to the class and these were recorded on a flip chart sheet. The same process was repeated with the Irish Lady's-tresses orchid and the dunlin. The children were then asked to think of ways to spread the word about biodiversity and how they might help to protect it.

Carinish Primary – 23rd March 2005

Carinish Primary had approximately fifty pupils and these were again divided into two groups, P1/2/3 and P4/5/6/7. The same formats as the Eoligarry Primary workshops were adopted for each age group however for the younger children the corncrake and the dunlin plans were used and for the older children the corncrake and the cereal field margins.

Sir E Scott Primary – 24th March 2005

Sir E Scott Primary Department had approximately sixty pupils and these were split into four groups, P1/2, P3/4 (younger classes), P4/5 and P6/7 (older classes). Primary 4 was split into Gaelic and non-Gaelic speaking classes. The same formats as the Eoligarry Primary workshops were adopted for each age group however both groups the corncrake, cornbunting and dunlin plans were used.

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 1.2).

Where it was considered that a proposed action, whilst benefiting the specific species or habitat in the plan, could have disadvantages for nature conservation in other ways it was not included. 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.

A3 PUBLICITY MATERIALS

PUBLIC NOTICE/ADVERTISEMENT

Western Isles Local Biodiversity Action Plan – Local Community Workshops

The Comhairle in association with the Western Isles Biodiversity Partnership and SNH wishes to obtain the views of the public on the five latest draft action plans – Corn Bunting, Corncrake, Dunlin, Irish Lady's-tresses Orchid and Cereal Field Margins.

To have your say, please come along to one of the community workshops:

- **Monday 14th March, 7.30 pm – Cabarfeidh Hotel, Stornoway**
- **Tuesday 15th March, 7.30 pm – Shawbost Community School, Lewis**
- **Monday 21st March, 7.30 pm – Castlebay School, Barra**
- **Tuesday 22nd March, 7.30 pm – Kildonan Museum, South Uist**
- **Wednesday 23rd March, 7.30 pm – Carinish Hall, North Uist**
- **Thursday 24th March, 7.30 pm – Sir E Scott School, Harris**

Contact Anne MacLellan on 01870 602425, amaclellan@cne-siar.gov.uk.

FEATURE

Help Enhance Our Local Wildlife!

Communities in the Western Isles are being invited to attend a series of meetings to take part in plans that will help safeguard some fascinating plant and animal species of the islands. Come and learn how to help maintain and enhance plants like the Irish lady's-tresses orchid and birds including the corn bunting, dunlin and the corncrake, whose distinctive call has become synonymous with long, hot summer days.

Lead by the Comhaile, the Western Isles Biodiversity Partnership is inviting all those who live in the Western Isles to attend evening workshops during March where you will have an opportunity to find out about the five latest species and habitat action plans and to give your views on future actions to safeguard the islands' wildlife. These latest workshops are being run following the fantastic response to the first round of workshops held in December 2003. Phil Say, workshop facilitator, said "We were really pleased with the enthusiastic support so far. The success of these plans relies on the involvement of the communities and the actions of everyone!"

As the people who know and understand the islands the best, your input is vital! Participants at the previous workshops highlighted the importance of biodiversity to the Western Isles and local participation within plans, "Biodiversity is a living tourism for the Western Isles" and "We have to protect our nature because it is special to our islands. If we can protect them, they can increase and make our islands more interesting places (If that's possible!).

The five latest action plans that will be introduced at the workshops are:

- **Corn Bunting** Species Action Plan – a plan to maintain and expand the range of this characterful bird of the farm and croft.
- **Corncrake** Species Action Plan – a plan to increase numbers of this nationally threatened species, so distinctive of the islands' machair and croftland.
- **Dunlin** Species Action Plan – a plan to protect the range and boost the breeding performance of this little speckled-back wader.
- **Irish Lady's-Tresses Orchid** Species Action Plan – a plan to promote traditional crofting to ensure the survival of this little-known and nationally rare orchid.
- **Cereal Field Margin** Habitat Action Plan – a plan to increase the acreage of traditional cereal cropping to encourage a diversity of well-loved birds, such skylark, song thrush and corn bunting.

The actions recommended in these latest plans are not yet complete and community comments and ideas are required which could help modify the actions to make them as effective as possible.

Workshops are being held at venues across the Western Isles on the following dates:

- Monday 14th March, 7.30 pm – Cabarfeidh Hotel, Stornoway
- Tuesday 15th March, 7.30 pm – Shawbost Community School, Lewis
- Monday 21st March, 7.30 pm – Castlebay School, Barra
- Tuesday 22nd March, 7.30 pm – Kildonan Museum, South Uist.
- Wednesday 23rd March, 7.30 pm – Carinish Hall, North Uist
- Thursday 24th March, 7.30 pm – Sir E Scott School, Harris.

Community involvement is invaluable to making local action plans work, so please come along and share your ideas and suggestions for the successful delivery of these plans. Cllr Angus Nicolson, chair of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, said 'The Comhairle is keen to encourage wide

community participation in the development and future delivery of these action plans, as the island's wildlife is something that all sections of the community can associate with and appreciate. Even the simplest actions can make a real difference.'

If you would like further details on the workshop evenings, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and biodiversity issues generally in the Western Isles please visit the Western Isles Biodiversity website at <http://www.w-isles.gov.uk/biodiversity>.

ANNEX B

List of Consultees

PARTNERS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED

Frank Horsman	Researcher on Irish Lady's-tresses orchid
Deborah Long	Plantlife, Scotland
John Love	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
Iain MacIver*	Landowner Representative
Lewis Mackenzie*	Western Isles Enterprise (WIE)
Iain D MacLeod	Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF), Lewis
Ena McNeill	Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF), North Uist
Colin MacPhail	Scottish Agricultural College (SAC)
Niall McPherson	Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD).
Katherine Mathis	Southern Isles Amenity Trust (SIAT)
David Muir	Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF), South Uist
Bill Neill	Currag
Richard Pankhurst	Botanical Society of the British Isles Vice County Recorder (BSBIVC)
Yvonne Richardson*	Crofters Commission (CC)
Jimmy Robarts	Researcher on Irish Lady's-tresses orchid
Martin Scott	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Becky Shaw*	Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF)
Anne Marie Smout	Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC)
Bob Weymss	Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT)

* still awaiting comments from these consultees

ANNEX C

Outputs from the Workshop Consultations

BIODIVERSITY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – 14TH MARCH 2005 CABARFIEDH HOTEL, STORNOWAY, LEWIS

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Iain D MacLeod	SCF
Steven Liddle	CnES/FC
John Love	SNH
Iain A MacLeod	Proiseact Eire Shiadar
David MacLeay	CnES Community Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

Given the limited number of people present, the workshop took the format of a round the table discussion as opposed to the more formal method of individual comments followed by group discussion and reporting. Due to the interests of the people present at the workshop and the limited time available only the cereal field margins and the corncrake plans were discussed. Notes were taken throughout the discussion and inevitably the conversation included comments and discussion regarding more general conservation and crofting issues.

NOTES TAKEN DURING ROUND THE TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Corncrake

- Action 1.1, Promote the use of Rural Stewardship Scheme and other incentives to ensure corncrake friendly management - Other leads/partners to be included are Western Isles Enterprise and Soil Association.
- Action 2.1, Encourage land managers adjacent to existing sites to introduce corncrake friendly maintenance techniques - Public meetings with an umbrella group with representatives from each of the involved organisations.
- Action 3.1 Awareness raising by production of leaflets and promotional material etc – lead by local community groups with advice from SNH and RSPB.
- Action 4, Monitoring and Research – there has been a recent survey in the Uists and this data should be available across the islands.

Cereal Field Margins

- The plan doesn't separate Lewis/Harris from the Uists. There should be separate actions to account for the difference
- Action 2.2, Address management techniques which are detrimental to cereal field margin management - Advice should be lead by SNH
- Action 2.4, Funding for a machinery ring - Machinery ring is a good idea but machinery should also be adapted to the size and type of land holdings
- Action 3.2, On site practical demonstrations - SAC should be the lead partner not CnES
- Action 4.1, Evaluate various obstacles to increased small scale cereal cropping - SEERAD should lead

General Comments

- It is good to have a plan for all the Western Isles but the actions suggested often only apply to the north islands or the southern islands e.g. The corncrake plans are written for Uists and Barra, not so much in Lewis and Harris. There is a habitat difference and the plans should allow for this by mentioning specific areas that need targeted.
- Work that has been done already has not been acknowledged e.g. stooking and corncrake schemes in the Uists
- There is a need for better communication between the north and south e.g. visits, videos and sharing of best practice.
- There should be a section of the plan that summarises cross cutting issues e.g. crofting good practices.
- The issue should be looked at more strategically across all the habitats and species.
- Suggested publication – “Guide to Good Land Management”. This would be a short document aimed at crofters. It would be a master plan that refers to the individual BAP’s.
- There is a need for a brand for the W. Isles (Hebridean) to help promotion and marketing, and to use as an incentive to continue crofting.
- Booklets should be produced on Lewis and Harris crofts (like SNH machair booklet) that are available to schools to encourage the next generation of crofters. This booklet would also publicise the good work done for the environment by crofters and raise spirits, “Crofters on machair is the best way of showing conservation and crofting working”.
- One stop shop – There is a need for an advisor who has links to all the agencies so that people can get advice from all the agencies from this one person without being passed around everywhere. Information passed out could include grants and management guides etc. The advisor could be the community coordinator, grazing clerks or local rangers. If the grazing clerk post were changed to this then the post would have to be formalised and paid.
- Enlarge the crofts or have a township croft. A system should be developed whereby if one croft is not being used then the neighbour could take it on and farm it. Bigger crofts are more likely to get grants.
- Machinery rings are a good idea.
- Concerned how the plans will be used/ actions implemented. There needs to be better communication between the local communities and the organisations. There should be an umbrella organisation with a representative from each organisation that meets with the community.
- Need to raise awareness in communities. There could be pilot schemes to encourage others. Plans that come from the bottom up usually succeed. Local groups should consult locally, get agreement from the community and then go to the organisation.
- Awareness raising could be in the form of a biodiversity booklet that is more public friendly (Iain Macleod). It would cover all biodiversity.
- The grazing committee is an under utilised group.
- In Lewis they need encouragement (financial and advisory) to move away from sheep into cropping.
- There is a perception that the CnES doesn’t consult.
- Lack of regular workforce may inhibit the islands.

BIODIVERSITY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – 15TH MARCH 2005 SHAWBOST SCHOOL, SHAWBOST, LEWIS

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Christina Mackay
Anne Campbell
Stuart Oakley – Biology Teacher
Kenny John MacLeod – CnES
John Love – SNH

INTRODUCTION

Given the limited number of people present, the workshop again took the format of a round the table discussion as opposed to the more formal method of individual comments followed by group discussion and reporting. However, this time a member of the group was asked to write up important comments on a flip chart sheet.

Due to the interests of the people present at the workshop and the limited time available the cereal field margins and the corncrake plans were again discussed in detail with a few brief points about the dunlin plan added at the end. Inevitably the conversation included comments and discussion regarding more general conservation and crofting issues.

FLIPCHART ACTION POINTS

Cereal Field Margins

- Grants for small-scale crofts – machinery, set up – grazing committee
- Cooperation in villages, crofters coming together
- Cereal cropping not seen as viable at present
- Branding produce
- Action 1.5, Training for spraying contractors – not relevant for this area as there is no spraying (possible Uist)
- Broaden the plan – not just cereals – arable – people will identify with this more
- Education – young people need to change and be encouraged – gardens in schools, areas in machair for schools to use? – Identify particular areas in Lewis and Harris
- Use of local seed important
- Demonstrations
- Growing for environmental return
- Find out how much it is worth

Corncrake

- Designated sites – money to keep the corncrake on site
- Non designated sites also – gardens
- Grass management is an issue – mowing contractors, silage – baling
- Encourage people to create corncrake habitats – garden/area of croft
- Action 3.3, Develop a mechanism to discuss positive management for the bumblebee – unsure why this action is included
- Replanting of wildflowers

- Reporting of new sites - public

NOTES TAKEN DURING ROUND THE TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Cereal Field Margins

- Grants – Difficult to get grants for smaller holdings as there are too many forms to fill in.
- Action 2.3, Encourage uptake in agri-environmental schemes – RSS (Rural Stewardship Scheme) is too complex for small-scale crofts and not that user friendly. Scheme works better for a township croft – co-operation is needed. If this happens there is a more varied habitat and so more points are awarded which gives more money.
- There is some existing cooperation between crofters
- It is hard to increase the (number of cereals in Lewis as most crofters only work part time. Crofting is hard work and usually only animals are farmed. It is often only “eccentrics” that get involved – crofting is their hobby.
- It is hard to get seed that will grow on machair land.
- Branding – make the market want what they have rather than visa versa
- Viability of the crofting units is the main barrier – environmental payments are the main incentive to cereal crop but what to do with the seed.
- Mainly livestock crofting or if there is cropping then it is potatoes or turnips, which are for the crofter’s own consumption.
- Action 1.5, Training for spraying contractors - Doesn’t apply, as there are no spraying contractors in W. Isles.
- The name of the plan should be broadened to “Arable Field Margins” as it is difficult to associate with cereal field margins.
- Action 5.1, Targeted program to raise awareness – There is a need for an education drive in schools for basic crofting knowledge e.g. possibly a small school garden, sponsor a potato. There is a generation gap in skills and knowledge.
- Need to split the plans and have some more guided towards Lewis and Harris so that local people can identify with the plans.
- Need to identify and map areas of machair left in Lewis and Harris.
- The use of local seed is important – it could be sold from Uist to Harris
- Public agencies should encourage cereal cropping by having demonstration plots.
- In a sheep dominated economy there is a need to promote the value of cereal crops to clarify the worth of environmental schemes to the crofter e.g. how much is x acres of cereal field margin worth to them.
- Policy – Need to draw up schemes with grants that include the start up costs, as there is a lack of infrastructure, skills and equipment for cereal cropping in Lewis. Grazing communities could enhance these things.
- Farmers need to think more environmentally
- Need to look into different types of crops as diff types make good fodder.
- Develop markets for native breeds, which are more adapted to environment.

Corncrake

- Get them in other areas than those mentioned in the plan – scrubby land, woodlands and gardens.

- Community grazing will help the corncrake – more sheep to graze down after the 11 month rest period enforced by the corncrake scheme. (11 months is too long for cutting or grazing).
- Grant money is attracted by designations – should extend the scheme to include all areas that the corncrake lives e.g. gardens and cemeteries (need council awareness for the management of these areas).
- Action 2.3, Further promote corncrake friendly mowing regimes - Cutting time is an issue. Contractors mow to profit, cut one area at a time so often are cutting too early to benefit the corncrake.
- Crofters need to be given money to cut late and need to be made aware as to why they should cut late.
- The long narrow crofts are actually corncrake friendly so cutting method is actually less of an issue.
- Information needs to be disseminated to non designated areas as the corncrake often lives in other areas, not just crofts e.g. gardens or any bit of wasteland. Information can help people manage their garden for corncrake.
- Action 3.3 - Link bee plan in more with corncrake
- Action 4 - Need to monitor all areas of corncrake habitat – gets monitored annually in designated areas anyway. Agreed that there is a need for regular survey.

Dunlin

- Not as sexy an issue as the corncrake.
- No point in talking about the dunlin as its habitat will be wrecked by the proposed wind farm. Councillors/council want the wind farm so why are they trying to save the dunlin
- Action 4.2 - No mention of the wind farm development under the actions. Should monitor all proposed developments. Should be incorporated into the site safeguard.

BIODIVERSITY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – 21ST MARCH 2005 CASTLEBAY SCHOOL, BARRA

LIST OF ATTENDEES

John Love – SNH
Judy R.
Steve Brown
Eoin MacNeill
Jamie Hepburn – SEPA
Lisa Craig – Teacher
James MacLeod – Fisherman
Lachie MacLeod – Fisherman
Angus Morrison
Jonathan Grant – Builder

INTRODUCTION

Due to the higher attendance at this workshop, after a short time to look over the posters and plans individually, people divided into groups and each group discussed an individual plan. Each group recorded the points they discussed on a flip chart page. The plans discussed were the Irish Lady's-tresses, corncrake, corn bunting and cereal field margins. The dunlin plan was not discussed due to lack of time.

Several people attending the workshop misunderstood the function of the event. They believed it to be an educational event or have plans on the marine environment. Two people collected information that they were interested in and left without commenting on the plans as they felt they did not know enough about the topics.

FLIP CHART ACTION POINTS

Cereal Field Margins

- Crofting is not just keeping stock but includes the growing of fodder etc.
- Payments should demand cropping.
- Absentee crofts can still be worked by neighbours, and later by owners returning.
- Action should be taken for inactive crofts.
- Avoid stock being run only to convince the authorities the croft is being worked.
- Inactive crofts will contribute to more viable crofts for active crofters.
- The Croft Entrant Scheme is often short term.

Corn Bunting

- More cereal cropping by traditional methods.
- To feed cattle on the sheaf therefore more birds and flowers.
- Should not feed silage to cattle all the time – vary the feed therefore more birds after the cows have moved on from the feeding stance.
- Hay is less good than corn but still a lot of birds feeding on the seed.
- No seed for birds from silage.

- Why is there a 60% decline of pigeons in Eoligarry
- Active crofters should be offered the chance to cultivate inactive crofts (e.g. for older people).
- Rotational cropping improves grass pasture.
- New schemes should incorporate good practise.
- Better monitoring of scheme entrants to make sure prescriptions are being adhered to.
- Full time crofting is better than part time.
- Payments for stooking – good for birds and for tourists.
- Keeping of stock should be accompanied by actual crofting.

Corncrake

- Fence off where the crakes are calling with payments (Mar-Sept) – Open fence to be grazed in winter (Oct – Feb).
- More for crakes in land management contracts.
- Pay for specific crake areas to be fenced rather than whole croft (as now).
- Environmental payments are a legitimate agricultural product.
- Sheep minimum impact – subsidy for nothing.
- Friendly mowing essential for survival.
- Rats are a possible threat to be considered.
- Predation by crows to be considered.
- Materials need to be geared towards different levels in schools e.g. primary and secondary.
- Need to expand distribution by creating habitat in other areas.
- Need to make direct contact with crofters and townships to promote schemes/ provide information (general to all plans).
- Provision for staff/ people in each area.
- Financial incentives vital.
- Liaison with Cats Protection League to raise awareness of predation by cats – reduced rates for neutering cats.
- More specific information to individuals on species in their area.
- Tree Planting – new areas, need to ensure that this won't affect breeding corncrakes i.e. use of trees by crows etc.

Irish Lady's-tresses Orchid

- More biological research into the plant itself – what conditions are favourable for growth and reproduction.
- Climate change should be added to the threats.
- Should be information boards on the ferry – tourist information as to why it is important.
- Need incentive schemes for orchid management (Action 3.2, Develop an orchids and biodiversity course for crofters etc) – not taken up.
- Raise awareness in different ways e.g. an orchid treasure hunt for kids.
- Action 4.1, Maintain a dossier/database of Irish Lady's-tresses orchid records in the Western Isles Access restricted – this goes against raising awareness in the Western Isles.
- Action 4.4, Visit former sites of orchids – This could be carried out by a ranger with volunteers.

ADDITIONAL NOTES TAKEN DURING DISCUSSIONS

Corn Bunting

- Crofts are often left unmanaged even in the ESAs. This is bad for the land, as the area will go rank and then becomes unmanageable.
- New CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) grant schemes as GEAP (Good Environmental Agricultural Practice) – as of 2006 – should address the above issue.
- There should be more monitoring of people involved in the schemes – shouldn't get money for nothing. This is limited by a lack of staff.
- There should be spot checks on 20 crofts around the islands.

Corncrake

- RSPB came round every year to count them.
- Areas where corncrakes are should be fenced off and this should be included in Land Management Contracts. It should also mean more cash granted in the Rural Stewardship Schemes.
- The environment needs to be a legitimate product.
- Money should not be paid generally for the whole croft, it should be paid by the hectareship but the area must be fenced off. If you don't fence then you don't get the money.
- Inactive Crofters – action should be taken against poorly managed crofts – they should be reallocated to another crofter. The Crofters Commission should make sure its managed properly

BIODIVERSITY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – 23RD MARCH 2005 CARINISH HALL, NORTH UIST

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Ruth Thomas
Nev Thomas
Brian Lowe – RSPB
Lyn Lowe
Nicolette MacLean
Ena McNeill – SCF
Jeni Henton
Nicky Davies
Katharine Mathis – SIAT
Oliver Foote – Western Isles Fisheries Trust, District Salmon Board
Anne Morton
David Morton

INTRODUCTION

Again, due to the higher attendance at this workshop, after a short time to look over the posters and plans individually, people divided into groups and each group discussed an individual plan. Each group recorded the points they discussed on a flip chart page. The plans discussed were the cereal field margins, corn bunting and dunlin. The corncrake and Irish Lady's-tresses plans were not discussed due to lack of time. After the group discussions each group briefly summarised their findings to the other groups.

FLIP CHART ACTION POINTS

Corn Bunting

- There should be more financial support for seaweed application as this will reduce the application of pesticides (Action 1.2, Seek a more cautious and targeted use of pesticides on farmland)
- A more robust goose management scheme.
- Promote and encourage traditional harvesting methods e.g. use of a community owned binder and finances for the labour involved.
- There will be payment for seaweed application within the RSS (Rural Stewardship Scheme).
- Brian Lowe (RSPB) – apart from the additional actions listed above the RSPB were happy with everything mentioned in the plan and in fact the RSPB are already carrying out many of the actions listed in the plan.

Cereal Field Margins

- There should be advice and assistance to crofters with paperwork, which can be burdensome and off-putting.
- The possible cause of the decrease in crofting might be the bureaucracy, regulations and large amount of paperwork.
- Encourage active crofting, especially among young people e.g. subletting croft to someone who will actually use it.
- Need a person whose responsibility it is to raise enthusiasm for crofting (like a promoter). Leaflets and posters may not be as effective as a live person with knowledge and enthusiasm to encourage others.

- See if there are alternative seed sources available beyond the islands and establish seed links with other offshore islands.
- Ensure that various partner organisations coordinate efforts to cover all action points listed in the plan.
- Knock on effect between keeping cows and growing cereal crops for feed (encourage cattle instead of sheep perhaps). There is a strong link between cropping and cattle.
- Make Action Point 5.1 (Targeted program to raise awareness...) a HIGH priority instead of a medium priority.

Dunlin

- Research into effect of wind farms on dunlin? E.g. from Denmark, Anglesey etc.(Need more info so its not a subjective decision) – RSPB?
- Communication (Action 3.2, Distribute leaflets...). Is distributing leaflets the most effective method? – Ask SCF what is the best means of communication.
- Action 3.3 Publicise availability of free conservation advice from SAC - Should be in consultation with SCF.
- Tourism is an opportunity for communication.
- Policy – Integrate LBAP into recent CAP changes i.e. ensure crofters benefit financially for managing land for dunlin. £ for conservation and land management.
- Raise awareness in schools – (Action 4.1, Agree and establish a program of survey...). Machair and grassland surveys would fit into the science curriculum.
- Need an ongoing programme to educate children about natural history.
- Coastal Erosion – loss of machair – what is being done?
- Action 2.1, Predator control... - Need to keep awareness raised re: hedgehog issue. Need to raise awareness about the dangers of exotic species in general.
- Action 2.2, Off road vehicles... - More signs, but only when needed i.e. seasonal.
- Action 3.1, Talk to communities... - Am Paipear

ADDITIONAL NOTES TAKEN DURING DISCUSSIONS

Dunlin

- Action 3.2, Distribute leaflets... - SCF should be a lead – it is good to communicate with the grazing clerks but crofters will not listen to SNH. It is better to have SCF giving advice in person rather than leaflets.
- Provide conservation information to tourists. Educate B&B landladies and distribute pamphlets. The more interest is expressed in these issues e.g. dunlin, the more something is likely to be done about it, influencing politicians.
- Tourism is important as it is the biggest earner and people usually come for the environment.
- Cash incentives could be per head of dunlin instead of per head of cattle.

Corn Bunting

- The population of corn bunting in North Uist is the most northerly population in the world.

- Action 1.1, Develop guidance on the use of schemes for habitat management - crofters know how to manage the land properly for the buntings but need more financial help.
- Action 4.2, Agree and establish a programme of annual survey and monitoring – The RSPB are already monitoring corn bunting and have introduced feeding troughs and stacks as supplementary feeding in winter.
- In South Uist there are 81 natural stooks and a good population of corn buntings already. These are smaller crofts and most crofters have other jobs as well. In North Uist there are more full time crofters who do not have the time for stooking and so they need more financial help.
- The lack of seaweed application is a threat. Seaweed use cuts down the need for artificial fertiliser and pesticides because it cuts down on weeds.
- Need seaweed contactors to share the load.
- All the Actions are good but are difficult to do because of the geese. The geese need managed.
- If there is a law to prevent geese shooting then there is a need to petition parliament to change the law for local good.
- Get rid of the geese and the other actions will naturally follow.

General Comments

- Geese are the driving force behind the move from late corn and hay production to silage production (need to get the seed away from the geese).
- Need to call all crofters individually and talk to the grazing clerk. Consultation should be on a more local township basis.
- It should be made clear that it is genuine consultation.
- Drip feed information into the community and it will slowly get into the culture of the place.
- The most important factors in the implementation of the plans are policy changes and cash incentives.
- Am Paipear – it is a good idea to promote the plans through this local newspaper e.g. Dunlin Diary!

ANNEX D

Summary of School Workshops

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL “WORKSHOPS”

Aim of school workshops

One of the main purposes of the project brief was to “*encourage the involvement of young people and schools in the process*”. It was recognised that evening workshops are unlikely to attract young people and that school visits were the most appropriate means of raising awareness among young people and engaging schools in the LBAP process.

With this aim in mind ‘mini-workshops’ were held at four primary schools across the Western Isles with classes ranging from P1 to P7.

Four primary schools visited were:

Stornoway Primary School, Lewis
Eoligary Primary School, Barra
Carinish Primary School, North Uist
Sir E Scott Primary Department, Harris

Primary school age children are a good audience to target as they are receptive to talking about wildlife and are keen to get involved. For a summary of the schools workshops see Annex A.

Summary of responses from the children

Awareness of biodiversity and the LBAP species varied considerably from class to class and school to school. The most commonly recognised species was the corncrake, which most children had heard of. As expected, the bird species were generally more easy to relate to than the cereal field margins and the orchid, however, on Barra, where much of the Irish Lady’s-tresses research is underway, awareness of the orchid among the older children was high, although most needed guidance in thinking of actions to conserve the species. Many of the teachers also found the topic interesting and joined in the sessions asking questions and encouraging the children to make links to previous work done in school. Some of the children at Sir E Scott Primary were set LBAP homework (on the birds) and many classes were keen to make posters to raise awareness of the species. There is potential to build on these initial visits and to establish relationships with teachers at these schools and others across the Western Isles to fuel awareness and interest in the LBAP and biodiversity in general.

Ideas for future projects and work with schools

Some ideas that came from the school visits and the evening workshops include:

- LBAP poster competitions – publicising the best in the local paper and/or making them into postcards that can be sold locally at tourist venues.
- Creation of school information packs that can form the basis of lessons based on biodiversity, conservation and the specific habitats and species in the area.
- Encouragement of site visits to see the habitats and species, which would really bring alive local biodiversity for the children. The RSPB has some

teachers resources available online, these could be adapted to make them specific to the Western Isles species and habitats.

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/learn/catalogue/index.asp>

- Links to secondary schools science syllabus – to get young people doing survey work, which could feed into monitoring programmes.

ANNEX E

Additional Consultations on the Irish Lady's-tresses Orchid Plan

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the partner consultations and workshops, orchid experts based on the Western Isles were consulted on the Irish Lady's-tresses plan, to ensure that local knowledge of this species has been taken into account in drafting the plan.

DR J ROBERTS

Dr Roberts is a local botanist whose expertise is within the study of populations of Irish Lady's-tresses in Barra on the Western Isles. He has worked closely with Richard Gulliver, who wrote the plan for this species, and so feels that the plans are fairly complete. He was interviewed by phone.

Dr Roberts emphasised the fact that winter grazing should be encouraged as a positive action for the orchid. If areas are not grazed then the grass sward will grow to height that is not as favourable for the orchid and the taller grass also favours slugs which graze on the orchids. He commented that slugs in fact eat many plants that have been believed to be underground in a dormant phase. The slugs eat the whole plant only leaving part of the root tip, which may re-grow in time. Slug damage is not as significant for plants that grow in sandy soil areas, as slugs do not find these conditions favourable.

Cattle can do a good job of grazing but if too many congregate in one place then the conditions prove unfavourable for the orchids and there won't be as much growth. For this reason sheep would be ideal for winter grazing. Dr Roberts commented that temporary fencing of areas can be a good way to control grazing.

Suggested Actions

- In areas of particularly high sward he suggests controlled winter grazing (ideally with sheep) to promote Irish Lady's-tresses.

FRANK HORSMAN

Mr Horsman is a botanist resident in the Western Isles, who has considerable knowledge of an interest in the Irish Lady's-tresses orchid on the islands. He was contacted by phone and provided comments on the actions in the plan by e-mail, which are as follows:

- 1.2 Who will determine "possible Irish Lady's-tresses sites"? Who, in the Western Isles, apart from myself, knows all the past and present sites for *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* in the Western Isles?
- 2.1 Who will compensate the crofters financially?
- 3.1 It is not unknown for landowners to deliberately destroy rare plant sites. Cf: Deliberate overgrazing by sheep.
- 3.2 Who is competent to run such a course out here, and who will fund it? There are some difficult marsh orchids out here.

- 4.1 Exactly what use is envisaged for this "dossier/database"?
- 4.2, 4.3, 4.6 and 7 Is SNH going to fund these projects?
- 4.4 How will the contractors/volunteers/"or a mix" know where the former sites are? Who will demonstrate the vegetative features of the plant?
- 4.5 How will the contractors or volunteers know what constitutes a "suitable habitat"? Perhaps there is some scope for using some Linclate School sixth form biology "A" level students, under initial supervision, here (+ 4.4)? What about Harris and Lewis, which certainly should not be overlooked? My own field work on Harris and Lewis has been limited so far but I would not be surprised if it turns up there.
- 4.7 Who will do this difficult, sensitive professional work and who will supervise it?