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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this research was to engage the communities of the Western Isles to ascertain the views and opinions of the local people on actions set down in three draft Local Biodiversity Action Plans. These plans were facilitated by a Western Isles Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group in 2002-2003. The plans are:

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

Three workshops were held on the Western Isles to review the draft plans. At the workshops people were encouraged to provide comments on the suggested actions and also to bring forward additional actions. Additional consultations were undertaken with key partners identified in the draft plans by telephone prior to the workshops and with other stakeholders during the visit to the Western Isles.

The action tables included in the draft plans have been revised to incorporate community comments. The revised action tables are presented below and make up 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.

Table 1.1 Native Woodlands Revised Action Table

| Action | Lead | Priority | Timescale | Partners | Objective |
|---|------|----------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Survey all Semi-natural woodlands & compile inventory. | SNH | High | Short | SIAT, ST | 1 |
| Identify high priority Semi-natural woodlands for bringing into management (based on species diversity and scope for expansion). | SNH | High | Short | Land-managers | 1 |
| Encourage long-term responsible management of all existing and newly planted Semi-natural woodlands. Develop a generic guidance document for land managers for the long term management and maintenance of existing and newly planted woodlands. This guide will include advice on long-term financing of the planted area. | SNH | High | Medium | SEERAD, FC, Land-managers | 2 |
| Develop a long-term plan to link woodland areas for the purpose of creating wildlife corridors and for promoting natural regeneration of woodland. | SNH | Medium | Medium | FC | |
| Bring priority into Semi-natural woodlands management to promote regeneration. | SNH | High | Medium | Land-managers, FC, SNH, SIAT | 3 |
| Initiate programme of seed collection, propagation and planting of threatened species (such as hazel and juniper) and island native woodland species. Concentrate on expanding existing woodland areas and targeting areas that historically were wooded. | SNH | High | Medium | Land-managers, FC, ST, SIAT | 4 |
| Produce Woodland Strategy containing CnES endorsement of high priority for Semi-natural woodlands | CnES | High | Short | FC, SNH | 5 |
| Present case for SFGS Locational Premium for Western Isles Semi-natural woodlands and publicise the likely availability of grant aid to enhance native woodlands on the islands. Make a case for developing application forms that are straightforward and less time consuming. | CnES | High | Medium | FC | 5 |

| Action | Lead | Priority | Timescale | Partners | Objective |
|---|-------|----------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Investigate how existing financial subsidies can be better used to provide incentives for the planting of native woodlands. Present case for increased coverage/ funding for RSS and investigate ways that current grants provided to crofters for shelterbelts can be utilised to increase the area of native woodlands. | CnES | High | Medium | SEERAD, SNH, SAC | 5 |
| Incorporate native woodlands in wider programme of WI biodiversity awareness | CnES, | Medium | Medium | SNH, Rangers | 6 |
| Develop demonstration projects in the island groups to raise awareness of the benefits of regenerating native woodlands. Illustrate benefits in terms of ecology, landscape and long-term economic benefits along with good design & best practice. Target crofters who are currently doing this well on the islands and arrange a means for information and advice to be exchanged between the crofters, such as a series of 'on-croft' open days. | CnES | Medium | Short | SNH, SWT, Rangers, SAC | 6 |
| Establish nurseries for local species. Until local stock is available ensure that only natural regeneration is used to extend woodlands. | FC | High | Medium | SAC, SEERAD, SNH, Rangers | 4 |
| Undertake research into the genetic variability of mainland and island species and variability between more local species, such as differences from island to island and even west coast to east coast. | SNH | High | Medium | FC, SEERAD, CnES | 4 |
| Develop an effective mechanism (or make use of an existing mechanism) to communicate with crofters on the management of woodland areas – this will include information and guidance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long-term management; - species selection; - sourcing of local species; - soil conditions; - location of plantings; | SAC | High | Medium | SEERAD, SNH, FC, CnES | 6 |

| Action | Lead | Priority | Timescale | Partners | Objective |
|--|-----------------|----------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - size and shape of plantings (to be small and a natural shape); - native nursery crops; - muirburn; - grazing management; - financial and subsidy schemes; - filling out forms for subsidy and other schemes. | | | | | |
| Develop a long, medium and short-term plan for controlling the deer population on the islands. | Deer Commission | High | Medium | SNH | 2, 3 |
| Plant a series of community woodlands that are planted and managed <i>ie.</i> owned by communities and involve schools in this process. This initiative could be coupled with a wider Council initiative to establish a 'plant a tree day' which in subsequent years could be know as 'maintain a tree day' where communities are encourage to get out and tend to their woodland. | CnES | High | Medium | SIAT, FC, Rangers | 2, 3 |
| Establish woodland areas in school grounds. Children could be encouraged to plant a tree upon joining the school and be encouraged to maintain it in the future throughout his or her education. Develop a young naturalists group (not limited to young people) but run and managed by young people. | CnES | High | Medium | SIAT, FC, Rangers, SNH | 2, 3 |
| Encourage people to grow native woodland species in their own garden. Use the CnES biodiversity website to better effect for this purpose | CnES | High | Short | SIAT | 2, 3 |
| Provide free local seedlings every year (once local stock is established). | FC | High | Medium | CnES, Rangers | 2, 3 |

Table 1.2 Great Yellow Bumblebee Revised Action Table

| Action | Lead | Priority | Timescale | Partners | Objective |
|---|--------|----------|-----------|--|----------------------|
| Agree and establish a programme of annual survey and monitoring on machair and neutral grassland. | SNH | High | Long | RSPB, BWARS | 1,2,3 |
| Map the current range of the bee in the Western Isles per 5km square or better. Publicise the map and ask for records. | SNH | Medium | Short | Rangers, Curracag, BWARS, BRISC | 1,2,3 |
| Investigate the benefits of establishing a Local Record Centre with the possibility of linking it to the proposed environment exhibition at Nunton Steadings. | CnES | High | Long | SNH, SWT, BRISC, Curracag, Rangers | 1,2,3 |
| Produce an awareness leaflet and poster for the public and land managers which includes information on what the bee looks like and how to distinguish it from other bees. | SNH | High | Medium | | 1,2,3 |
| Develop an identification course for bumblebees as part of the developing programme. | BRISC | High | Medium | Curracag, BWARS, SNH | 1, 4 |
| Encourage adjoining land managers, e.g. Harris Golf Club, to introduce 'bee-friendly' maintenance techniques. Identify a Harris contact to take this forward. | CnES | Medium | Long | SNH, Rangers, Curracag, BWARS | 3 |
| Develop habitat management guidelines for use by land managers in management plans. Publicise free conservation advice from SAC. | SEERAD | High | Long | SNH, SAC, BWARS | 1,2,3,4 |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------|--------|---|---------|
| Develop a mechanism whereby crofters can be approached on a ground level, to discuss positive management of the machair for the bumblebee. Crofts should be prioritised by need for more positive management. This should be supported by a general awareness raising campaign and identification training for crofters (and a means for reporting back sightings). | SAC | High | Medium | SNH, Rangers | 2,3,4 |
| Develop an awareness campaign directed at school students. The campaign could include posters, school visits for identification training and field visits by a ranger. Use the CnES website to better effect for this purpose. Develop a young naturalists group (not limited to young people) but run and managed by young people. | CnES | High | Short | Rangers, Head Teachers, Curracag, SWT | 3, 4 |
| Develop an awareness campaign directed at tourists. Work with the tourist board to raise awareness of the bee and to use the bee as a tool to promote the island. Organise ranger field trips and identification training for tourists. Investigate the possibility of working with private enterprise (eg. Calmac) for promotional displays and other awareness raising initiatives. Develop awareness pamphlets to be available in the tourist information centres and B&Bs. Ensure that there is a means for trained tourists to report back sightings. | Tourist Board | Medium | Medium | CnES, Rangers, SWT, Curracag | 2, 4 |
| Develop an awareness campaign to establish the identity and image of the bee. The campaign should include actions that community members can undertake themselves. Use the CnES website to better effect for this purpose. | SNH and CnES | High | Medium | Rangers, SWT, Curracag | 1,2,3,4 |
| Identify areas of suitable habitat in Lewis and encourage 'bee friendly' management in these areas. | SNH | Medium | Long | Rangers, Curracag, BWARS, Crofters | 3 |
| Research the potential to seed roadside verges and the edges of appropriate lochans with species to attract bees. | CnES | Medium | Medium | BRISC, Rangers | 3 |

| | | | | | |
|--|------|--------|--------|--|------------|
| Investigate the potential for management for corncrake to benefit bees and add additional appropriate measures to the plan (eg. the possibility of planting knapweed). | RSPB | Medium | Short | SNH, Rangers, | 3, 4 |
| Promote the use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) and other financial incentives to crofters to ensure 'bee friendly' management of the machair habitat. Develop guidance for crofters on the use of the schemes for habitat management. | SAC | High | Medium | SEERAD, CnES, SNH, Rangers | 3, 4 |
| Undertake research into field mouse distribution and numbers towards a better understanding of fluctuations in field mouse and Great Yellow Bumblebee population. | SNH | Medium | Long | BWARS, BRISC, Curracag, Rangers | 2, 3, 4 |
| Undertake research into the distribution of the female Great Yellow Bumblebee in relation to winter hibernation (it is currently unknown where the bees hibernate in winter). | SNH | Medium | Long | BWARS, BRISC, Curracag, Rangers | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Undertake research into the use of local versus island red clover seed to determine if there are different levels of success in year to year regeneration. | SNH | High | Medium | Rangers, Crofters. | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Ensure that when seed mix is provided to crofters its includes 'bee friendly' flowers in that mix. Use local red clover instead of just white clover in seed mix. Investigate the use of existing seed stock held by CnES. | CnES | Medium | Medium | SAC | 2, 3, 4, |
| Provide suitable 'bee friendly' flower seeds to community members to plant in their garden and verges. | CnES | High | Short | SIAT, SNH, Curracag | 2, 3, 4 |

Table 1.3 Saline Lagoons Revised Action Table

| ACTION | Lead | Priority | Time-scale | Partners | Objective |
|--|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| Summarise data on saline lagoons in the Western Isles into a user-friendly form, and distribute to planners, landowners and land users. This should include good visual material to convey the character of saline lagoon habitats and species | SNH CnES | High | Short | CnES SNH | 1, 2, 3 |
| Incorporate the need for maintaining the health of saline lagoons in future local structure and development plans. | CnES | High | As plans are produced | SNH | 1, 2, 3 |
| Incorporate awareness of saline lagoons into ESA and similar schemes which aim to balance land use and conservation | SNH | Medium | Medium | CC, land-owners, SEERAD | 1, 2, 3 |
| Communicate and work with crofters to address land management methods that detrimentally affect saline lagoons. | SEPA | Medium | Medium | SAC,SNH, Rangers | 1, 2, 3, |
| Develop an awareness campaign directed at school students. The campaign could include posters, booklets, school visits and field visits with a ranger. Use the CnES biodiversity website to better effect for this purpose. Address marine litter in this campaign. Develop a young naturalists group (not limited to young people) but run and managed by young people. | CnES | High | Short | Rangers, Head Teachers, Curracag, SWT, Comann na Mara | 2, 3 |

| ACTION | Lead | Priority | Time-scale | Partners | Objective |
|---|------|----------|-------------------|---|------------|
| Develop an awareness campaign directed at tourists. Work with the tourist board to raise awareness of the habitat and to use the habitat as a tool to promote the island. Organise Ranger field trips for tourists. Work with private enterprise (eg. Calmac) to fund promotional exhibitions. Develop awareness pamphlets to be available in the tourist information centres and B&Bs. | SNH | Medium | Medium | CnES, Rangers, SWT, Curracag, Comann na Mara, Tourist Board | 2, 3 |
| Develop a general awareness campaign for the local community. This should include exhibitions, field visits with Rangers but also more wide reaching methods such as pamphlet mail outs. Use the CnES website to better effect for this purpose. Address the issue of litter in this campaign. | SNH | High | Medium | CnES, Rangers, SWT, SIAT, Curracag, Comann na Mara | 2, 3 |
| After identification of saline lagoon areas in the Western Isles, take opportunities to identify and quantify any lagoons that may be adversely affected by sewage inputs with the long-term aim of preventing any further adverse impacts. The possibility of financial assistance to individuals to upgrade their sewage system should be investigated. | SEPA | High | As & when | SNH, Scottish Water, NGOs | 1, 2, 3 |
| Review the possibility of removing prohibitive culverts. Assess these on an individual basis. | SEPA | High | As & when | SNH, NGOs | 1, 2, 3 |
| Monitor existing key populations and species at key sites to ensure quality is maintained or enhanced. | SNH | Medium | Medium; long-term | SWT, NGOs, land-owners | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Implement appropriate actions contained in the Loch nam Madadh EMS Management Scheme. Investigate the possibility of an interpretation 'Sea Life' centre at Lochmaddy. | | | On-going | Management | 2, 4 |

| ACTION | Lead | Priority | Time-scale | Partners | Objective |
|--|--------------------------|----------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| The centre could also establish a lab research centre for visiting researchers and students. | | | | Group, Comann na Mara | |
| Commission further specialist surveys of this priority habitat. Many lagoonal species require specialist identification and will not have been recorded by MNCR surveys | SNH | Medium | Medium | JNCC, Universities | 4 |
| Develop a saline lagoons management plan (or incorporate as part of a broader coastal management plan) for the Western Isles that sets policies to proactively address potential impacts from development. | SNH | High | Short | CnES | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Investigate the possibility of incorporating Saline Lagoon areas into CnES Geographical Information System (GIS). | CnES | Medium | Medium | | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Investigate green-tourism opportunities for the saline lagoons habitat. | Western Isles Enterprise | Medium | Medium | Area Tourist Board, SNH | 3 |

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 to date:

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

The draft action plans identify objectives and targets for maintaining and enhancing the particular habitats and species and identify a set of actions to achieve these targets. The Steering Group wanted to engage local communities in the Western Isles in the development of the Actions Plans and commissioned Natural Capital to facilitate discussions relating to these plans. The purpose of the discussions were to:

- *ascertain the views of the public as to whether the actions suggested in the draft habitat and species plans will achieve its 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 species¹.

¹ UN Convention on Biodiversity Article 2

The Scottish Executive describes it more simply as '*the total variety of all living things that surround and sustain us*'.²

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. Scotland has its own Biodiversity Group (the Scottish Biodiversity Forum Working Groups) and various sub-groups which are responsible for delivering biodiversity actions in Scotland.

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

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 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 such 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 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.

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 have been drafted and the Steering Group wishes to maintain and enhance community involvement in the biodiversity process. Natural Capital's role was 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 (see *Section 2.2*).

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.

The core method used to engage communities in the process of reviewing and commenting on the first set of Western Isles Biodiversity Plans was three community workshops, held at different locations on the Western Isles; one on the Isle of Barra, one on the Isle of Benbecula and the last in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. These locations were chosen to build on the earlier consultations

which had been undertaken (see *Section 2.3.3*). Each of the workshops were held at 7.00 pm at suitable locations:

- Castlebay Primary School in Barra (3 attendees);
- Nunton Steadings in Benbecula (17 attendees);
- County Hotel in Stornoway (18 attendees).

The plans were posted on the CnES Biodiversity website and a comment sheet was provided for those who preferred to provide feedback on the plans electronically. One response was received and the comments have been incorporated into the workshop outcomes in *Section 4*.

Prior to visiting the islands to hold the workshops contact was made with the key partner organisations which are identified in each of the draft plans to assist in the implementation of a specified action. In each of the Local Biodiversity Action Plans, ‘partners’ – agencies, organisation and local groups - were identified as support agencies (to assist the lead agency) to implement each of the LBAP actions (see *Section 2.4*). Prior to the workshops each of the partners identified in the plans were contacted to determine if they were content with the role that had been identified for themselves within the plans, *ie.* whether they thought the role identified for them was sufficient, appropriate and/or feasible.

In some instances the identified partners were organisations that were already included on the Western Isles Biodiversity Action Steering Group, and in this case these groups were not contacted as they had already had input into the development of the Biodiversity Action Plans. These organisations included:

- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds(RSPB)³;
- Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD);
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH);
- Stornoway Trust.

Working from the key partner list provided by the CnES, the following key partners were contacted:

- Bees Wasps and Ants Recording Society (BWARS);
- Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC);
- Crofter’s Commission;
- Curracag – Western Isles Natural History Society;
- Forestry Commission;
- Scottish Agricultural College (SAC);
- Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT);
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA);
- Southern Isles Amenity Trust.

³ RSPB, are on the Steering Group but asked to provide comments on the draft plans. These have been included with the other Partner comments.

Whilst visiting each island a number of additional *ad hoc* meetings were held based upon availability and interest. These meetings were unstructured although the discussion was based upon the actions identified in each draft plan. These meetings formed the basis of the discussion presented in *Annex B* of this report which discusses broader land management issues on the Western Isles.

An opportunity was also taken to visit the school in Castlebay for the purposes of engaging young people who, from our experience, most often do not attend workshop evenings. During the day we spoke with four different classes of varying age groups, from Primary 5 and 6 up to 5th Year.

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*).

2.3.1 Acknowledgements

Natural Capital would like to thank everyone who attended the workshops on Barra, Benbecula and in Stornoway. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals who gave up their time to meet with us while we were on the islands:

- Mr David Bowman – Head Teacher Castlebay Community School;
- Mr Jonathan Grant – former Ranger on Barra;
- Mr David Muir – Scottish Crofting Foundation;
- Mr Ian Cairns – Scottish Agricultural College (SAC);
- Ms Yvonne Richardson – Crofter’s Commission.

Thanks also to Mr Donald N MacDonald and Mr Jamie Boyle of RSPB who provided comments by telephone and email after the workshops.

We would also like to thank the LBAP authors, Bill Neill, Sue Scott and John Hollingdale for providing photographs for the posters and other visual material used during the workshops.

A special thanks to Mr David Bowman, Head Teacher and the students of Castlebay Community School who took the time at very short notice to meet with us and discuss the Biodiversity Action Plans.

2.4 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 each of the workshops.

The main report is supported by the following annexes:

- *Annex A:* Provides a detailed methodology;
- *Annex B:* Presents a discussion of general land management issues which were discussed during our meetings with partners, steering group members and individuals when we visited the islands;
- *Annex C:* Presents the detailed outputs from the workshops and the visit to the Castlebay Community school. It includes verbatim comments as provided on the post-it notes and flip chart sheets, additional notes taken during the workshops and school visit and a list of attendees at each of the workshops.

3 OUTCOME OF PARTNER CONSULTATIONS

Generally, most partner organisations commented on their role, but also provided further, more general comments regarding the plans. The identified partners generally showed great interest and support for the plans. In some instances as with BRISC and SAC they were keen to get involved to a greater extent than was identified for them in the plans and suggested further ways that they could help to meet the objectives of the plans.

The majority of the comments in relation to the suggested actions were with respect to their feasibility. For example BWARS had some concerns that there was too much potential for mis-records of the Great Yellow Bumblebee if the greater public were asked to provide records of the bee. SEPA had some concerns regarding their ability to implement two of the actions relating to sewage control and culvert removal. The RSPB questioned the appropriateness of their role against two of the actions in the Saline Lagoons Plan also regarding sewage control and culvert removal. They were not clear what the RSPB could do to assist in implementing these actions. These particular actions may need to be reviewed with respect to these points, which are discussed in more detail below.

The comments provided by each partner group have been summarised and presented by organisation, below.

3.1 BEES, WASPS AND ANTS RECORDING SOCIETY

BWARS has been identified as a partner in the Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan. Murdo MacDonald responded on behalf of BWARS as an expert on this species. As a result BWARS provided several quite specific comments regarding the past and current records of the species. These specific comments have not been included here but have been forwarded to the CnES for inclusion (in consultation with the plan author) in the plan. The more general comments which are relevant to this report are included below.

BWARS thought that the target date of 2010 for the production of a current species range map should be reviewed. BWARS indicated that such maps could already be produced based on existing information although it believed that there was still a need to undertake some further searches on Harris and Lewis. BWARS forwarded some large scale maps of the Great Yellow Bumblebee's current range in the UK with its comments. With reference to *Section 7* in the plan '*Opportunities and Current Action*' BWARS indicated that RSPB is currently working on an opportunity to use the funding schemes provided for corncrake management to indirectly enhance the environment for bees. This may be something that could be investigated as part of the process of implementing the plan.

BWARS raised a concern that an identification leaflet for the public (as included as an action point in the draft plan) may not be sufficient to prevent mis-records of the Great Yellow Bumblebee. BWARS' past experience with public identification of the Great Yellow Bumblebee showed that the Great Yellow Bumblebee was often confused with the more common *Bombus muscorum*. It was the belief of BWARS that records should only be accepted from 'trained' observers⁴.

Suggested actions:

- Review existing baseline information and then redefine target date of 2010 for production of current species range map (likely to be possible some time in advance of 2010).
- Promote liaison with RSPB to investigate the potential for management for corncrakes to benefit bees and add any additional appropriate measures to the plan.
- Redefine the purpose of the leaflet as being to raise awareness of the species not to promote recorded sightings.

3.2 BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND (BRISC)

BRISC has been identified as a partner in the Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan. BRISC thought that the recommendations in the plan were comprehensive and confirmed that it was happy to undertake the role that had been identified for the organisation. BRISC and Curragag are collaborating over developing and running local plant and animal identification courses, which could include one on bumblebees. With respect to the action in the draft plan for setting up a local records centre, BRISC is in the process of lobbying support for a national network of Local Records Centres (LRC) throughout Scotland. At present it has suggested a major centre in Inverness with satellite centres in outlying places (eg. in Lewis as suggested by the Action Plan). This is something that BRISC would be keen to help develop further. BRISC questioned whether there may be a further opportunity, not yet identified in the draft plan, of targeting roadside verges or marginal land such as the edges of lochans for seeding with *Trifolium pratense* (red clover) and *Lotus corniculatus* (bird's foot trefoil) to encourage the Great Yellow Bumblebee.

Suggested actions:

- BRISC and Curragag to develop identification course for bumblebees as part of the developing programme.
- Collaborate with BRISC over setting up a local Western Isles record centre as a satellite of the proposed national centre.
- Research the potential to seed roadside verges and the edges of appropriate lochans with species to attract bees.

⁴ Consultation with the Plan author has indicated that mis records are not likely to be an issue as public records would not be used as official records but as an indication of bee's whereabouts and to raise awareness of the bee.

3.3 CROFTER'S COMMISSION

The Crofter's Commission has been identified as a partner in the Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan. The Commission reviewed the plan and is content with the role identified for it in the plan.

Suggested actions: None required.

3.4 CURRACAG

Awaiting comments

3.5 FORESTRY COMMISSION

The Forestry Commission has been identified as a partner in the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan. The Commission did not have any specific comments regarding its role as a partner and confirmed it is content with the suggested actions. The Commission did provide comment on one of the stated objectives of the plan, which is the initiation of '*a programme of seed collection and supplementary planting for vulnerable species (hazel and juniper)*'. The Commission did not think that seed collection should be limited to vulnerable species only, but that it should be a high priority to collect local seed from all native species for the purposes of building up a local nursery stock. The Commission considered that the expansion of woodland areas should be by natural regeneration only until local planting stock is available. However it added that building up a native stock should be a priority as expansion by natural regeneration will take far too long due to the small size of the remnant woods.

Suggested actions:

- Modify the action in the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan from the collection of seed from vulnerable species to include all native species.
- Include the building up of local stock and nurseries as a priority action in the plan.
- Amend draft plan objective to promote Native Woodlands through natural regeneration to include planting with native species of local stock as well.

3.6 RSPB

The RSPB has been identified as a partner in the Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan and the Saline Lagoons Habitat Action Plan. It is with respect to its role in the Saline Lagoons Plan that the RSPB has provided comments.

RSPB is included as a partner in two specific actions in the Saline Lagoons Plan:

- The identification of saline lagoon areas in the Western Isles that are adversely affected by sewage inputs with the aim of preventing any further adverse impacts;
- The encouragement of natural water paths by supporting removal of prohibitive culverts.

The RSPB has commented that it is not sure why it has been included as a partner against these actions and is unclear how it could help to implement them.

Suggested actions:

- Review partner responsibilities in the Saline Lagoons Habitat Action Plan and amend role of RSPB to that appropriate to its function.

3.7 SCOTTISH AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (SAC)

The SAC has been identified as a partner in the Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan. The SAC has reviewed all three plans and has provided some comments that are relevant to all of them. With respect to the Great Yellow Bumblebee Plan, SAC commented that the Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) was a practical way of encouraging crofters to manage habitat to benefit the Great Yellow Bumblebee. This could be achieved through the 'Management of Species Rich Grassland' as part of the wider RSS plan (and Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) in Uist and Barra). It added that the RSS would also encourage the re-introduction of cattle on smallholdings of less than 10 hectares (ha) of inbye land which will have a positive impact on the management of habitat for the Great Yellow Bumblebee. SAC thought that it might be able to offer assistance with the initiatives identified in the Great Yellow Bumblebee Plan to optimise the amount of red clover swards.

To help toward the implementation of all of the plans, the SAC indicated that it can carry out 'on-croft' advisory visits to discuss beneficial habitat management practices throughout the Western Isles and that it will also to answer telephone or written queries from crofters regarding conservation matters. It could also provide advice through public meetings, such as on conservation issues generally or woodland management. Specialist advisors could be brought to the Western Isles to talk at these meetings. All of the visits and public meetings could be provided without charge because SAC has a contract to deliver conservation advice on behalf of SEERAD. SAC also considered that all land based initiatives, across all of the plans, would generally need to be approached on a township basis to gain the maximum environmental benefits as the habitats mainly lie on common grazings.

With respect to the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan the SAC considered that the recently approved Woodland Strategy will encourage positive actions towards the creation and management of the woodland habitat. SAC consider that

the Strategy will help give high priority to enhance native woodlands on the Western Isles and thus the Locational Premium likely to be available in the Western Isles.

As a final comment, the SAC added that initiatives are needed to engage the 'rural' population generally, not just land managers. It thought it was particularly important to encourage young people to become interested and involved in biodiversity initiatives.

Suggested actions:

- Promote use of the Rural Stewardship Scheme in the plan as a means of delivering habitat enhancements to encourage bees.
- Liaise with SAC to promote swards of red clover to encourage bees.
- Publicise the availability of free advice to crofters from SAC on conservation issues.
- Publicise the likely availability of grant aid to enhance native woodlands.
- Identify means of engaging young people in biodiversity initiatives.

3.8 SEPA

SEPA has been identified as a partner in the Saline Lagoons Habitat Action Plan. SEPA had been involved in the Western Isles Biodiversity Action Steering Group and so has had some input into the development of the plans.

With reference to the action to identify lagoons adversely affected by sewage inputs, SEPA commented that while it is in a position to help identify and quantify the sewage inputs it would be difficult to take the next step to prevent the inputs. This is because it is very difficult for SEPA to promote an improvement to a sewage system in Scotland unless it can be undertaken as part of a larger public scheme supported by Scottish Water. SEPA is of the understanding that such schemes are being developed but that they are unlikely to be finalised and agreed until approximately 2015. Nevertheless, SEPA believed that it could work towards the implementation of the action by identifying the sources of input and working towards an improvement.

Regarding the action to support the removal of prohibitive culverts, SEPA commented that this action would be difficult to implement and possibly controversial. However, it is possible that under the Water Framework Directive SEPA will identify the saline lagoons that are unable to effectively flush water as 'transitional water bodies' unable to meet 'good' status. In this case SEPA would be obliged to move towards the improvement of the situation or obtain a derogation to leave the culverts as they are. Again SEPA considers that it can help to work towards the aim of improving the situation although it will not always be possible to remove the prohibitive culverts.

SEPA added that with respect to the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan that it was important to comply with the Forestry Commission's Forest and Water Guidelines when new areas of land are planted for woodland.

Suggested actions:

- Amend the Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan to say SEPA to identify and quantify sewage inputs rather than prevent inputs.
- Amend the Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan to say SEPA to review the possibility of removing prohibitive culverts rather than removing them.
- In the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan add that all new planting should follow best practice guidance such as that included in the Forestry Commission Forest and Water Guidelines.

3.9 SOUTHERN ISLES AMENITY TRUST

Awaiting comments.

3.10 THE SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST

The SWT has been identified as a partner agency in all three plans. The Scottish Wildlife Trust advised by telephone that it was aware of the quite extensive role that had been identified for it in each of the plans. The Trust indicated that it had reviewed the plans and that it was content with the specified actions and its role with respect to each of these.

Suggested actions: None required.

4 BIODIVERSITY ACTIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the community consultations 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. In particular the Steering Group was interested in ascertaining 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, *ie.* how the objectives and targets stated in the plans are to be achieved. As such the actions represent the backbone of each of the plans and it is with respect to these that the Steering Group wanted to gauge public opinion.

The purpose of the three workshops (see *Section 2.4*) was therefore to provide a forum for community members to come together to consider these actions. The workshops were facilitated as a two part process (see *Annex A – Methodology*). The first part of the workshop provided an opportunity for attendees to examine the suggested actions against the purpose and objectives of the draft plans and then to provide short-hand comments on post-it notes as they wished. During the second part attendees were encouraged to discuss and brainstorm ideas and comments regarding the plan actions.

Discussion of the outcomes of the workshops is divided below into *Section 4.2* which summarises the comments on existing actions and *Section 4.3* which looks at the suggested new actions. Ideas relating to community engagement are discussed in *Annex B*.

4.2 COMMENTS ON EXISTING ACTIONS

Generally, the community members that were present at the workshops did not have any major objections to the biodiversity actions suggested for each plan. There were several comments that indicated that most people believed that the suggested actions were thorough and well thought out and that they would achieve the objectives and targets set down in each of the plans. Other than these positive comments, there were very few direct comments made about the suggested actions. However, there were a number of comments made during the brainstorming sessions which indirectly related to the suggested actions. There was very little difference in the type of comments provided between the islands and a number of recurring themes were raised at all of the workshops.

We have collated all of the workshop comments as they relate to a particular suggested action and have presented them below according to each plan. The recurring themes have been drawn out and discussed at the beginning of each section.

4.2.1 Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan

There were three very strong themes that came out in discussions for Native Woodlands. These were:

- the long term maintenance of new plantings;
- the use of local species;
- communication with crofters and land managers to implement the actions.

It was felt by some present at each of the workshops that while planting of native woodlands had been undertaken in the past they had simply been left without any long-term management plans. The long term maintenance of newly planted areas was therefore an issue that was brought up at each workshop. Most present, thought it was important to provide the necessary resources and education to ensure that long-term maintenance is provided for newly planted woodland areas in the future.

The use of local species for planting was also a key theme for Native Woodlands, and was discussed at each workshop. Attendees thought that it was important not only to distinguish between mainland and island species but also to distinguish between species that were grown on different islands or even different coasts of the same island. It was thought that further research may be required into the present tree stock to determine genetic variations between ‘local’ species. It was suggested several times that local nurseries could be set up to provide stocks of local species.

The other key theme was the importance of communication with crofters and land managers. Communication was thought to be essential if the proposed actions for enhancing the Native Woodlands were to be implemented successfully. In particular it was thought that crofters needed to be provided with advice and guidance on long-term management of the newly planted areas, the protection of existing scrub on common grazings, the use of local species for shelterbelts and muir burning.

These comments and others which were raised are presented below in *Table 4.2.1* against the actions to which they relate, in the draft Native Woodlands Habitat Management Plan.

Table 4.2.1 Woodlands - Workshop Comments on Suggested Actions

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey all Semi-natural woodlands & compile inventory. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify high priority Semi-natural woodlands for bringing into management (based on | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|--|---|
| <p>species diversity and scope for expansion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage responsible management of all existing Semi-natural woodlands • Bring priority into Semi-natural woodlands management to promote regeneration • Initiate programme of seed collection, propagation and planting of threatened species (hazel, juniper) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed that this was necessary and that long-term maintenance is considered for all future plantings. It was thought that long-term maintenance should be considered at an early stage when funding for the new plantings is obtained. Several comments indicated that there was a greater need to communicate with crofters on how to manage these areas of woodland in the long-term. Also it was mentioned that CnES and other organisations promoting woodland retention should work with crofting townships to protect woodland on common grazings. • Some attendees thought that there was limited potential for natural regeneration as only sycamore was setting seed and regenerating. • It was unclear to some why this action was limited to threatened species. Groups thought that it was important to plant smaller plots so that they are easy to manage and look after. There was a comment that plantings should be done in natural shapes not squares and rectangles. Most thought it was important to provide advice to crofters on what type of species to plant. It was also realised that it is important that it is made cost effective for people to grow woodland on their property. One group mentioned that they thought it was important to consider the type of habitat that the woodland would replace - in some cases on other islands woodland had been planted on environmentally sensitive habitat. It was questioned by one person whether it was worth the trouble of propagating Hazel from local species |

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce Woodland Strategy containing CnES endorsement of high priority for Semi-natural woodlands • Present case for Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme Locational Premium for Western Isles Semi-natural woodlands • Present case for increased coverage/ funding for RSS • Incorporate native woodlands in wider programme of Western Isles biodiversity awareness • Develop demonstration projects in the island groups to raise awareness of the benefits of regenerating native woodlands. Illustrate benefits in terms of ecology, landscape and long-term economic benefits along with good design & best practice. | <p>as there were very few species on the Western Isles. It was suggested that it might be more efficient to source Hazel trees from the mainland. Suggested that the Millennium Wood at Northbay may be a good place to plant Hazel trees. A question was raised as to whether the juniper suggested was the dwarf variety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • It was noted that paperwork associated with applying for grants are time consuming and not always clear. An easier application process would benefit the new scheme. • One group mentioned that crofting communities can already receive grants for the planting of shelterbelts. The present schemes should be used as far as possible. • None • Many thought that this action was very important. One group in particular thought that crofters and other land managers in the villages who were successfully growing native woodland on their land should be contacted and arrangements made so that these people can provide advice and assistance. |

4.2.2 Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan

As with all of the draft Biodiversity Action Plans, people were generally satisfied with the suggested actions set down in draft plan. Some comments and suggested actions did however indirectly relate to the suggested actions and they have been included in the table below against the relevant action (as they appear in the draft plan).

The key issue with respect to the suggested actions was the raising of public awareness of the Great Yellow Bumblebee. This was discussed at length and many of the new actions that were identified by the groups were in essence a sub-action of this main action already identified in the plan. Groups spoke about developing strategies for raising awareness of crofters, school children, tourists and the general public. Most felt that this was key to the implementation of all of the actions in the plan.

Table 4.2.2 Great Yellow Bumblebee - Workshop Comments on Suggested Actions

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree and establish a programme of annual survey and monitoring on machair and neutral grassland. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the current range of the bee in the Western Isles per 5km square or better. Publicise the map and ask for records. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the benefits of establishing a Local Record Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was mentioned that a local records centre has been proposed for Nunton Steadings. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an identification leaflet for the public and land managers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many mentioned that this was a very good idea. As well as a leaflet one group mentioned that an identification poster might be a good idea that could be put up in schools and tourist offices etc. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage adjoining land managers, eg. Harris Golf Club, to introduce 'bee-friendly' maintenance techniques. Identify a Harris contact to take this forward. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop habitat management guidelines for use by land managers in management plans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare exhibition and other material for the purposes of raising awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was a theme picked up at all of the workshops. All groups thought it was very important to raise the profile and awareness of the bee. In particular they |

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas of suitable habitat in Lewis and encourage 'bee friendly' management in these areas. | <p>thought awareness should be raised in 4 different groups of people, crofters, local people, school children and tourists. Different strategies for targeting these different groups were suggested. For example it was suggested that the tourist board could help to raise awareness amongst tourists and that rangers could take school children out to the machair to identify the bee. It was mentioned that there is the opportunity to include a Great Yellow Bumblebee display at the wildlife exhibition which is planned for Nunton Steadings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People that attended the Stornoway meeting were very surprised that there were so few recorded sightings of bees on Lewis and didn't think that the land was managed that differently from machair on Barra, the Uists and Benbecula. They thought it was less to do with land management and more to do with lack of survey and lack of awareness amongst local people of the bee. However in Barra, the group did think there were different grazing regimes on the machair in Lewis and Harris. |

4.2.3 Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan

As with the Great Yellow Bumblebee, the most important issue relating to the suggested actions in the draft Saline Lagoons Habitat Action Plan was the raising of awareness. Again, the groups thought that awareness raising should extend to crofters, tourists, school children and the general public and various means for targeting each group were discussed.

The comments are presented below as they relate to each suggested action, as they appear in the draft plan.

Table 4.2.3 Saline Lagoons - Workshop Comments on Suggested Actions

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|--------|-------------------|
|--------|-------------------|

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise data on saline lagoons in the Western Isles into a user-friendly form, and distribute to planners, landowners and land users. This should include good visual material to convey the character of saline lagoon habitats and species • Incorporate the need for maintaining the health of saline lagoons in future local structure and development plans. • Incorporate awareness of saline lagoons into ESA and similar schemes which aim to balance land use and conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most groups identified the raising of awareness as the most important issue for saline lagoons. Suggested that this action be extended to go beyond planners, landowners and land-users to include children, tourists and general public. It was suggested that there should be exhibitions to raise awareness as well as pamphlets for the general public and booklets for children which could be distributed to schools. One post-it note stated that they had never heard of the word 'lagoon' used to describe a feature of the local landscape which illustrated how important raising awareness is. It was also questioned whether there is a Gaelic word for Saline Lagoons. Most groups thought it was important to get groups out to see the lagoons, especially children. Another group thought that the CnES Biodiversity Website could be better used to raise awareness of the lagoons. One group mentioned that the tourist board could help to target tourists with an interest in marine environments to build initial interest in the habitat. • One group mentioned that 'joined-up thinking' was very important to prevent impacts to saline lagoons when developments were being considered. They thought it was very important to work with developers eg. road developers at an early stage. • None |

| Action | Workshop Comments |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After identification of saline lagoon areas in the Western Isles, take opportunities to identify any lagoons that may be adversely affected by sewage inputs with the aim of preventing any further adverse impacts. • Encourage natural water paths by supporting removal of prohibitive culverts • Monitor existing key populations and species at key sites to ensure quality is maintained or enhanced. • Implement appropriate actions contained in the Loch nam Madadh EMS Management Scheme • Commission further specialist surveys of this priority habitat. Many lagoonal species require specialist identification and will not have been recorded by MNCR surveys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One group suggested that financial assistance could be provided to individuals to upgrade their sewage systems to secondary treatment systems. One post-it note commented that drainage at Tob Valasay was an area where main drainage needed to be addressed to prevent further sewage and run-off pollution. • It was noted on one post-it note that culverts in some cases create lagoons. One group thought that it was important to consider each culvert individually and not support a blanket removal of the culverts. • None • One group suggested an interpretation centre at Lochmaddy. • One group felt that a lot of research had already been done on the lagoons. |

4.3 SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

4.3.1 Introduction

During the break out sessions, groups were asked to consider whether there were any new actions which they could suggest that would assist in delivering the LBAPs. All groups spent some considerable time discussing this. Many of the groups' suggested actions were very strongly related to the actions that have already been suggested in each of the draft plans. As with the examples given above, many of the suggested actions were, in a sense, sub-actions of those already in the draft plans. Naturally, the focus of the suggested actions was community based. Others were actions suggested for agencies and Government

but from a bottom-up perspective. Such actions related to the agency initiatives communities have understood to have worked well versus those considered not to have worked well in the past. There were some recurring themes with respect to suggested actions regardless of which plan was being discussed. These key themes are presented below in *Table 4.3.1*.

If a suggested action did not specifically relate to a particular plan but was suggested as a more general comment on environmental management issues on the island, they are discussed in *Annex B*.

The proposed actions have all been reviewed in the context of the existing draft plans and where considered and have been added (unless otherwise indicated) to the revised action tables included in the Executive Summary (see *Section 1*).

Table 4.3.1 **Key Themes**

- The importance of communicating with crofters and/or land-owners on the actions which they will be actively involved in implementing;
 - Raising awareness levels with the local and wider community;
 - Engaging children and young people as a means of fostering an interest in the environment at a young age but also as a means of disseminating ideas to parents and the wider community;
 - The role of tourists in developing economic value for the habitats and species;
 - Effective management and use of the CAP reforms;
 - Effective management and use of financial subsidies;
 - Better use of the CnES Biodiversity website;
 - With specific reference to the habitat plans:
 - Use of local species;
 - Provision and/or access to local species.
-

4.3.2 Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan

The suggested actions relating to the Native Woodlands Habitat Action Plan are as follows:

- Develop a mechanism (or make use of an existing one) to communicate with crofters for the purposes of providing advice on long-term management of planted areas, species selection, location of plantings, soil conditions, sourcing of local species, muir burn, grazing management and financial schemes.
 - Produce non-technical pamphlets with this type of advice for crofters and the general public.
 - Identify crofters in the area that are successfully managing native woodland and facilitate a process (for example a forum) whereby advice and experience can be exchanged.
- Develop a long-term maintenance plan for new plantations so that the focus is shifted away from merely planting trees to maintaining the area into the

future. Provide or make use of existing financial incentives to ensure long-term management of the newly planted areas.

- Undertake research into the genetic variability of species. This research ideally will include studies into the genetic differences between mainland and island species but should also include further research into the genetic differences between local on a micro-scale. For example differences between species from island to island and also differences between particular species growing on the west coast and east coast. The purpose of this action is to ensure that the species chosen for a particular location is best suited to that location and will stand the greatest chances of long-term survival.
- Establish local nurseries on each of the islands that stock local species.
- Provide and make use of existing financial incentives for crofters and grazing communities to alter management for the regeneration of forests – this action should be coupled with advice for crofters on land management and access financial schemes (see action above).
- Develop a means for controlling the deer population on the islands.
- Plant a series of community woodlands. These should be planted and managed, *ie.* owned, by the local communities. It will be important to involve schools in this process. This action could be part of a wider scheme that establishes a day, once per year that is known initially as ‘plant a tree day’ and every year thereafter as ‘maintain a tree day’ to help communities to understand that woodlands require maintenance and management.
- Establish woodland areas in school grounds. Children could for example plant a tree upon starting their education at a particular school and be encouraged to maintain the woodland area, and their tree during the course of their education.
- Develop a long-term plan to link woodland areas for the purpose of creating wildlife corridors and for promoting natural regeneration of woodland.
- Use willow coppice as a nurse crop for native woodlands rather than conifers.
- When choosing a location for a woodland area choose areas which were historically areas of woodland in the past, as indicated by the presence of remnant woodland plant species such as primrose and bluebell.
- Encourage people to grow local species in their own gardens.
- Hand out free local seedlings annually every year – perhaps an initiative that could be supported by the SAC.

4.3.3 Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan

The suggested actions relating to the Great Yellow Bumblebee Species Action Plan are as follows:

- Manage road-side verges for the bee.
- Provide or make use of existing financial incentives and policy reforms (such as CAP) for crofters to keep stock off their land in summer and to graze in winter and to use seaweed as a fertiliser.
- Develop a mechanism whereby crofters can be approached on an individual basis, perhaps by a ranger, to discuss positive management of the machair for environment and the bumblebee. Crofts should be prioritised according to need, it will be evident that some crofts require more immediate action than others.
- Develop an awareness campaign directed at school students. This is the perfect species to capture the imagination of children. As part of this campaign develop an identification kit for students and develop field days where they can go out into the machair with local rangers or other specialists to identify the bee in the field.
- Work with the tourist boards to raise the awareness of the bee with tourists. Use it as a tool to promote tourism on the island. Produce awareness pamphlets for tourists that are available at tourist information centres, tourism attractions and in local accommodation. Work with the local tourist boards to develop a campaign targeted at insect/bee enthusiasts throughout the UK to come to island to survey and record the bee. Ensure that there is a mechanism in place for tourists to report back sightings of the bee.
- Develop an awareness campaign that establishes an identity and image for the bee. Aim to make it a household word, through the local press, posters, pamphlets, local wildlife displays (such as at Nunton Steadings) and, the CnES Biodiversity Website. Ensure that the campaign is interesting and straightforward by using everyday language not Latin names or 'scientific speak'. The campaign should include actions that community members can undertake themselves to improve numbers, such as planting particular types of flowers in their gardens. This should be supported by distributing seeds for free or making the right kind of seeds readily available for purchase.
- Develop an awareness raising scheme directed at crofters, recognising that crofters spend the greatest time in the machair and therefore have the greatest potential to see and record the species presence (or absence). The Great Yellow Bumblebee is already included in the RSS as part of the incentive to manage machair in a favourable way for the bee. The awareness scheme should build on this and provide tool kits and training for crofters to identify the bee and means for reporting back records of the bee.
- Undertake further research into field mouse distribution and numbers and work towards building up a better understanding of fluctuations in field mouse populations and the impact on the Great Yellow Bumblebee. If a strong link is found between the two species, research should go on to

investigate the impact of cats and ferrets on the field mouse and knock-on impacts to bees.

- Improve access to beaches for crofters for the collection of seaweed to be used as fertiliser [this action has not been included in the revised action tables due to the possibility of increasing levels of beach degradation – it is however a point that should be considered if seaweed fertilisation is going to be promoted].
- Undertake research into the distribution of the female distribution of the Great Yellow Bumblebee for the purposes of understanding where the bees hibernate in winter.
- Ensure that seed mixes (when deemed suitable to use) include ‘bee-friendly’ flowers. Use local red clover seeds in the machair seed mixtures. At present only the white clover is used as it regenerates better from year to year. It was suggested that the reason that the red clover doesn’t regenerate well is that local red clover seed isn’t used in the reseed mixtures. This should be checked and research undertaken to determine if local red clover regenerates more successfully than non-local red clover.
- Use the CnES Website to better effect so that people on the island wishing to know more about the species can go to the website and find out more. National and international links should be provided for further information.

4.3.4 Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan

The suggested actions relating to the Saline (Coastal) Lagoons Habitat Action Plan are as follows:

- Communicate and work with crofters to address land management methods that detrimentally affect saline lagoons such as pesticide and fertiliser use. Provide advice on financial schemes and incentives that can help the sustainable management of their land to the benefit of saline lagoons.
- Establish a Western Isles sea-life centre, perhaps a Lochmaddy, which provides exhibits and explains systems for visitors and a lab research centre for visiting researchers and students.
- Develop an awareness campaign to raise the profile of this habitat. This should include basic information on where lagoons are located since most people on the island do not know they exist. This could be achieved through permanent and mobile exhibitions, posters, and open field days for adults and children. The campaign should include a marketing element – sell the idea of the importance of the lagoons to local people as a haven for unique plant and wildlife, as the most important area in the entire world for saline lagoons and as a tourism resource which could bring cash into the community. It is necessary that the economic and social aspects of the saline lagoons are targeted in the awareness campaign also, not just environmental aspects.
- Develop an education and awareness campaign directed at students and children implemented through schools. Prepare educational, but interesting, videos for use in schools to foster an early understanding of the local marine

environment and an understanding of saline lagoons. The education should include field visits so that students can visualise what a lagoon is.

- Establish a young naturalist group –not limited to including young people, but run and managed by young people. This will enable young people to establish their own environmental priorities and empower young people with an environmental advisory/educational role within the community.
- Establish a role for Comann na Mara in raising the awareness of the saline lagoons.
- Use the CnES Biodiversity Website to better effect to help raise awareness of the lagoon and provide a resource for people wishing to investigate and find out more about the saline lagoons.
- Develop a saline lagoons management plan for the Western Isles (or incorporate as part of a broader coastal management plan) that sets policies to proactively address potential impacts from development.
- Monitor new and existing aquaculture developments for impacts to the ecosystem of the lagoons.
- Address the problem of marine litter on the island. This is important as it effects the image of the lagoon. It is difficult to get the message across that the lagoons are worth protecting if the litter gives the impression that they are not cared for.
- Investigate green-tourism opportunities for these habitats. For example the use of glass-bottomed boats for tourists (as has been done on Lochmaddy) to make the lagoons more accessible and visual and bring money into the local economy.