

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 21 July 2020 16:07
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Jimmy,

That would be really helpful. Thankyou so much!

Thanks
[REDACTED]

From: Jimmy Hyslop [mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot]
Sent: 21 July 2020 16:01
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

No that's fine. How about a decision one way or another by close of play on Friday 7th August?
jimmy

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 21 July 2020 16:00
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Jimmy,

An extension of two weeks would be very welcome, thankyou! Is there anything you need from me in order to make the request?

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: Jimmy Hyslop [mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot]
Sent: 21 July 2020 12:44
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi [REDACTED]
Just had a look at the calendar. Our funding offer is valid for 30 days which means that we would be looking for an acceptance by the weekend.

With you on shorter hours and me on leave next week, do you wish to request an extension of two weeks to allow this to be resolved?

Jimmy

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 21 July 2020 12:18
To: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for this. Please note that I will be on holiday for a week from this Friday evening,
Jimmy

From: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk)>

Sent: 21 July 2020 12:13

To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Jimmy,

Up until yesterday, the weather down here was pretty underwhelming – overcast and muggy. The last couple of days however have been lovely – sunshine and some blue skies!

Apologies for the delay in responding to your last email. We are just waiting for the outcome of a local meeting this week to discuss the implications of the project on deer management. This could lead to some additional costs and we just want to be clear on the final figures before we move forward. I hope to be in a position to update you later this week. I hope this doesn't cause you too much inconvenience.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 17 July 2020 16:51

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi [REDACTED]

Hope that you are well and have marginally better weather than the dreich stuff here.

I am conscious that I haven't anything from you, three weeks on from sending out the offer.

Please let me know how things are going,

Jimmy

From: Jimmy Hyslop

Sent: 08 July 2020 15:49

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk)>

Subject: RE: 501341 - Funding Offer - REVISED

Hi [REDACTED]

Well I chose the wrong week, weather wise, to take annual leave.

Anyway, If you have any questions about the funding offer, just give me a bell or drop an e-mail,

Jimmy

From: Jimmy Hyslop

Sent: 26 June 2020 14:11

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk)>

Subject: 501341 - Funding Offer - REVISED

Hi [REDACTED]

There was a small typo on the figures in the first page of the previous Funding Offer, which I have rectified in this version,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR | t:0131 314 [REDACTED]
| [REDACTED]

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach Chluaidh | G81 2NR
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Thoiribh an aire airson adhbharan gnothaich, 's dòcha gun tèid sùil a chumail air puist-dealain a' tighinn a-steach agus a' dol a-mach bho SNH.

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<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 23 July 2020 09:52
To: [REDACTED]; Tamara Lawton; Sinclair Coghill
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Fencing proposal

Hi [REDACTED]

Providing access and signing along the fence line seems like a sensible approach. Stiles over a deer fence would be a very restrictive access option and we recommend self-closing gates in the fence line in line with good practice.

If [REDACTED] does not reckon that it is likely to be sufficiently contentious that it would need to be referred to the Access Forum, then I am content with that. Suggest that you might want to keep in touch with him as the fencing works near completion,

Jimmy

From: [REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>
Sent: 23 July 2020 07:23
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Fencing proposal

Dear All,

Please see below the response from the access officer for the area. There will be a number of stiles at certain points along the Kirkaig, the locations will be decided when the fenceline is walked in August, as there are only certain points at which someone is able to cross the Kirkaig (but even at these points they would be wading), so it seems sensible to have access points there, and signage along the fence where appropriate.

If I respond to this email, saying that we take all of this on board, will this be acceptable for the BCF contract terms?

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: 17 July 2020 13:19
To: [REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Fencing proposal

Hi [REDACTED]

My apologies for not replying sooner but happy to discuss if you still wish.

There is a Ross & Cromarty Access Forum but it only meets 2 times a year and I would take issues forward to discuss with it. Its purpose is to advise the Council on access matters and so not every issue is put before the Forum, mainly the contentious ones.

As for the fence you propose it is across mostly wild rough land with little access. The path to access the Loch at Boat Bay appears to be outside your boundary. There is a path shown on maps from Rubha Phollaidh to Polly which would cross the fence but I have never walked it and so do not know its current use. However, it would be best to accommodate a self closing gate in this location. The path up the Kirkaig River also appear to be outside your

boundary. However, given the length of the fence, I would suggest that you include a means of crossing the fence in a number of locations as people may exercise their access rights over the land. Depending on the locations, small arrows attached to the fence pointing to the closest gate/stile can also be helpful.

I hope this is helpful.

Kind regards,

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■■■■■■■■■■

Outdoor Access & Long Distance Route Manager
The Highland Council, Council Offices, Dingwall IV15 9QN

During the COVID-19 lockdown staff are working from home please use email at this time.



From: ■■■■■■■■■■@coigach-assynt.org>
Sent: 08 July 2020 09:06
To: ■■■■■■■■■■@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Fencing proposal

Hi ■■■■■

I hope you are well and managing in the current situation.

I was wondering if you would be free today at all to discuss the Eisg Brachaidh Deer fencing proposal (map attached).

The proposal is to fence the legal landward boundary of Eisg Brachaidh Estate and then to manage the deer within the estate to the level at which woodland regeneration and non-woodland habitats see improvement. There aren't any rights of way as such, but we want to be sure that access is not inhibited. In particular we believe that Kayakers take their Kayaks onto Loch Sionasgaig from a wee car parking area just outside EB estate.

The fence will be part funded by the BCF fund (SNH) and they have requested that we speak to the local access forum – I wasn't aware that there was one and wondered if you would be able to put me in touch with them?

Anyway it would probably be easier to talk about this, so it would be great if you could let me know when you are free.

Kind Regards,

■■■■■■■■■■

Coigach-Assynt Living Landscape Project
Woodland Manager

■■■■■■■■■■

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 06 August 2020 17:18
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Fencing proposal

Hi [REDACTED]

I have had no internet access since Tuesday 10.35am.

Thanks for letting me know. Happy to give you another week and with switching the deer control finds into the fencing.

Jimmy

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 05 August 2020 13:06
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: Eisd Brachaidh Fencing proposal

Hi Jimmy,

Apologies for taking so long to get back to you, I have been waiting for various bits of information to fall into place so that I can give you a full picture of where we are.

The project team have now had the chance to finalise the costs, which stand at £428,246.27. As this represents a higher cost than we originally forecast, the funding required has also increased. We have received two very kind donations amounting to £43k in total, however there is still a funding gap of £117k. There is a very strong likelihood that this can be covered from underspends in the wider CALLP project, however official confirmation of this won't happen until September. In the meantime, Woodland Trust Management Team will be asked to underwrite the gap. We are currently waiting this to be signed off, hopefully by the end of this week. However, in the event that this runs into next week, would it be at all possible for the deadline for contract return to be extended by another few days? Apologies, I know you have already kindly given us an extension!

On a separate note, it has been decided that deer control can be carried out in one session rather than two, which has decreased the cost of this element. Would it therefore be possible to move funding from this line up to deer fencing, as below?

Cost description	Original total cash cost	Revised cash cost	Original BCF funding award 2020/2021	Proposed BCF funding 2020/2021
Deer fencing (based on 17.1km @£17.50 per metre)	242250.00	316588	116666.67	131714.44
Cattle grid across public road	25000.00	25000	25000.00	25000
Enrichment planting (5000 trees, fertiliser, labour and canes)	6950.00	6950	6950.00	6950
Deer control	16666.67	8333.34	16666.67	8333.34
Irrecoverable VAT	58174.00	71374.93	33057.33	26342.89
Total	349040.67	428246.27	198340.67	198340.67

Many thanks and apologies again for the delays and changes.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 06 August 2020 16:04
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Signed grant agreement Eisg Brachaidh
Attachments: 501341 - Funding Offer - Word version (A3210615) signed.pdf

Hi Jimmy,

Please find attached our signed grant agreement. Apologies again for the delay.

Thankyou for all your help and support over the last few months!

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

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Scottish Natural Heritage
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YOUR SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE GRANT OFFER

BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE FUND

Project Reference :	501341		
Project Title:	Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project		
Organisation:	Woodland Trust Scotland		
Project period:	Start date	01 July 2020	End date 31 March 2021
Grant Offer date:	26 June 2020		

Name and Address of Applicant

Woodland Trust Scotland
South Inch Business Centre
Shore Road
Perth
PH2 8BW

1. Your Grant Offer

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), in exercise of its powers under Section 9 of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991, offers grant funding to **Woodland Trust Scotland** for the total value of **£198,340.67**

Funding is awarded per SNH financial year (1 April to 31 March) as follows:

2020/21	£198,340.67
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Coronavirus pandemic/COVID-19 - this Grant Offer is not an agreement with SNH that the planned activity is essential and able to be carried out in a safe manner. **Compliance with current Scottish Government and UK Government policy is the responsibility of the Applicant.** The Applicant must satisfy themselves that planned activity is compliant at all times.

2. Your project

This Grant Offer is based on your application submitted by [REDACTED] on the 3rd February 2020.

Scottish Natural Heritage, Caspian House, 2 Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR Tel: 0131 314 6750 www.nature.scot

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, Taigh Caspian, 2 Cùirt a' Mharaiche, Pàirc Gnothachais Bhruach Chluaidh, Bruach Chluaidh G81 2NR Fòn: 0131 314 6750 www.nature.scot

Purpose of Grant

To restore the health of 2,000ha of various habitats in SSSI/SAC on Eisd Brachaidh estate through reducing the deer grazing pressure and some supplementary planting. This involves erecting a 17.1km fence, installing a cattle grid and undertaking deer control.

3. Your Project costs

The table below shows the **maximum** grant we are offering per SNH financial year towards the costs of work. Only costs detailed in the table below can be claimed from us.

Funding awarded is **inclusive** of VAT. Our contribution to any irrecoverable VAT you have applied for is shown in the table below as a separate project cost.

Cost Description	Total Cash Cost (£)	SNH Funding 2020/21 (£)
Deer fencing (based on 17.1km @£17.50 per metre)	242,250.00	116,666.67
Cattle grid across public road	25,000.00	25,000.00
Enrichment planting (5,000 trees, fertiliser, labour and canes)	6,950.00	6,950.00
Deer control	16,666.67	16,666.67
Irrecoverable VAT	58,174.00	33,057.33
Total	349,040.67	198,340.67

If your final project costs are lower than expected when you applied, we will reduce our grant pro-rata.

4. Project Progress and Claim Schedule

Your schedule for claiming funds is detailed below. Payment will be made in arrears and claims will require to be supported by evidence of expenditure. Any specific evidence requirements will be outlined in the Special Conditions noted below.

Subject to approval, we will make payment to you within 30 working days of receiving a completed form.

Period covered by claim	Expected claim date	Expected Claim Value (£)
29 June - 31 December 2020	15 January 2021	£25,000.00
01 January – 31 March 2021	15 April 2020	£173,340.67

We reserve the right to withhold payment if you do not submit your Project Progress and Claim form(s) on time.

5. Evaluation and Reporting

Project achievement will be measured against the activities and expected outputs detailed in your application.

The following reporting measures relate to this Grant Offer:

Reporting	
1	<p>Project Progress & Claim</p> <p>A progress report should be submitted as part of each claim for payment, to include details of costs incurred and activities delivered during the reporting period. It should also include any publicity acknowledging SNH/BCF support for the project. A template will be provided by SNH.</p>
2	<p>End of Project Report</p> <p>An end of project report should be submitted with the final claim for payment or no later than 15 April 2021. This report is additional to standard progress reports as part of each claim and should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Before and after photographs showing the BCF funded works undertaken ▪ An updated map confirming location of works/activity ▪ A summary of overall project delivery, quantified as appropriate ▪ An assessment of the extent to which the project has met its aims and the intended outcomes can realistically be achieved ▪ Any significant challenges encountered and actions taken to address them ▪ Any additional or unintended benefits as a result of the project, to include any relating to working with project partners and landowners ▪ An outline of maintenance plans, including funding, for the 10 year compliance period ▪ An indication of any further works/new projects planned as a result of the BCF project ▪ How you have acknowledged BCF funding throughout your project. <p>The report should be produced electronically in a format that can be readily shared with others, including publication on our website.</p>

6. Funding Conditions

Your Funding is subject to our Standard Terms and Conditions which form part of your contract with us. These are attached in **Annex 1**.

In addition to Scottish Natural Heritage's Standard Terms and Conditions, the following Conditions apply:

Special Conditions	
1	<p>You must comply with the Guidance on how to acknowledge our support for your project that is available on our website.</p> <p>Please note – due to the current coronavirus pandemic we are asking applicants not to promote their fund awards for the time being. We will be back in touch with you to outline how we plan to announce the fund awards and your options for promoting your project in due course.</p>

2	All relevant permissions <u>must</u> be confirmed before work commences and are the responsibility of the applicant. This includes permissions relating to designated sites, felling licences and SEPA licences as required. You must provide evidence of permissions prior to starting your project, unless we have agreed otherwise.
3	<p>A compliance period of 10 years will be mandatory for all land management and site improvement works funded through the BCF. This requires that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where the landowner is not the applicant, the landowner gives permission for the works taking place; ▪ That the landowner also gives permission for any subsequent maintenance to take place, alongside a commitment not to change the use of the land. In the event of selling land, the obligations contained within this Grant Offer must form part of the sale contract; ▪ The site is maintained in the condition created with BCF funds to enable the longer term benefits to be realised. Any maintenance to BCF funded works (for example repairs to fencing, management of new hedgerows) will be at no further cost to SNH. <p>You are responsible for ensuring landowner permissions are in place to allow them to fulfil their contractual maintenance obligations. Standard wording for landowner permissions is provided in our Landowner Permission form.</p> <p>The landowner agreement form was received by SNH on 25 June 2020.</p>
4	All activity funded through BCF must be completed by 31 March 2021 . You must notify SNH immediately if your project experiences any issues that mean this timescale for completion will not be met.
5	BCF funding is awarded to support delivery of the activities detailed in Annex 3 . Any proposed changes to the activities must be discussed and agreed with SNH first.
6	All information submitted to SNH, including any spatial data, will be made freely available for reuse. The information will be used for SNH legitimate interests, which include, but are not limited to, informing the development of relevant strategies, policies and guidance. It may also be shared with research communities to support national research programmes on land use management to support biodiversity, and any other party SNH considers relevant. Personal information will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and any other relevant legislation. Please refer to our Funding Privacy Notice .
7	Due to size of the area to be enclosed the applicant must explore the proposals with the Local Access Forum before the fencing goes ahead.

7. Contract Period

Please note that the Terms and Conditions of your Grant Contract will apply for the duration of the Project and for **10** years from the date of your final payment of Grant. This is the Contract Period.

8. Acceptance of your Funding Offer

Please now sign a copy of this Funding Offer and return it either as a scanned document to

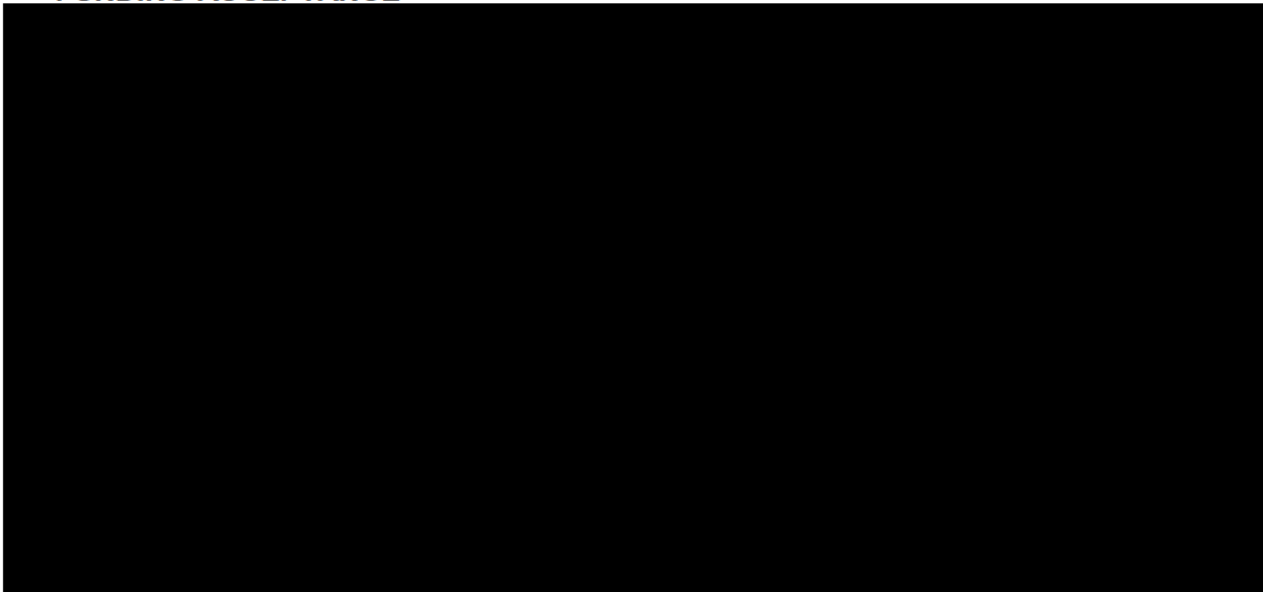
jimmy.hyslop@nature.scot .

You must complete the Funding Offer Acceptance section below and send the signed copy of this Funding Offer to us within 30 days of the Funding Offer date. You must be the applicant or have the relevant authority to accept this Funding Offer for and on behalf of the applicant. If you do not accept our Funding Offer within 30 days, we reserve the right to withdraw or reduce our Offer to you.

Signed *Jimmy Hyslop* for and on behalf of SNH

Jimmy Hyslop
Funding Officer

FUNDING ACCEPTANCE



Annex 1

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE - STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF GRANT

These Terms and Conditions shall apply to the Grant offered by us to you and are incorporated into the Grant Contract. These Terms and Conditions shall prevail over any terms or conditions and may be varied only with our Written agreement.

Definitions

- 'we', 'us', 'our' – Scottish Natural Heritage
- 'you', 'your' – the individual or organisation(s) awarded the Grant as set out in our Grant Offer
- Approved Activities – the agreed project activities to be completed as part of the Project as detailed in the Grant Offer.
- Contract Period – the period of time specified under 'Contract Period' in the Grant Offer. This includes any maintenance or monitoring period following completion of the actual grant project.
- Grant - the grant award offered to you by us in the Grant Offer
- Grant Contract - the Grant Offer together with these Terms and Conditions and the requirements referred to in the Grant Offer, these Terms and Conditions, and the Guidance
- Grant Offer – the formal letter offering our Grant to you
- Guidance – the documents we publish to guide you about our grants
- Project – the project set out in the grant proposals, adjusted by any changes agreed in writing between you and us and/or any changes contained in the Grant Offer. The Project includes the purposes for which you applied for a grant and how you intend carrying out those purposes
- Property – any assets such as buildings, land, equipment, vehicles, documents or other assets such as intellectual property rights that you buy, create, restore, conserve or otherwise fund with the Grant
- Writing and Written shall incorporate the use of Electronic Forms of writing

1. Use of Grant for specified purposes

You must only use the Grant for the Project. Any change to the Project must be approved by us in writing and in advance.

2. Starting the Project

You must not start or make any changes to the Project prior to us advising you we have received your acceptance of our Grant Offer. Any work started or goods/ equipment purchased prior to this will not be eligible for the Grant unless specifically agreed by us in writing.

3. Contract documents to be followed

You must comply with the Grant Contract throughout the Contract Period.

4. Permissions and consents

You must comply with all domestic and European legislation and regulations relevant to the Project and have all necessary consents and permissions in place before work commences. Evidence of compliance and consents must be supplied to us if requested.

5. Buying goods and services

If the Project involves buying goods or services or undertaking works, you must secure good value for money with the Grant.

To help achieve this you must get competitive quotes and tenders for all goods, works and services in accordance with the contract thresholds outlined in **Annex 2** below. Contract thresholds reflect the value of the contract, not the total Project value or SNH grant value.

If you intend to contract on a different basis from the thresholds outlined in **Annex 2**, you must get our prior approval, in writing.

If you are a public body you should follow your own purchasing procedures to ensure public accountability.

You must put formal contracts in place with contractors, suppliers and professional advisers before you start the respective element of the Project. The terms of these should be proportionate to the standards required of the Project. Employers or clients should be appropriately experienced to carry out the work required of them.

If the Project involves a new post(s) you must advertise this and conduct a formal recruitment process.

6. Standard and sustainability of project

You must carry out the Project in line with relevant best practice and to an appropriate standard for its purpose.

In addition, you should take all reasonable steps to optimise opportunities for sustainable procurement and building sustainability into your activities.

7. Overspend and underspend

The Grant is the total amount of funds we will provide and will not be increased if your costs increase or for any other reason.

If you complete the Project without spending the full amount of Grant, we will recalculate the amount of Grant to be paid to reflect the underspend. If you receive payment in advance and complete the Project without spending the full amount of the Grant you must pay back the proportion of Grant that reflects the underspend.

We will not allow any underspend to be carried forward into a new financial year. Any underspend at the end of a financial year will be retained by SNH. It will not be carried forward to any future years of the Grant, where these exist. Notwithstanding the foregoing, we may consider carrying forward underspend in exceptional circumstances where SNH considers it is in the public interest. This must be formally agreed in writing.

You must inform us of any change to your VAT status and/or to the level of VAT you need to pay in respect of the project. If your VAT payment decreases, we will reduce our contribution to those costs and you will have to pay back any amounts of VAT you have managed to claim back. If your VAT payments increase we will not increase our grant payment. In exceptional cases we may consider assisting with increased VAT costs where SNH considers it is in the public interest. This must be formally agreed in writing.

8. Evidence of satisfactory delivery

We will only pay the Grant once you have provided evidence of satisfactory delivery of the Approved Activities detailed in the Grant Offer, unless the Grant Offer specifies payment on a different basis.

9. Ongoing conditions

We will pay you the Grant or any instalment of it in line with the Grant Contract, provided we are satisfied you are delivering (and will continue to deliver) the Project as outlined in your Grant Application and the Grant Contract.

This includes delivering the requirements of any maintenance or monitoring period when the grant Project has been completed.

10. Maintenance and restoration

Where the Grant relates to Property you must maintain the Property in good repair and condition for the duration of the Contract Period. This includes keeping it physically secure in an appropriate environment. You must also keep any objects or fixtures that form part of the Property in a physically secure and appropriate environment.

11. Sale and transfer of goods and services

You must continue to own any Property and maintain responsibility for what happens to it for the duration of the Contract Period.

You must not sell, let or otherwise dispose of the Property or any part of it or any interest in it during the Contract Period without our written approval in advance. Our approval may include new conditions.

If you do sell, let or otherwise dispose of the Property with our approval you will repay us immediately the Grant, or such part of it as we decide. The amount to be paid will reduce by equal proportions over the whole of the Contract Period so that by the end of that period the liability for repayment would be nil. We will tell you how much we expect you to repay when agreeing to any sale or transfer.

If you sell or otherwise dispose of the Property or any part of it **without** our approval we will consider this to be in breach of the Grant Contract. If this is the case then Clause 18 will apply.

12. Period of Grant

The terms and conditions applying to the Grant will apply for the Contract Period specified in the Grant Offer.

13. Insurance

You must insure the Property for its full reinstatement value including inflation and professional fees during the Contract Period unless we specifically agree otherwise. If the Property is lost or damaged, for example by fire, lightning, storm or flood, you may find that you cannot meet the approved Activities of your Project. In this instance we may have to consider claiming back our payments made in accordance with the Grant.

You must take out insurance for the works (if any) and for any unfixed materials and goods delivered to the property. All of these must be covered for their full value against loss or damage.

You must tell us, in writing, within five working days about any significant loss or damage to the Property or as soon as you are aware.

If we have agreed in writing that you can self-insure, you do not need to take out insurance in respect of the Property.

14. Other Project funding

Our Grant is made on the basis that other funding for the Project (financial contributions from other parties, your financial contribution) will be in accordance with the financial information provided in your Grant Application. We will be entitled to ask for confirmation of such funding.

If such funding is varied or withdrawn you will inform us without delay. If match funding is not secured we reserve the right to review the level of our support, should changes to the Project need to be made. We also reserve the right to vary or withdraw our Grant although we will only do this after discussing the situation with you.

15. Acknowledgement of Grant

You must acknowledge the Grant publicly in line with the requirements in our grant acknowledgement Guidance. Payment of Grant may be withheld if you fail to comply with these requirements or fail to provide satisfactory evidence that you have done so if requested by us.

If requested, you must provide us with photographs or transparencies or high resolution digital images, including video images of your Project. All images should be in electronic format. You must also meet any other acknowledgement or publicity requirements we may tell you about from time to time.

You give us the right to use the photographs, transparencies or digital images, including video images you provide to us. You must get any permission, including copyright, you need for you and us to use these images, including the consent of any persons appearing in them where applicable, before you send them to us or before you use them.

We may publicise the Grant in whatever way we think fit.

16. Right to inspect

You must allow reasonable access to any person authorised to inspect the Project for the purpose of ensuring that the Terms of Grant are being complied with.

17. Financial Information & Records

You must keep sufficient financial information and records relating to the Project, in accordance with our financial information and records Guidance. Records should be kept for the Contract Period.

For the duration of the Contract Period, SNH and the Auditor General of Scotland may require an examination of your financial information, documents and records and you must permit access to these upon request.

You must give us any financial (e.g. receipted invoices, payslips, time sheets) or other information we may request from time to time relating to the Project or the Grant.

We have the right, as funders, to require you to improve your financial information and record keeping – or such other requirements as we may specify - if we consider it necessary to do so to meet accepted standards for the management and reporting (including audit) on the use of public funds.

18. Repayment of Grant

We will stop paying the Grant and you must repay us any Grant that we have already paid if:

- You fail to comply with the Grant Contract
- Any information given to us by, or on behalf of you, in connection with the Grant, is found to be incorrect, misleading or fraudulent, whether this is provided before or after the Grant has been paid
- You do not use the Grant for the Project or change the Project without getting our prior written permission
- You change your legal status, close down, are declared bankrupt or go into receivership or liquidation
- You are negligent or fraudulent in relation to your dealings with us over the Grant
- You knowingly withhold information that is relevant to the Grant

We may exercise any of our rights under the Grant Contract at any time, even if we do not do so immediately. If we decide not to rely on one right, we may still rely on any of our other rights under the Grant Contract.

19. Transfer of Grant

The Grant is personal to you and you may not assign the Grant or any rights or obligations under the Grant Contract without our agreement in writing.

If, due to future organisational restructuring, we notify you that SNH's grant giving powers are altered we reserve the right to transfer the Grant to another body for funding in place of the SNH grant scheme. In the event of this situation arising, your Grant Contract with us will transfer to such a body when you are accepted into the other grant scheme.

20. Use of Property for security

You must not use the Property as security for a loan or other commitment without our prior approval.

21. Indemnity provision

You will indemnify us against all action, claims, demands, costs, expenses and losses incurred by or made against us which arise out of or in connection with the payment of the Grant or any services or Property created or provided using the Grant.

22. Grant correspondence

Any notice, request or document we send to each other concerning the Grant must be delivered to the addresses in the Grant Offer or such other address as we might agree with you.

Annex 2 - Procurement requirements

One of the Conditions of receiving funding from us is that you must secure good value for money if your Project involves buying goods or services or undertaking works.

This is outlined in our Standard Terms and Conditions of funding - paragraph 5 above – Buying goods and services.

Procurement purchasing thresholds

All Applicants should demonstrate good procurement practice by inviting open and fair competitive quotes, emails are acceptable, and tenders as outlined below*:

*Public Bodies should follow their own purchasing procedures to ensure public accountability. Please have these available, as we may ask to see them.

Purchasing threshold - including any VAT that may be payable	Requirement
£1,000 & below	x 1 Quote – to ensure value for money
£1,000 to £25,000	x 3 Quotes – a minimum of 3 suppliers to be invited to quote Justification required if single tender Justification required if Other Than Lowest Quote
£25,000 to £50,000	x 5 Quotes - a minimum of 5 suppliers to be invited to quote Justification required if 5 suppliers not invited to quote Justification required if Other Than Lowest Quote
£50,000 and above	- advertise and full procurement tendering exercise Where an Applicant plans to do the restoration work on their own land, personally or through their business operations, we will require additional evidence to ensure fair and open competition and value for money. Please email BCF@nature.scot for more information.

If you intend to contract on a different basis from the thresholds above, you must get our prior approval in writing.

You will need to keep appropriate financial information and records to support purchasing decisions.

Applicants must not enter into a formal contract with a supplier prior to receiving and accepting a formal offer of funding from us.

Annex 3 – BCF Supported Activity

	Project Activity	Location/site(s)	Outputs
A	Repair and replacement of deer fences around the Estate perimeter	Eisg Brachaidh eEstate	17.1km new fence erected to protect the estate from deer grazing pressures
B	Cattle grid across public road		One cattle grid to prevent deer ingress along road
C	Deer control within the fenced area	Eisg Brachaidh Estate	All deer within fence removed down to a level of 1 deer per sq km
D	Enrichment planting to aid natural regeneration	Various areas within the newly fenced area on Eisg Brachaidh Estate	5,000 native trees planted

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 16 August 2020 19:47
To: info@landcommission.gov.scot
Cc: [REDACTED]@btinternet.com; [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Dear Sir/madam

We have been sent the Consultation below.
The deadline is only 3 weeks which would seem to conflict with your good practice guide Community Engagement in Decisions Relating to Land.
The parties involved are the owners represented by CKD Galbraith, CALL and the Woodland Trust.
There has been no consultation with [REDACTED] let alone the Assynt community who will be impacted by 5 miles of fence guiding deer to Inverkirkaig and exacerbating existing problems in Lochinver.
Can you help?

Yours faithfully

From: WSDMG [mailto:wsuthdmg@btinternet.com]
Sent: 16 August 2020 13:53
To: WSDMG - Secretary
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

See below for info.

[REDACTED]
Secretary, West Sutherland Deer Management Group
[REDACTED]

Tel. [REDACTED] M. [REDACTED]
Email wsuthdmg@btinternet.com
WSDMG website wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk
ADMG website www.deer-management.co.uk

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-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Sent: 14 August 2020 15:05
To: assyntofficeservices@btinternet.com
Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

For information of the Local Deer mgmt. sub-group:

Please see below a text we have just sent out to the Ullapool News and Assynt News, which you may wish to circulate.

Many thanks.

The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

An exciting initiative to restore woodland, heath and peatland across the 2000ha Eisg Brachaidh Estate has secured more than £420,000 thanks to support from the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Challenge Fund and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is also being sought from Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Eisg Brachaidh project area forms part of the Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project aims to restore a range of habitats including saving irreplaceable old woodland remnants and improving the condition of heathland communities on this part of the Inverpolly SAC.

Key to its success is reducing grazing pressure from deer. There are no young trees growing on the Estate and the few mature trees that do remain are fading fast. Wet and dry heathland and bogs are also suffering from over browsing and trampling. We need to act now to stop further loss of woodland and help rare heathland and peatland habitats recover.

We plan do this by installing a deer fence around the estate boundary. Deer will remain within the fence but numbers will be kept at a sustainable level alongside continued cattle grazing. Cattle have a different grazing style from deer and it is this mix of grazing that's important to support natural habitat improvements.

Open public access will be maintained throughout the project with suitably placed gates, cattle grids and stiles.

We appreciate that when an area is fenced it can be difficult to predict the knock-on effect of deer movements in the surrounding area. These impacts can be managed however, and the project partners are committed to dealing with any problems that may arise for neighbours. The movement and number of deer will be monitored to help with this.

As lead partner for the CALLP woodland projects, Woodland Trust Scotland will be responsible for work on the ground in association with Eisd Brachaidh Estate under guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage regarding deer and designated habitats.

This is an exciting large-scale restoration project that will be delivered over many years to create healthy Assynt habitats for the next generation to enjoy. We look forward to getting started!

If anyone has any queries please do get in touch. Contact [redacted] ([redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or [redacted] ([redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk) before 1 September 2020.

[redacted]
PR & Communications Officer

Telephone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk<mailto:[redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Woodland Trust, South Inch Business Centre, Perth, Perthshire, PH2 8BW
01738 635 544
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>

[Fb]<<https://www.facebook.com/thewoodlandtrust/>>[Tw]<<https://twitter.com/WoodlandTrust/>>[Yt]<https://www.youtube.com/user/woodlandtrust/>

[Woodland Trust Scotland]<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>
Stand up for trees<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>

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Registered in England No. 1982873.
Registered Office: Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL.
<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Sharon Phipps

From: BCF
Sent: 17 August 2020 13:14
To: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk'
Cc: Jimmy Hyslop
Subject: 501341 - Biodiversity Challenge Fund – publicity of your project
Attachments: BCF - media release template - July 2020.docx

Dear [REDACTED]

As we have received Acceptance of your Funding Offer it's now possible to proceed with publicity of your project.

We'd ask you to complement our media release of 10 July 2020 by publicising your Biodiversity Challenge Fund award with your local media. Please find attached the media release template which you can use for this purpose. Please have your own spokesperson available for the day you choose to share your media release, in case of local radio or TV interview requests.

News releases can be circulated to SNH's Publicity Manager, Cat Synnot, for review and comment if you would find this helpful and/or require further guidance. When possible, please allow 72 hours for feedback.

Please note that email news releases may be sent without logos as plain emails (without attachments) to prevent rejection by the recipient's system.

Please also tag us in any social media you issue about your project using #NatureScot and we will look to share on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) channels where possible.

Acknowledging our funding is an important condition of your Offer. Our [Acknowledgement Guidance for Biodiversity Challenge Fund](#) has important information about Working with the Media which we ask you to read. There may be other ways you wish to promote your award and our guidance has suggestions on this.

Contacting us

If you have any questions about promoting your project please contact our primary contact for Biodiversity Challenge Fund media relations, Cat Synnot, Publicity Manager - cat.synnot@nature.scot.

If you have any other questions about the fund please email us – BCF@nature.scot.

Kind regards
Central Funding Team

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 07 September 2020 15:01
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 17 August 2020 12:54
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Cc: Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Thanks Graeme,

██████████ seems to misunderstand, as the wording "If anyone has any queries please do get in touch" does not constitute a consultation,

Jimmy

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 12:50
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Cc: Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Hi Jimmy,

I think the consultation he's referring to would be the email from ██████████ at the Woodland Trust asking for comments on the EB fencing proposal which is at the bottom of this email. We certainly wouldn't have a three week public consultation for any of our work, but I'm not sure what (if any) direction we have given on the length of consultation period for this proposal. In terms of our response we may look to contact the Land Commission and advise them of the situation and let them know what local discussion have been taking place. They may benefit from some context prior to response.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 12:36
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Cc: Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Hi Graeme,
An observation and a question for you:

██████████' e-mail is addressed to the Scottish Land Commission, presumably in relation to its role promoting good practice and relations between landowners and tenants
<https://landcommission.gov.scot/our-work/tenant-farming> .

██████████ refers to a consultation with a deadline of only 3 weeks. What is the consultation and who is requesting responses/involvement?

Jimmy

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 09:37
To: Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Cc: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Hi Folks,

Can we get our heads together and see how we respond to this?

Thanks,

Graeme

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 09:25
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Hi Graeme,
See below from ██████████. I cannot see any information in his email chain about a consultation, so I don't know what specifically he is talking about. Are you happy to deal with the response, if any is needed, as you did with the previous contact from ██████████ in June?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer
Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR
| t:0131 314 ██████████ Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach
Chluaidh | G81 2NR nature.scot - Connecting People and Nature in Scotland - @nature_scot

From: ██████████ <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 16 August 2020 19:47
To: info@landcommission.gov.scot
Cc: ██████████ <@btopenworld.com>; ██████████ <@btinternet.com>; ██████████ <@inverandkirkaig.com>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

Dear Sir/madam

We have been sent the Consultation below.
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There has been no consultation with [REDACTED] let alone the Assynt community who will be impacted by 5 miles of fence guiding deer to Inverkirkaig and exacerbating existing problems in Lochinver.

Can you help?

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

From: WSDMG [<mailto:wsuthdmg@btinternet.com>]
Sent: 16 August 2020 13:53
To: WSDMG - Secretary
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh woodland project

See below for info.

[REDACTED]
Secretary, West Sutherland Deer Management Group

[REDACTED]
Tel. 01571 [REDACTED]
Email wsuthdmg@btinternet.com
WSDMG website wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk
ADMG website www.deer-management.co.uk

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-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] [@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk)
Sent: 14 August 2020 15:05
To: assyntofficeservices@btinternet.com
Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

For information of the Local Deer mgmt. sub-group:

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This is an exciting large-scale restoration project that will be delivered over many years to create healthy Assynt habitats for the next generation to enjoy. We look forward to getting started!

If anyone has any queries please do get in touch. Contact [redacted] ([redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk<mailto:[redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>) or [redacted] ([redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk<mailto:[redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>) before 1 September 2020.

[redacted]
PR & Communications Officer

Telephone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk<mailto:[redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Woodland Trust, South Inch Business Centre, Perth, Perthshire, PH2 8BW
01738 635 544
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>

[Fb]<<https://www.facebook.com/thewoodlandtrust/>>[Tw]<<https://twitter.com/WoodlandTrust/>>[Yt]<<https://www.youtube.com/user/woodlandtrust/>>

[Woodland Trust Scotland]<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>
Stand up for trees<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>

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Registered Office: Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL.
<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Community Engagement in Decisions Relating to Land

ROUTE MAP

This Route Map is to support those with responsibility for taking decisions about land to navigate and implement the reasonable expectations of engaging with local communities impacted by those decisions. These reasonable expectations are drawn from the Land Rights and Responsibilities Protocol – Community Engagement in Decisions Relating to Land and the Scottish Government’s Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Communities can reasonably expect to be formally consulted in decisions about the use and management of land where the outcome is likely to have an impact on the community.
- Engagement should be a genuine exercise in collaboration, and community views should be considered to aim to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Engagement and communication should be open-ended to encourage positive working relationships and communication between communities, land owners and managers.
- Engagement should be proportionate to the resources available to all parties and the impact that the decision may have on the community.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

How to identify those who will be impacted?

- When we talk about community, we are generally meaning the individuals who live in a place. This can be an urban or rural area. It can include whole towns, single streets, large geographic areas or a small village or neighbourhood.
- Local communities are expected to work with land owners or their delegated managers through a representative organisation e.g. community council or other relevant constituted community organisations, who have an openly elected membership, and represent the area within which the land and/or a related community sits. This is not an instrument for addressing individual disputes.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

These are set out in the Land Rights and Responsibilities Protocol – Community Engagement in Decisions Relating to Land.

Where the Protocol uses the word **should**, we will expect all parties to follow the approach described. Where the Protocol **recommends** a course of action it means this is good practice but recognises that other approaches may be equally effective.

Up to date contact information for people with local decision-making authority over the land and for the office bearers of community organisations should always be publicly available.

Where a community aspiration or concern about current or proposed land management emerges, this should be communicated promptly to the owner or manager of the land. Reasonable opportunity should be given for them to respond to issues raised and enter into constructive dialogue about it.

START HERE

? Does the land-use change you are planning have **significant impact** on the community?

There is no fixed definition of significant impact, but it can be taken to mean a decision that might affect the social, economic or cultural development of a community. It could also involve a change or restriction of access to local services, a good quality environment or community viability. Useful examples are included in the Scottish Government’s Guidance.

Examples of routine land management activities with little impact include:

- Most day to day decisions relating to land where the impact on the local community is small or non-existent, e.g.
- Most deliveries
- Repairs and improvements
- Pesticide spraying and muck spreading

Regular communication – even when decisions being undertaken are not significant, can help to prevent problems arising and build good neighbourhood relationships.

YES

NO

? Does my decision have a statutory requirement for community engagement, for example under planning or forestry regulations?

Regular communication – even when decisions being undertaken are not significant, can help to prevent problems arising and build good neighbourhood relationships.

YES

NO

Some decisions on land involve a statutory requirement for community engagement. If there is a statutory requirement to engage then this must be complied with. However, you may wish to consider the benefits of supplementary engagement. It can be beneficial to engage with the local community at an early stage, prior to any formal decision-making process.

? Is this land use change to have a **moderate or significant impact** on the local community?

MODERATE IMPACT

Short-term but disruptive activities
Activities carried out in irregular circumstances
Changes to regular activities

Examples

- Activities which disrupt transport or business activities
- Activities causing significant light, sound or smell pollution
- Activities carried out at unusual times, or causing more disruption than usual
- Other disruptive activities in both the urban and rural environments

INFORMAL ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDED

SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Long-term or permanent changes with significant impact
Long-term disruptive activities
Activities which impact significantly on the local economy, society and culture, or environment
Decisions likely to alter the local population level or structure, including through intergenerational impact

Examples

- Significant long-term changes in land-use, for instance: changes between agricultural land, forestry, nature reserves, green spaces, industry, housing, regeneration and development
- Estate management, where a significant proportion of the land is controlled by one party
- A business or service that significantly contributes to local employment or provides vital services
- Decisions impacting on the viability of vital local institutions such as schools, doctors’ surgeries, sports centres and cultural centres

Engagement Methods

- Sending a letter or an email
- A notice on a community notice board
- Posting on social media
- A phone call
- Visiting in person
- Putting up a sign

PLEASE VIEW

Engagement Methods

Engagement about significant decisions is characterised by being planned and should include feedback to the community. Methods include:

- Publishing a written consultation or survey
- Holding local meetings
- Holding site visit (s)
- Carrying out workshop (s) perhaps with a facilitator
- Collaborating with the community to co-design a project

PLEASE VIEW

Where a relevant party makes a request for information, or for a meeting to discuss matters relevant to that organisation; and where the information is appropriate and proportionate, this should be accommodated.

Within six weeks of a request

Those who own land or have significant control over it should create an engagement plan that sets out what, how and when they will engage with the community on the decisions that affect them, particularly where a community organisation or elected representative proposes it or where it becomes clear that such a plan would be useful.

Completed within twelve months

Where plans to significantly alter an aspect of land management or use can be reasonably anticipated in advance, information about the proposed change should be publicly available at a stage when there is opportunity for the decision to be influenced.

At least three months in advance of the planned change.

Arrangements for recording actions and decisions taken at consultation/ engagement meetings should be agreed in advance of the meeting with the record made available to relevant parties.

Within six weeks of the end of the consultation period or of feedback being received unless otherwise agreed.

Where decisions about land use or management may have a significant impact, people making them should explain how views from the community have been taken into account in their decision making process.

Within six weeks of the end of or of feedback from a community consultation exercise being received.

Engagement Methods

Engagement about significant decisions is characterised by being planned and should include feedback to the community. Methods include:

- Publishing a written consultation or survey
- Holding local meetings
- Holding site visit (s)
- Carrying out workshop (s) perhaps with a facilitator
- Collaborating with the community to co-design a project

PLEASE VIEW

A range of tools and information can be found at:
www.landcommission.gov.scot
www.gov.scot/policies/land-reform

Recommended timescale – We recognise that these may not always be applicable in every circumstance, and that where necessary, alternative timescales may be appropriate and agreed by the relevant parties.

Polly Estates Ltd.
Inverpolly
Ullapool
Ross-shire
IV26 2YB
Email: info@inverpolly.com
[REDACTED]

The Press Release “The Eisg Brachaidh Revival” circulated on 14th August describes a massive conservation project at the very heart of Assynt. It purports to be an exemplar of good practice, but there has been no consultation whatsoever on this initiative which plans to put almost 12 miles of deer fence right in the heart of our most important landscape area. The justification for the project is to protect a wide range of designated habitats, but the majority of these are at Favourable or Recovering condition already, and it is not clear that such a fence is necessary.

The Australian landowners with Perth based conservation organization Woodland Trust Scotland have developed a £420,000 project with Scottish Natural Heritage behind closed doors under the cover of COVID lockdown, to be implemented in two weeks’ time in the middle of a global pandemic, and neighbouring landowners and crofters are expected to clear up the mess with no opportunity to input in advance. There is no transparency or due process involved, and all those organizations charged with protecting landscape, bird life, archaeology, access, deer management and local community interests appear to have been bypassed in the rush to spend this money. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) appear to have sanctioned and funded a huge project without any due diligence or analysis, and have therefore created a huge conflict of interest for themselves, and are risking reputational damage for all those involved.

Any initiative or inward investment to improve our natural heritage must be encouraged in this area, but people locally need to have a voice, and direct neighbours must be given the time and space to consider how this is best implemented.

This project needs to be put on hold so that it can be properly considered and amended. As it stands, the local community are only being given a few days to respond, and that is not right.

[REDACTED]
Chair, Coigach- South Assynt Deer Group and Inverpolly Estate.

Inverpolly Estate

INFORMATION NOTE WITH REGARDS TO FENCED ENCLOSURE ON EISG BRACHAIDH

CONFIDENTIAL

Eisg Brachaidh map to accompany WMO commentary 4 June 2019



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0 0.5 1km
Map centre: 209301.20, 917196.40
proj: View 4.5.3 - Jun 04, 2019 16:23
nature.scot

[Redacted] : Native Woodland Advice

Office: 01887 8 [Redacted] Mobile: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]@nativewoods.co.uk

The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd is a non profit distributing organisation dedicated to managing and expanding Scotland's native woodlands. We offer specialist advice and management services to landowners and agents throughout the country.



Background

This short report has been prepared for Inverpolly Estate with regards to proposals to completely deer fence the neighbouring property of Eisg Brachaidh (EB), to the South of Lochinver. This report is **CONFIDENTIAL** to the owners of Inverpolly initially, but it is expected that it will be shared with neighbours, including EB, and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and it has been written with this purpose in mind.

Inverpolly is the agricultural tenant at EB, and [REDACTED] is also the Chair of the Coigach- South Assynt Deer Management Group as well as being an adjacent landowner, and has an interest in the proposal from each of these perspectives.

The EB proposal is to reduce browsing pressure across their property to restore a range of habitats including native woodland, most of which are designated at SSSI and SAC level. They have received funding from the SNH Biodiversity Challenge Fund and from the Woodland Trust for Scotland and CALLP (Coigach & Assynt Local Landscape Partnership). The Woodland Trust are managing the project, and it is put forward as an exemplar of habitat restoration in Scotland.

The project is a very significant proposal at the local level, but there has been very little substantive consultation on it to date, if any, and this is likely to lead to very significant problems going forwards. This is not acceptable for a project now confirmed as receiving £420,000 in public funding, and falls well short of all recommended guidelines for communication with community interests. The purpose of this report is to articulate the concerns surrounding this project, and to recommend some actions that need to be implemented so that we get a scheme that has a reasonable chance of success and which others can work around without detriment to their own interests.

My knowledge of the area comes from preparing the Deer Management Plan (DMP) for the Coigach- South Assynt Deer Management Group (C-SA DMG), covering the period 2018- 2023. Background to this plan can be found at:

<http://wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk/deer-management/deer-management-plan-south-area-sub-group/>

The Current C-SA Deer Management Plan

The C-SA DMP was set up to cover the period 2018-23. It was recognized when producing this that a significant project might well be forthcoming on EB within the period of the plan, but there was little information or discussion at the time on what that might look like, and at the time, there did not appear to be a straightforward fit with the Forestry Grant Scheme, which would have been the expected funding mechanism.

The most significant public interest within the area was the management of designated sites, particularly the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC which dominates the area and contains by far the greatest number of designated features. The designated sites cover the greater part of EB. Inverpolly has been the focus of conservation activity for over 40 years, and has until very recently been subject to a Section 7 voluntary control scheme to oversee deer numbers. This scheme was generally held to be very successful, in that it has delivered fairly steady deer populations and culls, and most of the broad suite of habitats except native woodland are in favourable or recovering condition. At around 4.5 deer per square km, the C- SA area has one of the lowest

deer densities in Scotland. SNH has been struggling to fund such schemes for a number of years now, and a S7 agreement is no longer in place.

The previous S7 agreement meant that SNH were effectively running the C- SA DMG, or at least part of it, and the Group as a whole suffered because of this, not having much in the way of capacity themselves, and this was the major weakness identified within the Group when drawing up the DMP. There now appears to be funding available through CALLP to cover secretarial expenses and habitat surveying, and that this has indeed been drawn down and has improved the running of the group.

In terms of designated habitats and appropriate deer densities, there was a strong consensus during the DMP process that except for native woodland, deer densities were appropriate for the broad suite of other habitats which dominated by far the greater part of the area, and this was agreed by SNH at the time, and confirmed again in summer 2020. The broad thrust of the DMP was therefore to maintain a generally stable deer population, and the culls implemented through to 2019-20 suggest that deer numbers should be the same or possibly slightly lower than they were when the plan was drawn up. There have been increased culls on neighbouring DMG areas, along with at least one year of higher mortality and very low recruitment in Sutherland more generally, so the chances that the C-SA deer population might have increased from the 2016 count would be very low indeed.

The problem of assessing the native woodland

Within the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC area, which includes EB, the native woodland is designated as both an upland birch woodland and an upland western acidic oak woodland. As with the Ardvar woodlands to the north, the oak feature is extremely poor in terms of tree and shrub species which are absent from all but a small proportion of the area. It cannot and will not function naturally as an oak wood, even if browsing levels are reduced. A seed source for the main tree and shrub species is simply not there. At Ardvar, an independent consultant report has recommended that the oak woodland feature is inappropriate to the greater part of the site, and this is likely to be the case within the Inverpolly SAC as well.

As such, it is only fair to consider the native woodland here as an upland birch woodland, which may have a small proportion of other native species within it, and set expectations on that basis. The condition of the native woodlands should therefore be judged by the amount and extent of downy birch regeneration present.

Making an assessment of the condition of the native woodland within the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC is extremely difficult. Native woodland is extremely fragmented across the area, composed of a series of largely separate and isolated woodland areas, interspersed with open ground habitats. The swathe of woodland that extends across EB and the western part of Inverpolly, extended in to non designated woodland further north, is the only significant area of broadleaved woodland within the area. The other woods are all very small.

On one hand, and despite the fairly low average deer density, many of these small woodlands are very obviously highly impacted with no regeneration and poor ground vegetation. On the other, there have been many enclosures covering the woodland area which have included some planting, others are planned going forwards, and the Native Woods of Scotland Survey (NWSS) shows several areas at low or medium impacts, including some areas which are not fenced.

The problem with assessing these woodland features is how to give an overall summary when there is mixed evidence available as to current condition, but good intent on the part of the owners has clearly been demonstrated in the past.

The Eisg Brachaidh woodland

The EB woodland area is difficult to assess as well, despite being much bigger. There clearly is regeneration present along the coastline, near the road, on steeper ground that is difficult for animals to access, and within areas of gorse which are fairly extensive in areas and which provide good protection for young trees. There are areas of birch regeneration elsewhere around the complex of woodlands, a proportion of which has got away or is likely to in the future. There is regeneration within the small number of enclosures. Looking more widely at the woodland, there are clearly younger cohorts of trees which have become successfully established in the past. It would not be appropriate to describe the woodland as only having older trees. This is clearly not the case, and in this regard, the Press release produced by Woodland Trust Scotland misrepresents the current status of the site by clearly stating that there are no young trees, and that the older trees are rapidly dying out.

There is a very clear parallel here with when SNH issued a Press Release in 2016 which misrepresented the position on the Assynt peninsula to the north, and greatly angered the local population there. The position with the woods here on EB is not quite so obvious, but a clear statement that there is no regeneration and the trees are dying out is more of a campaign message and bears little basis in reality. As a statement made with clear conviction and no ambiguity, it can easily be shown to be false.

There are some areas of mature trees and areas which are obviously in decline without signs of regeneration around them, but this is only a proportion of the total. There are extensive areas of dry heath around some of the remnants which you might expect birch regeneration to be spreading on to, but no such regeneration is present. There are some examples of non- birch species regenerating, but these are extremely limited. In part, this will be a function of the limited seed source, but a greater proportion of willow and possibly hazel would certainly be forthcoming with a sympathetic browsing regime.

An important feature of the EB woodlands is the extensive fire that occurred within them around eight years ago. This clearly took out a large swathe of trees of a younger cohort, and there will undoubtedly have been regeneration within this as well. A side effect of this fire is that regrowth of ground vegetation has made it extremely attractive to deer in the years afterwards, bringing more browsing pressure in to the area more generally, and undoubtedly, the last few years will have seen browsing pressure at higher levels than might have previously have been the case.

When drawing up the DMP previously, I had seen this mixed evidence within the EB woodlands, and was trying to decide whether to be more or less optimistic about how the woodland area was developing, and whether the balance was positive or negative. This is obviously a subjective thought process, but my conclusion at the time was that the fire damage tilted the balance towards a more pessimistic outlook, and that some sort of intervention would be required, either fencing or targeted deer control.

Suitable management of the EB woodlands is therefore both necessary, and beneficial to any assessment of the native woodlands in south Assynt in general.

The question is, *"Is what is proposed the answer?"*

The Current Proposals

DMG members have been aware of the general intention to do something within the EB woodlands for some time, and EB have also had extensive discussions with Inverpolly regarding the possible resumption of around 40 hectares of ground from their leased area.

The proposal to fence the entire property has only been known from this summer, there has been no involvement of the deer group, and the project has been presented as a fait accompli which will begin shortly. Help has been offered to help deal with practical issues arising, but there has been no substantive consultation, and this is where the problem is.

The broad swathe of woodlands in the NW of the DMG area, with EB at its heart, will be one of the most valuable areas for deer shelter and feeding, and will be used proportionately more than the open ground dominating most of the group. The deer issues will certainly be very significant, and these are covered below, but it is not apparent how a range of other issues have been considered either, if indeed they have. These mostly relate to the fence itself.

The fence itself

A twelve mile fence within south Assynt is a very significant issue in itself. While there are a number of fenced enclosures within the area, few of these are visible. This fence is much larger, by several orders of magnitude. It will lie within an important landscape area, and an assessment of the visual impact of this will need to be made. It is not apparent that this has been done. It is difficult to see how a range of national access organizations would not object to this proposal. While the fence is not going near the high mountains, the lochs of Assynt are very popular for fishing and walking and camping, and it is the open, unrestricted landscape that people value.

The proposed fenceline is very conspicuous in that a very high proportion of the length is next to lochs, watercourses or the sea, much of which is designated. It is likely that this will channel deer in to the narrow riparian zone outwith the fence, and this can only have negative consequences, potentially tracking or trampling this sensitive zone, and possibly facilitating predator access which could further damage protected bird species. The presence of so much fencing in proximity to water bodies in itself should trigger the need for an Environment Impact Assessment, as both the water bodies and the riparian zone around them are protected at both SSSI and SAC levels, as well as the breeding bird life they sustain. Fences are most usually considered as a risk of bird strike in relation to ground nesting black grouse and capercaillie, but it might be expected that extensive fencing within an area of sensitive hill lochs would become a similar problem, particularly as some of the bird species will be migratory. It is understood that there is fishing let alongside the River Kirkaig, and inappropriate fencing could well be detrimental to the amenity and hence the value of fishing activity in that area.

The fence proposed could well cost £300- 350,000 or more for its installation alone, with ongoing maintenance costs. It is not clear to me that such a fence is actually required.

Deer Issues

The local deer group have not been consulted, and no analysis of the proposal has been undertaken. Removing such a sheltered area from the deer range will have a significant impact on the C- SA open range deer population, and this needs to be properly assessed in advance, not as an afterthought. There will be welfare issues, increased trampling risk and economic impact considerations to be analysed. Deer are likely to be diverted on to the grazings at Inverkirkaig, and further on in to Lochinver where there already is an issue that needs to be addressed. This can only exacerbate that.

It is proposed that a population of deer is retained within the 2000 ha enclosure, but a small number of deer kept within an enclosure can often create more damage than a larger number which have the freedom to come and go as they please. The woods of Assynt appear to hold significant numbers of deer in winter, sometimes up to 20 per sq km or more, with flies and midges forcing them out on to the higher tops in summer. Stopping them from moving as they naturally would is going to create welfare issues, and stressed deer will respond to this by damaging more trees. There are few, if any, publicly funded enclosures in Scotland where regeneration is desired and deer are actively retained within them. The desired density is usually zero, even if this is not actually achieved, particularly with sika deer and roe within the area as well.

The lack of consultation

If this was a Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) application, a full range of biodiversity, access, archaeology, deer and local community interests would need to be consulted, and almost certainly, a full Environmental Impact Assessment would be required, given the range of potential impacts within a highly designated area.

This proposal is highly unusual in that funding has apparently been obtained from another public source, but an EIA will still be required, and it is difficult to see how many of these issues could be successfully accommodated.

There has been a tendency in Scotland in recent years for ambitious conservation projects to be taken forwards without any local input on important issues, and this has been exacerbated by the Deer Working Group report which downplays the importance of collaboration, community engagement or deer management groups.

It may be that consultation has taken place on some of the issues above, but none of this appears to be in the public domain. The full public investment in the scheme is listed through a Press Release at £420,000, funded largely by SNH at a time when they have no money for even most of their routine work which they are having to cut back on.

In my opinion, trying to take forward such a proposal without obvious consultation of any significant sort risks very serious reputational damage to all those concerned. For this reason alone, the timeline needs to be re- considered, and the project developed properly.

The particular role of SNH

It appears that SNH have made available a very significant amount of funding for this project, making them a significant project partner, and implying that this is the sort of project and approach that they wish to be associated with. In their regulatory role, SNH will have to oversee any deer related issues created by their own actions, but there is no evidence that any of this was considered before money was allocated, in the way that Scottish Forestry are required to do. To me, it appears that SNH have created a conflict of interest for themselves, and in not considering deer related issues in particular at the outset, they especially are risking reputational damage for themselves.

Is the fence required?

This is the key question.

The rationale for the project says the objective is to reduce grazing and browsing to improve a broad range of habitats, implying all are currently being negatively impacted, but the majority of designated habitats are in Favourable or Recovering condition already, with the exception of the native woodlands. SNH confirm that this is the situation in summer 2020. The signature habitat within the area is blanket bog, and this is recovering across the area, and fencing may well risk trampling and tracking damage to bogs alongside side it. The most dominant habitat is wet heath, at Favourable condition already. The dry heath is at Unfavourable status (assessed 2004), but it is not readily apparent if any such impacted areas are within EB. Any dry heath areas around the woodland resource will certainly regenerate with trees if browsing is reduced. Paradoxically, this will also downgrade the dry heath to Unfavourable status unless the assessment processes are changed.

There is no evidence that open ground habitats require to be fenced, and that the S7 process was already delivering the necessary condition.

The fence really only therefore applies to the native woodlands, and these could be enclosed by a much smaller enclosure than proposed, or possibly a number of smaller enclosures. The question, which is admittedly subjective, is whether a fence is required? A better consultation would inform this decision more effectively.

There is good evidence elsewhere in Assynt that birch regeneration can be achieved by deer control alone if the area concerned is of a significant enough size, and if pressure can be applied in the spring months when regeneration is most vulnerable.

There is certainly a big enough area of trees on EB to consider a deer management approach without any fences. Out of Season authorizations would certainly be required for the spring months to deter stags in particular, and this would put pressure on that resource, but the likelihood is that an enclosure would have a much larger overall effect. The advantage that EB would have over Ardvär is that they seem to have a much larger area of dry heath around their woodlands, which is more likely to regenerate, particularly if the ground could be scarified by trampling with cattle in the autumn and early winter months, as the EB proposal suggests. For many areas in Scotland, a deer management only approach would not be practicable, but there is certainly enough at EB to suggest that it could work well if the main objective was a significant increase in downy birch regeneration. Targeted but possibly modest deer control measures combined with cattle trampling/ scarifying would produce the best response, with the latter probably being the more important

if that can be delivered. The larger the area that can be generated, the more likely it is to get away.

Many people in Scotland will be confused as to why environmental NGOs and SNH are moving directly to a huge fenced scheme to deliver regeneration in an area where fencing may not be required, when they have spent many years campaigning for more regeneration through deer reductions. No proper evaluation of the options has been carried out here. In terms of the damaging effects of fences, it would be difficult to envisage a more inappropriate location for what is proposed.

Targeted deer control is unlikely to produce much in the way of oak regeneration when so little seed supply is available. It may be appropriate to create a number of smaller enclosures on suitable ground and produce a future seed source to supplement whatever birch regeneration that can be achieved.

The effect of the recent fire will shortly begin to fall away as well, with vegetation becoming less attractive to deer again as it gets older, and this is likely to reduce impact levels within the area, meaning that achieving more regeneration might then become easier than is currently apparent.

Economic Appraisal

Within the DMG assessment process, there is a requirement that the economic effect of significant changes in management be quantified. The methodology is highly complex and probably unworkable in most areas, but this is a very significant scheme, SNH have seen fit to fund it, and I would argue that SNH now have a moral duty to conduct an economic appraisal of the project according to their own methodology, or insist that the project managers do this. As the DMG has not been consulted, it would not be appropriate to expect them to do this.

Timing

There is a suggestion that these works will begin in September, and be complete by February 2021. It is not possible for a DMG to assess a project and deliver mitigating culls in such a short time period, and it also risks significant welfare problems or displacement of more deer in to crofting areas or in to Lochinver.

Deer management activities have also been very significantly disrupted because of the current pandemic, and this could happen again over the winter, with activity possibly not being allowed again or with no markets for venison.

It would be better to postpone the project for a year and provide for more time for consultation and delivery of any mitigating actions.

Questions

I would ask the following questions:

- 1 Who has been consulted on this proposal?
- 2 What information was used to secure funding?
- 3 Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been undertaken or scoped out?
- 4 What is the proposed deer density within the enclosure?
- 5 What is the anticipated density then outside the enclosure?
- 6 Have habitat impact assessments been undertaken on open ground habitats within the area as part of the development of this plan? If not, how does the project justify saying that they are in poor condition when the accepted position is that this is not the case?
- 7 Has HIA been conducted within the woodland area, regeneration quantified, or age profiles created? If not, how is the suggestion that the wood is dying off in places justified?

Recommendations

- 1 This project, as described, will not become an exemplar of good practice. Quite the opposite, and there is likely to be very significant reputational damage on the back of it. It is not wise to present it as such.
- 2 There needs to be a proper consultation from the outset, and an extensive Environmental Impact Assessment will be required.
- 3 The rationale noted in the proposed Woodland Trust press statement does not accurately describe the site, and overstates the environmental damage that requires to be restored. It reads like a campaign document which might convince an interested outsider, but which is not persuasive to a more local land management and practical or community audience. Such a Press Release is likely to be counterproductive if issued. (I note that PR has now been circulated, and it will therefore be important to put on record an alternative view).
- 4 It appears to me that a very much smaller enclosure focused only on the woodlands would suffice if this is deemed necessary, or possibly a combination of smaller enclosures. The eastern half of the proposed enclosure is almost certainly unnecessary, and this is where the negative impacts are most likely to be.
- 5 My own instinct is that a targeted deer management effort would work more effectively, and would eliminate the cost and negative environmental impacts of a fence through such sensitive landscapes. The maintenance costs alone would be very high. If funding is available, it would be better spent in supporting and improving current deer management activities and monitoring, and that would deliver benefits to the wider south Assynt area beyond EB. Authorizations for out of season culling would be required, combined with focused cattle grazing and regular monitoring. Small enclosures to help secure a seed source of non- birch species may also be beneficial, especially for building an oak resource.
- 6 The C- SA deer plan needs to be re- drafted to accommodate the new situation, irrespective of whether the fencing or deer management approach is followed.
- 7 An upgraded deer plan needs to consider the cumulative impact of a scheme here in combination with changes within North Ross and possibly also the Assynt Peninsula, as well as any other significant changes in land use which might happen in the coming five years.
- 8 The best long term approach would be best informed by undertaking an economic appraisal of the two options, and SNH need to insist on this as a condition of funding from project management. This would test their own methodology and see whether it was fit for purpose.
- 9 There also needs to be a risk assessment on future wildfire events within the area, as this has significant implications for a publicly funded fenceline.
- 10 Information on a current assessment of the woodland area needs to be provided, so that the current situation can be more readily understood. This may or may not be available.
- 11 If a significant enclosure is agreed, the DMG should look to facilitate the opening up of an equivalent area of woodland elsewhere in the group, encouraging support for the FGS removal of fences if required to deliver this. Taking away old redundant fences within the Assynt landscape on a risk-assessed basis would be a much better use of the significant available funding than what is being proposed.

Sharon Phipps

Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh woodland project

The Eisd Brachaidh Revival

An exciting initiative to restore woodland, heath and peatland across the 2000ha Eisd Brachaidh Estate has secured more than £420,000 thanks to support from the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Challenge Fund and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is also being sought from Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Eisd Brachaidh project area forms part of the Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project aims to restore a range of habitats including saving irreplaceable old woodland remnants and improving the condition of heathland communities on this part of the Inverpolly SAC.

Key to its success is reducing grazing pressure from deer. There are no young trees growing on the Estate and the few mature trees that do remain are fading fast. Wet and dry heathland and bogs are also suffering from over browsing and trampling. We need to act now to stop further loss of woodland and help rare heathland and peatland habitats recover.

We plan to do this by installing a deer fence around the estate boundary. Deer will remain within the fence but numbers will be kept at a sustainable level alongside continued cattle grazing. Cattle have a different grazing style from deer and it is this mix of grazing that's important to support natural habitat improvements.

Open public access will be maintained throughout the project with suitably placed gates, cattle grids and stiles.

We appreciate that when an area is fenced it can be difficult to predict the knock-on effect of deer movements in the surrounding area. These impacts can be managed however, and the project partners are committed to dealing with any problems that may arise for neighbours. The movement and number of deer will be monitored to help with this.

As lead partner for the CALLP woodland projects, Woodland Trust Scotland will be responsible for work on the ground in association with Eisd Brachaidh Estate under guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage regarding deer and designated habitats.

A non-profit making company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England No. 1982873.

Registered Office: Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL.

<<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>> <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@nativewoods.co.uk
Sent: 17 August 2020 15:56
To: Francesca Osowska
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: SNH Funded project- Eisd Brachaidh Estate. South Assynt
Attachments: Inverpolly Press Release.docx; Information Note for Inverpolly Estate- August 2020.docx

Francesca,

SNH have recently awarded £420,000 or thereabouts to deer fence the above property which lies in Assynt, to the south of Lochinver. There has been no consultation on this project whatsoever, with two weeks of notice given before work begins in September. Woodland Trust Scotland are managing the project, and issued a Press Release on Friday, so we are having to respond to that.

I have been asked to help by [REDACTED] Inverpolly, who also chairs the local deer group, copied in here.

There is no process or transparency in any of this, and all those organizations involved are risking considerable reputational damage, including yourselves. The interesting aspect of this is that a fence may not be required in this situation at all. Some focused deer reduction may well suffice.

I am writing to yourself and Woodland Trust separately to ask that this project is put on hold until the situation is properly consulted on and analysed. In practice that might mean postponing it for a year, but a much better outcome will be achieved if this is done properly.

I hope that you can give this some of your attention. Attached is PR from [REDACTED] to the local papers, and a document from myself which sets out some background. A 12 mile deer fence in the middle of one of our most sensitive landscapes is not appropriate and is not necessary.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Native Woodland Advice

Tel: 01887 [REDACTED]

Mob: [REDACTED]

The Native Woods Cooperative (Scotland) Ltd

www.nativewoods.co.uk

Registered Office: [REDACTED]

Sharon Phipps

From: Graham Boyle
Sent: 17 August 2020 16:57
To: Graeme Taylor
Cc: Jimmy Hyslop; Francesca Osowska
Subject: COR160189 Email from [REDACTED] re BCF SNH Funded project- Eisd Brachaidh Estate. South Assynt (A3287514)
Attachments: COR160189 Email from [REDACTED] re BCF SNH Funded project- Eisd Brachaidh Estate. South Assynt.obr

Hi Graeme

Francesca has received a complaint from a [REDACTED] regarding an BCF application in South Assynt. Jimmy suggested that you were dealing with communications and I'd be grateful if you could draft a response on Francesca's behalf and cc her once done.

Many thanks

Graham

Graham Boyle has sent you a link to "COR160189 Email from [REDACTED] re BCF SNH Funded project- Eisd Brachaidh Estate. South Assynt" (A3287514) from Objective.

Open in Navigator

Double click on the attachment

Open in Your Browser

Latest: <https://erdms.nature.scot:8643/id:A3287514/document/versions/latest>

Published: <https://erdms.nature.scot:8643/id:A3287514/document/versions/published>

Template release

You can use the media release template below for publicising your project and sharing with your local media. You should add in details such as your project's funding award value, its aims and location and a quote from your project's spokesperson.

Insert date here

Headline Nature fund's £INSERT AWARD VALUE HERE award to (INSERT PROJECT AIM HERE, SUCH AS *'protect threatened waders'*)

Paragraph 1: A project to **(ADD BRIEF DETAILS OF THE KEY AIMS OF YOUR PROJECT HERE)** is a recipient of the Scottish Government's Biodiversity Challenge Fund.

Paragraph 2: **(ADD NAME OF YOUR PROJECT HERE)** has been awarded **(INSERT FUNDING AWARD VALUE HERE)** to **(YOU CAN DESCRIBE THE MAIN 2-3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES HERE)** at **(YOU CAN ADD THE LOCATION(S) OF YOUR PROJECT)**. Investment in 'green recovery' is understood to be one cost effective way to help make our communities sustainable and more resilient, while driving inclusive economic development.

Paragraph 3: **(INSERT A QUOTE FROM YOUR PROJECT SPOKESPERSON HERE)**
They could describe why the work of your project is so important and the difference it will make to your local area, community and biodiversity.

Paragraph 4: The Biodiversity Challenge Fund specifically encourages applicants with innovative projects that improve biodiversity and address the impact of climate change, by increasing the resilience of our most at-risk habitats and species and creating large areas of brand new habitat.

Paragraph 5: **(NAME YOUR PROJECT HERE)** is one of 16 successful projects across Scotland announced in the second round of the £4 million Biodiversity Challenge Fund. The projects will take practical steps to improve natural habitats, safeguard plant and animal species and improve biodiversity.

Paragraph 6: The Biodiversity Challenge Fund adds to the many millions of pounds of Scottish Government funding delivered through the Scottish Rural Development Programme and other sources to support biodiversity and help to deliver Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy.

Paragraph 7: SNH Chief Executive, Francesca Osowska, said:

"As lockdown conditions lift, green recovery projects like the Biodiversity Challenge Fund put nature, and nature-based solutions, at the heart of rebuilding our economy.

"But it's not just about conservation - enriching our nature is also part of the solution to the climate emergency too. People know that climate change is a big issue but not as many know that biodiversity loss is also a global and generational threat to human well-being.

"Nature is at the heart of what we do, and we will continue to deliver the transformational change needed to bring a nature-rich, sustainable and more economically secure future for Scotland."

Paragraph 8: The Biodiversity Challenge Fund adds to the many millions of pounds of Scottish Government funding delivered through the Scottish Rural Development Programme and other sources to support biodiversity and help to deliver Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy.

Notes for editors

The aim of the Biodiversity Challenge Fund is to enable targeted action for priority habitats and species, accelerating efforts that will help Scotland meet its international biodiversity commitments. Creating a nature-rich future is an important part of our response to climate change.

Fulfilling commitments made in the 2018 & 2019 Programmes for Government to establish and then to extend a Biodiversity Challenge Fund, in summer 2019 Scottish Natural Heritage commenced administering investments of around £1.8 million to create and improve habitats for key species and encourage increased access to nature over the following 2 years. With a number of additional projects from the first round subsequently receiving funding offers (£0.8m), the latest announcement marks a boost to the total funding that has been made available to the Biodiversity Challenge Fund to just over £4m.

The fund is supporting projects that are:

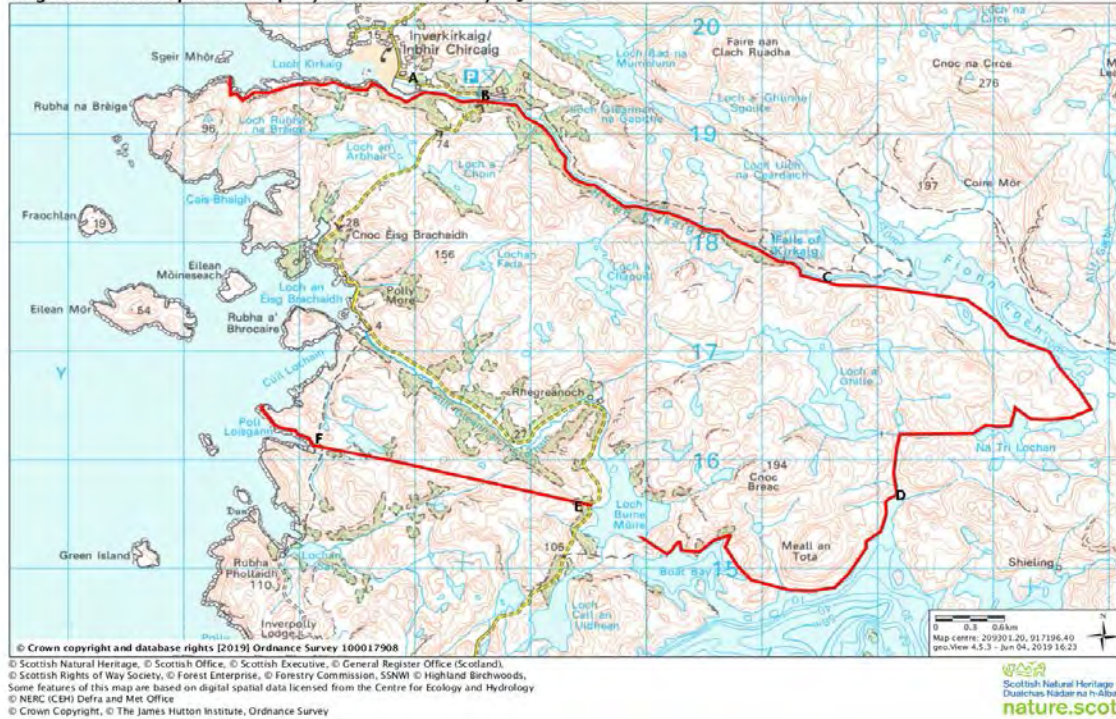
- Ambitious and will make a demonstrable, and measurable, impact
- Seek to address the drivers of biodiversity change with action preferably focused on causes rather than symptoms
- Make connections on the ground and link actions and/ or projects, increasing resilience in those habitats and species most at risk.

Inverpolly Estate

INFORMATION NOTE WITH REGARDS TO FENCED ENCLOSURE ON EISG BRACHAIDH

CONFIDENTIAL

Eisg Brachaidh map to accompany WMO commentary 4 June 2019



[REDACTED]: Native Woodland Advice

Office: 01887 [REDACTED] @nativewoods.co.uk

The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd is a non profit distributing organisation dedicated to managing and expanding Scotland's native woodlands. We offer specialist advice and management services to landowners and agents throughout the country.



Background

This short report has been prepared for Inverpolly Estate with regards to proposals to completely deer fence the neighbouring property of Eisg Brachaidh (EB), to the South of Lochinver. This report is **CONFIDENTIAL** to the owners of Inverpolly initially, but it is expected that it will be shared with neighbours, including EB, and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and it has been written with this purpose in mind.

Inverpolly is the agricultural tenant at EB, and [REDACTED] is also the Chair of the Coigach- South Assynt Deer Management Group as well as being an adjacent landowner, and has an interest in the proposal from each of these perspectives.

The EB proposal is to reduce browsing pressure across their property to restore a range of habitats including native woodland, most of which are designated at SSSI and SAC level. They have received funding from the SNH Biodiversity Challenge Fund and from the Woodland Trust for Scotland and CALLP (Coigach & Assynt Local Landscape Partnership). The Woodland Trust are managing the project, and it is put forward as an exemplar of habitat restoration in Scotland.

The project is a very significant proposal at the local level, but there has been very little substantive consultation on it to date, if any, and this is likely to lead to very significant problems going forwards. This is not acceptable for a project now confirmed as receiving £420,000 in public funding, and falls well short of all recommended guidelines for communication with community interests. The purpose of this report is to articulate the concerns surrounding this project, and to recommend some actions that need to be implemented so that we get a scheme that has a reasonable chance of success and which others can work around without detriment to their own interests.

My knowledge of the area comes from preparing the Deer Management Plan (DMP) for the Coigach- South Assynt Deer Management Group (C-SA DMG), covering the period 2018- 2023. Background to this plan can be found at:

<http://wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk/deer-management/deer-management-plan-south-area-sub-group/>

The Current C-SA Deer Management Plan

The C-SA DMP was set up to cover the period 2018-23. It was recognized when producing this that a significant project might well be forthcoming on EB within the period of the plan, but there was little information or discussion at the time on what that might look like, and at the time, there did not appear to be a straightforward fit with the Forestry Grant Scheme, which would have been the expected funding mechanism.

The most significant public interest within the area was the management of designated sites, particularly the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC which dominates the area and contains by far the greatest number of designated features. The designated sites cover the greater part of EB. Inverpolly has been the focus of conservation activity for over 40 years, and has until very recently been subject to a Section 7 voluntary control scheme to oversee deer numbers. This scheme was generally held to be very successful, in that it has delivered fairly steady deer populations and culls, and most of the broad suite of habitats except native woodland are in favourable or recovering condition. At around 4.5 deer per square km, the C- SA area has one of the lowest

deer densities in Scotland. SNH has been struggling to fund such schemes for a number of years now, and a S7 agreement is no longer in place.

The previous S7 agreement meant that SNH were effectively running the C- SA DMG, or at least part of it, and the Group as a whole suffered because of this, not having much in the way of capacity themselves, and this was the major weakness identified within the Group when drawing up the DMP. There now appears to be funding available through CALLP to cover secretarial expenses and habitat surveying, and that this has indeed been drawn down and has improved the running of the group.

In terms of designated habitats and appropriate deer densities, there was a strong consensus during the DMP process that except for native woodland, deer densities were appropriate for the broad suite of other habitats which dominated by far the greater part of the area, and this was agreed by SNH at the time, and confirmed again in summer 2020. The broad thrust of the DMP was therefore to maintain a generally stable deer population, and the culls implemented through to 2019-20 suggest that deer numbers should be the same or possibly slightly lower than they were when the plan was drawn up. There have been increased culls on neighbouring DMG areas, along with at least one year of higher mortality and very low recruitment in Sutherland more generally, so the chances that the C-SA deer population might have increased from the 2016 count would be very low indeed.

The problem of assessing the native woodland

Within the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC area, which includes EB, the native woodland is designated as both an upland birch woodland and an upland western acidic oak woodland. As with the Ardvar woodlands to the north, the oak feature is extremely poor in terms of tree and shrub species which are absent from all but a small proportion of the area. It cannot and will not function naturally as an oak wood, even if browsing levels are reduced. A seed source for the main tree and shrub species is simply not there. At Ardvar, an independent consultant report has recommended that the oak woodland feature is inappropriate to the greater part of the site, and this is likely to be the case within the Inverpolly SAC as well.

As such, it is only fair to consider the native woodland here as an upland birch woodland, which may have a small proportion of other native species within it, and set expectations on that basis. The condition of the native woodlands should therefore be judged by the amount and extent of downy birch regeneration present.

Making an assessment of the condition of the native woodland within the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC is extremely difficult. Native woodland is extremely fragmented across the area, composed of a series of largely separate and isolated woodland areas, interspersed with open ground habitats. The swathe of woodland that extends across EB and the western part of Inverpolly, extended in to non designated woodland further north, is the only significant area of broadleaved woodland within the area. The other woods are all very small.

On one hand, and despite the fairly low average deer density, many of these small woodlands are very obviously highly impacted with no regeneration and poor ground vegetation. On the other, there have been many enclosures covering the woodland area which have included some planting, others are planned going forwards, and the Native Woods of Scotland Survey (NWSS) shows several areas at low or medium impacts, including some areas which are not fenced.

The problem with assessing these woodland features is how to give an overall summary when there is mixed evidence available as to current condition, but good intent on the part of the owners has clearly been demonstrated in the past.

The Eisg Brachaidh woodland

The EB woodland area is difficult to assess as well, despite being much bigger. There clearly is regeneration present along the coastline, near the road, on steeper ground that is difficult for animals to access, and within areas of gorse which are fairly extensive in areas and which provide good protection for young trees. There are areas of birch regeneration elsewhere around the complex of woodlands, a proportion of which has got away or is likely to in the future. There is regeneration within the small number of enclosures. Looking more widely at the woodland, there are clearly younger cohorts of trees which have become successfully established in the past. It would not be appropriate to describe the woodland as only having older trees. This is clearly not the case, and in this regard, the Press release produced by Woodland Trust Scotland misrepresents the current status of the site by clearly stating that there are no young trees, and that the older trees are rapidly dying out.

There is a very clear parallel here with when SNH issued a Press Release in 2016 which misrepresented the position on the Assynt peninsula to the north, and greatly angered the local population there. The position with the woods here on EB is not quite so obvious, but a clear statement that there is no regeneration and the trees are dying out is more of a campaign message and bears little basis in reality. As a statement made with clear conviction and no ambiguity, it can easily be shown to be false.

There are some areas of mature trees and areas which are obviously in decline without signs of regeneration around them, but this is only a proportion of the total. There are extensive areas of dry heath around some of the remnants which you might expect birch regeneration to be spreading on to, but no such regeneration is present. There are some examples of non- birch species regenerating, but these are extremely limited. In part, this will be a function of the limited seed source, but a greater proportion of willow and possibly hazel would certainly be forthcoming with a sympathetic browsing regime.

An important feature of the EB woodlands is the extensive fire that occurred within them around eight years ago. This clearly took out a large swathe of trees of a younger cohort, and there will undoubtedly have been regeneration within this as well. A side effect of this fire is that regrowth of ground vegetation has made it extremely attractive to deer in the years afterwards, bringing more browsing pressure in to the area more generally, and undoubtedly, the last few years will have seen browsing pressure at higher levels than might have previously have been the case.

When drawing up the DMP previously, I had seen this mixed evidence within the EB woodlands, and was trying to decide whether to be more or less optimistic about how the woodland area was developing, and whether the balance was positive or negative. This is obviously a subjective thought process, but my conclusion at the time was that the fire damage tilted the balance towards a more pessimistic outlook, and that some sort of intervention would be required, either fencing or targeted deer control.

Suitable management of the EB woodlands is therefore both necessary, and beneficial to any assessment of the native woodlands in south Assynt in general.

The question is, *"Is what is proposed the answer?"*

The Current Proposals

DMG members have been aware of the general intention to do something within the EB woodlands for some time, and EB have also had extensive discussions with Inverpolly regarding the possible resumption of around 40 hectares of ground from their leased area.

The proposal to fence the entire property has only been known from this summer, there has been no involvement of the deer group, and the project has been presented as a fait accompli which will begin shortly. Help has been offered to help deal with practical issues arising, but there has been no substantive consultation, and this is where the problem is.

The broad swathe of woodlands in the NW of the DMG area, with EB at its heart, will be one of the most valuable areas for deer shelter and feeding, and will be used proportionately more than the open ground dominating most of the group. The deer issues will certainly be very significant, and these are covered below, but it is not apparent how a range of other issues have been considered either, if indeed they have. These mostly relate to the fence itself.

The fence itself

A twelve mile fence within south Assynt is a very significant issue in itself. While there are a number of fenced enclosures within the area, few of these are visible. This fence is much larger, by several orders of magnitude. It will lie within an important landscape area, and an assessment of the visual impact of this will need to be made. It is not apparent that this has been done. It is difficult to see how a range of national access organizations would not object to this proposal. While the fence is not going near the high mountains, the lochs of Assynt are very popular for fishing and walking and camping, and it is the open, unrestricted landscape that people value.

The proposed fenceline is very conspicuous in that a very high proportion of the length is next to lochs, watercourses or the sea, much of which is designated. It is likely that this will channel deer in to the narrow riparian zone outwith the fence, and this can only have negative consequences, potentially tracking or trampling this sensitive zone, and possibly facilitating predator access which could further damage protected bird species. The presence of so much fencing in proximity to water bodies in itself should trigger the need for an Environment Impact Assessment, as both the water bodies and the riparian zone around them are protected at both SSSI and SAC levels, as well as the breeding bird life they sustain. Fences are most usually considered as a risk of bird strike in relation to ground nesting black grouse and capercaillie, but it might be expected that extensive fencing within an area of sensitive hill lochs would become a similar problem, particularly as some of the bird species will be migratory. It is understood that there is fishing let alongside the River Kirkaig, and inappropriate fencing could well be detrimental to the amenity and hence the value of fishing activity in that area.

The fence proposed could well cost £300- 350,000 or more for its installation alone, with ongoing maintenance costs. It is not clear to me that such a fence is actually required.

Deer Issues

The local deer group have not been consulted, and no analysis of the proposal has been undertaken. Removing such a sheltered area from the deer range will have a significant impact on the C- SA open range deer population, and this needs to be properly assessed in advance, not as an afterthought. There will be welfare issues, increased trampling risk and economic impact considerations to be analysed. Deer are likely to be diverted on to the grazings at Inverkirkaig, and further on in to Lochinver where there already is an issue that needs to be addressed. This can only exacerbate that.

It is proposed that a population of deer is retained within the 2000 ha enclosure, but a small number of deer kept within an enclosure can often create more damage than a larger number which have the freedom to come and go as they please. The woods of Assynt appear to hold significant numbers of deer in winter, sometimes up to 20 per sq km or more, with flies and midges forcing them out on to the higher tops in summer. Stopping them from moving as they naturally would is going to create welfare issues, and stressed deer will respond to this by damaging more trees. There are few, if any, publicly funded enclosures in Scotland where regeneration is desired and deer are actively retained within them. The desired density is usually zero, even if this is not actually achieved, particularly with sika deer and roe within the area as well.

The lack of consultation

If this was a Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) application, a full range of biodiversity, access, archaeology, deer and local community interests would need to be consulted, and almost certainly, a full Environmental Impact Assessment would be required, given the range of potential impacts within a highly designated area.

This proposal is highly unusual in that funding has apparently been obtained from another public source, but an EIA will still be required, and it is difficult to see how many of these issues could be successfully accommodated.

There has been a tendency in Scotland in recent years for ambitious conservation projects to be taken forwards without any local input on important issues, and this has been exacerbated by the Deer Working Group report which downplays the importance of collaboration, community engagement or deer management groups.

It may be that consultation has taken place on some of the issues above, but none of this appears to be in the public domain. The full public investment in the scheme is listed through a Press Release at £420,000, funded largely by SNH at a time when they have no money for even most of their routine work which they are having to cut back on.

In my opinion, trying to take forward such a proposal without obvious consultation of any significant sort risks very serious reputational damage to all those concerned. For this reason alone, the timeline needs to be re- considered, and the project developed properly.

The particular role of SNH

It appears that SNH have made available a very significant amount of funding for this project, making them a significant project partner, and implying that this is the sort of project and approach that they wish to be associated with. In their regulatory role, SNH will have to oversee any deer related issues created by their own actions, but there is no evidence that any of this was considered before money was allocated, in the way that Scottish Forestry are required to do. To me, it appears that SNH have created a conflict of interest for themselves, and in not considering deer related issues in particular at the outset, they especially are risking reputational damage for themselves.

Is the fence required?

This is the key question.

The rationale for the project says the objective is to reduce grazing and browsing to improve a broad range of habitats, implying all are currently being negatively impacted, but the majority of designated habitats are in Favourable or Recovering condition already, with the exception of the native woodlands. SNH confirm that this is the situation in summer 2020. The signature habitat within the area is blanket bog, and this is recovering across the area, and fencing may well risk trampling and tracking damage to bogs alongside side it. The most dominant habitat is wet heath, at Favourable condition already. The dry heath is at Unfavourable status (assessed 2004), but it is not readily apparent if any such impacted areas are within EB. Any dry heath areas around the woodland resource will certainly regenerate with trees if browsing is reduced. Paradoxically, this will also downgrade the dry heath to Unfavourable status unless the assessment processes are changed.

There is no evidence that open ground habitats require to be fenced, and that the S7 process was already delivering the necessary condition.

The fence really only therefore applies to the native woodlands, and these could be enclosed by a much smaller enclosure than proposed, or possibly a number of smaller enclosures. The question, which is admittedly subjective, is whether a fence is required? A better consultation would inform this decision more effectively.

There is good evidence elsewhere in Assynt that birch regeneration can be achieved by deer control alone if the area concerned is of a significant enough size, and if pressure can be applied in the spring months when regeneration is most vulnerable.

There is certainly a big enough area of trees on EB to consider a deer management approach without any fences. Out of Season authorizations would certainly be required for the spring months to deter stags in particular, and this would put pressure on that resource, but the likelihood is that an enclosure would have a much larger overall effect. The advantage that EB would have over Ardvær is that they seem to have a much larger area of dry heath around their woodlands, which is more likely to regenerate, particularly if the ground could be scarified by trampling with cattle in the autumn and early winter months, as the EB proposal suggests. For many areas in Scotland, a deer management only approach would not be practicable, but there is certainly enough at EB to suggest that it could work well if the main objective was a significant increase in downy birch regeneration. Targeted but possibly modest deer control measures combined with cattle trampling/ scarifying would produce the best response, with the latter probably being the more important

if that can be delivered. The larger the area that can be generated, the more likely it is to get away.

Many people in Scotland will be confused as to why environmental NGOs and SNH are moving directly to a huge fenced scheme to deliver regeneration in an area where fencing may not be required, when they have spent many years campaigning for more regeneration through deer reductions. No proper evaluation of the options has been carried out here. In terms of the damaging effects of fences, it would be difficult to envisage a more inappropriate location for what is proposed.

Targeted deer control is unlikely to produce much in the way of oak regeneration when so little seed supply is available. It may be appropriate to create a number of smaller enclosures on suitable ground and produce a future seed source to supplement whatever birch regeneration that can be achieved.

The effect of the recent fire will shortly begin to fall away as well, with vegetation becoming less attractive to deer again as it gets older, and this is likely to reduce impact levels within the area, meaning that achieving more regeneration might then become easier than is currently apparent.

Economic Appraisal

Within the DMG assessment process, there is a requirement that the economic effect of significant changes in management be quantified. The methodology is highly complex and probably unworkable in most areas, but this is a very significant scheme, SNH have seen fit to fund it, and I would argue that SNH now have a moral duty to conduct an economic appraisal of the project according to their own methodology, or insist that the project managers do this. As the DMG has not been consulted, it would not be appropriate to expect them to do this.

Timing

There is a suggestion that these works will begin in September, and be complete by February 2021. It is not possible for a DMG to assess a project and deliver mitigating culls in such a short time period, and it also risks significant welfare problems or displacement of more deer in to crofting areas or in to Lochinver.

Deer management activities have also been very significantly disrupted because of the current pandemic, and this could happen again over the winter, with activity possibly not being allowed again or with no markets for venison.

It would be better to postpone the project for a year and provide for more time for consultation and delivery of any mitigating actions.

Questions

I would ask the following questions:

- 1 Who has been consulted on this proposal?
- 2 What information was used to secure funding?
- 3 Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been undertaken or scoped out?
- 4 What is the proposed deer density within the enclosure?
- 5 What is the anticipated density then outside the enclosure?
- 6 Have habitat impact assessments been undertaken on open ground habitats within the area as part of the development of this plan? If not, how does the project justify saying that they are in poor condition when the accepted position is that this is not the case?
- 7 Has HIA been conducted within the woodland area, regeneration quantified, or age profiles created? If not, how is the suggestion that the wood is dying off in places justified?

Recommendations

- 1 This project, as described, will not become an exemplar of good practice. Quite the opposite, and there is likely to be very significant reputational damage on the back of it. It is not wise to present it as such.
- 2 There needs to be a proper consultation from the outset, and an extensive Environmental Impact Assessment will be required.
- 3 The rationale noted in the proposed Woodland Trust press statement does not accurately describe the site, and overstates the environmental damage that requires to be restored. It reads like a campaign document which might convince an interested outsider, but which is not persuasive to a more local land management and practical or community audience. Such a Press Release is likely to be counterproductive if issued. (I note that PR has now been circulated, and it will therefore be important to put on record an alternative view).
- 4 It appears to me that a very much smaller enclosure focused only on the woodlands would suffice if this is deemed necessary, or possibly a combination of smaller enclosures. The eastern half of the proposed enclosure is almost certainly unnecessary, and this is where the negative impacts are most likely to be.
- 5 My own instinct is that a targeted deer management effort would work more effectively, and would eliminate the cost and negative environmental impacts of a fence through such sensitive landscapes. The maintenance costs alone would be very high. If funding is available, it would be better spent in supporting and improving current deer management activities and monitoring, and that would deliver benefits to the wider south Assynt area beyond EB. Authorizations for out of season culling would be required, combined with focused cattle grazing and regular monitoring. Small enclosures to help secure a seed source of non- birch species may also be beneficial, especially for building an oak resource.
- 6 The C- SA deer plan needs to be re- drafted to accommodate the new situation, irrespective of whether the fencing or deer management approach is followed.
- 7 An upgraded deer plan needs to consider the cumulative impact of a scheme here in combination with changes within North Ross and possibly also the Assynt Peninsula, as well as any other significant changes in land use which might happen in the coming five years.
- 8 The best long term approach would be best informed by undertaking an economic appraisal of the two options, and SNH need to insist on this as a condition of funding from project management. This would test their own methodology and see whether it was fit for purpose.
- 9 There also needs to be a risk assessment on future wildfire events within the area, as this has significant implications for a publicly funded fenceline.
- 10 Information on a current assessment of the woodland area needs to be provided, so that the current situation can be more readily understood. This may or may not be available.
- 11 If a significant enclosure is agreed, the DMG should look to facilitate the opening up of an equivalent area of woodland elsewhere in the group, encouraging support for the FGS removal of fences if required to deliver this. Taking away old redundant fences within the Assynt landscape on a risk-assessed basis would be a much better use of the significant available funding than what is being proposed.

Sharon Phipps

From: Katherine Leys
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:45
To: SNHMEDIA; Graeme Taylor
Cc: Vicki Mowat; Jimmy Hyslop; Chris Donald; Graham Boyle; Emma Keenan; Tim Hancox; Cat Synnot
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence
Attachments: Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Challenge Fund grant - complaint - media response 18 August 2020.obr

Hi Graeme cc others

Here is the first draft of a response. I have refrained from pointing out some of the obvious things – like the application came from a partnership so not just one applicant and the BCF deadline was more than a month before Covid, and I haven't gone into any details about the other things that have been tried to reduce numbers. Some of your Area team would be able to supply that detail if we want it.

Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity | Scottish Natural Heritage | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Àrainn Elmwood | Rathad Carslogie | Cùbar | Fìobha | KY15 4JB | nature.scot –
Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

Please be aware that all Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) email addresses have changed to this new format: firstname.lastname@nature.scot. My new email address is katherine.leys@nature.scot

In accordance with government instructions, I am working from home. I can be contacted by all the usual methods, except in person as the office is currently closed.

From: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:14
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Ley@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>; Emma Keenan <Emma.Keenan@nature.scot>; Tim Hancox <Tim.Hancox@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme

Thanks for this. Yes, we'll need to get a line ready. Would it be yourself and Kath best placed to help make a start with that?

The information note attached – is that an independent assessment of the situation? I presume not if the project is pushing on as planned?

Cheers
dom

Dominic Shann | Communications Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Great Glen House | Leachkin Road | Inverness | IV3 8NW | t: 01463 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir | Rathad na Leacainn | Inbhir Nis | IV3 8NW
nature.scot – Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 09:43
To: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Ley@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Folks,

BCF received an email yesterday about an application to the scheme which has been passed and is about to be delivered in South Highland. There's some significant deer fencing and it has caused some upset with local landowners. As you will see there's a press release in the email, at this stage I've no idea if it's been picked up. Presume we may want to have something put together prior to that happening? I am sure between South Highland and BCF we can assist. There's also an associated complaint to Francesca which we received yesterday and we will be responding to in due course.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 17:08
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme,
Further from [REDACTED] Chair of the DMG,
Jimmy

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 17 August 2020 16:32
To: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 18 August 2020 15:15
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Subject: Update re: local feedback

Hi Jimmy,

I just wanted to keep you abreast of the activity that has been going on locally regarding the project. As you know, there have been discussions with the local deer management group, landowners and community members regarding the project since early in 2020, as part of our effort to consult with the local population in line with SNH and CALLP project requirements. Last week, we invited all local residents to feedback their views on the project via a household door-drop leaflet and information notices in business premises, with a response deadline of 1st September. So far, we have received messages of support, but also some negative feedback in the form of the attached press release, which you may already be aware of.

I will keep you updated with the feedback we receive by 1st September.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

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<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>
Sent: 18 August 2020 08:56
To: Tamara Lawton; Sinclair Coghill; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Land Commission Scotland_GOODPRACTICE-routemap-web.pdf
Attachments: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival article 130820 - FINAL.docx

Apologies the article is now attached

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 August 2020 08:43
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Subject: FW: Land Commission Scotland_GOODPRACTICE-routemap-web.pdf

Biodiversity Challenge Fund grant - Eisd Brachaidh Estate. South Assynt

SNH has awarded just under £200 000 to the Eisd Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project. The project recipient, Woodland Trust Scotland, submitted the application in February, acting on behalf of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscapes Partnership and the owners of Eisd Brachaidh Estate.

“The Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF) seeks applications from ambitious projects and this one seeks to protect and enhance the remnants of ancient woodland on 2,000ha of the Eisd Brachaidh Estate. It plans to enhance and restore nature across most of the estate.

We have been involved in discussions on the future of this site including different fencing options for a number of years prior to this application. We expect that the Woodland Trust will continue with this local discussion as the scheme progresses, and comply with statutory requirements for a scheme of this type. The local Deer Management Group has decided to revise their deer management plan to take into account revised site management and this should deal with any changes to local deer movements.

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>
Sent: 18 August 2020 08:42
To: Tamara Lawton; Sinclair Coghill; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh project
Attachments: Inverpolly Press Release.docx; Information Note for Inverpolly Estate- August 2020.docx

Dear all,

Please see attached a press release from Inverpolly in response to the article that was finalised last Thursday (I've attached this also) and sent out last Friday. It was also posted by hand to all Inverkirkaig residential addresses with the exception of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as I knew they had already seen it from emails received.

[REDACTED] - although I think SNH will already know about this as you are the point of contact for Jimmy please could you pass it on.

I've requested a call with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] this am to check the protocol of how we go forward from here.

Part of the issue is over consultation as with an FGS application there is a set procedure and we've spoken about it over the last few months, yesterday [REDACTED] sent [REDACTED] from CKD a consultation guidance document from the Land commission which I haven't seen before. But [REDACTED] and I believe that we have covered whats in it. I'll send that on also.

It would be good to have a call about this, ideally before 1pm today for me.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@nativewoods.co.uk
Sent: Monday, 17 August 2020 16:34
To: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh project

Hi [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Inverpolly has asked me to help with this.

I think you have got this badly wrong, and you need to put this on hold until you analyse your options properly and give people time to respond. I am attaching PR which [REDACTED] has sent out today in response to your own, and I have produced my own interpretation of the situation there, having done the deer plan a few years ago. I have also contacted SNH CEO with a view to getting the brakes put on this. I note your PR has went further than just the local papers, and at least one journalist has dug deeper and contacted [REDACTED] So, the stories might not appear as you anticipated.

Contacting you out of courtesy.

Regards,

■
■
■
Native Woodland Advice

Tel: ■

Mob: ■

The Native Woods Cooperative (Scotland) Ltd

<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nativewoods.co.uk%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cemacaskill%40coigach-assynt.org%7C42159b5ccc3b4c10938808d842c9fe03%7C5fc8a0d78388456cbf60606549738b4a%7C0%7C0%7C637332782622891562&odata=e44%2F47iqMelMolmtv1nDDKfgQiCH%2BE5jtcYeJnIROEI%3D&reserved=0>
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Inverpolly Estate

INFORMATION NOTE WITH REGARDS TO FENCED ENCLOSURE ON EISG BRACHAIDH

CONFIDENTIAL

Eisg Brachaidh map to accompany WMO commentary 4 June 2019



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Scottish Natural Heritage
Duitheachas Nàdar na h-Alba
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The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd is a non profit distributing organisation dedicated to managing and expanding Scotland's native woodlands. We offer specialist advice and management services to landowners and agents throughout the country.



Background

This short report has been prepared for Inverpolly Estate with regards to proposals to completely deer fence the neighbouring property of Eisg Brachaidh (EB), to the South of Lochinver. This report is **CONFIDENTIAL** to the owners of Inverpolly initially, but it is expected that it will be shared with neighbours, including EB, and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and it has been written with this purpose in mind.

Inverpolly is the agricultural tenant at EB, and [REDACTED] is also the Chair of the Coigach- South Assynt Deer Management Group as well as being an adjacent landowner, and has an interest in the proposal from each of these perspectives.

The EB proposal is to reduce browsing pressure across their property to restore a range of habitats including native woodland, most of which are designated at SSSI and SAC level. They have received funding from the SNH Biodiversity Challenge Fund and from the Woodland Trust for Scotland and CALLP (Coigach & Assynt Local Landscape Partnership). The Woodland Trust are managing the project, and it is put forward as an exemplar of habitat restoration in Scotland.

The project is a very significant proposal at the local level, but there has been very little substantive consultation on it to date, if any, and this is likely to lead to very significant problems going forwards. This is not acceptable for a project now confirmed as receiving £420,000 in public funding, and falls well short of all recommended guidelines for communication with community interests. The purpose of this report is to articulate the concerns surrounding this project, and to recommend some actions that need to be implemented so that we get a scheme that has a reasonable chance of success and which others can work around without detriment to their own interests.

My knowledge of the area comes from preparing the Deer Management Plan (DMP) for the Coigach- South Assynt Deer Management Group (C-SA DMG), covering the period 2018- 2023. Background to this plan can be found at:

<http://wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk/deer-management/deer-management-plan-south-area-sub-group/>

The Current C-SA Deer Management Plan

The C-SA DMP was set up to cover the period 2018-23. It was recognized when producing this that a significant project might well be forthcoming on EB within the period of the plan, but there was little information or discussion at the time on what that might look like, and at the time, there did not appear to be a straightforward fit with the Forestry Grant Scheme, which would have been the expected funding mechanism.

The most significant public interest within the area was the management of designated sites, particularly the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC which dominates the area and contains by far the greatest number of designated features. The designated sites cover the greater part of EB. Inverpolly has been the focus of conservation activity for over 40 years, and has until very recently been subject to a Section 7 voluntary control scheme to oversee deer numbers. This scheme was generally held to be very successful, in that it has delivered fairly steady deer populations and culls, and most of the broad suite of habitats except native woodland are in favourable or recovering condition. At around 4.5 deer per square km, the C- SA area has one of the lowest

deer densities in Scotland. SNH has been struggling to fund such schemes for a number of years now, and a S7 agreement is no longer in place.

The previous S7 agreement meant that SNH were effectively running the C- SA DMG, or at least part of it, and the Group as a whole suffered because of this, not having much in the way of capacity themselves, and this was the major weakness identified within the Group when drawing up the DMP. There now appears to be funding available through CALLP to cover secretarial expenses and habitat surveying, and that this has indeed been drawn down and has improved the running of the group.

In terms of designated habitats and appropriate deer densities, there was a strong consensus during the DMP process that except for native woodland, deer densities were appropriate for the broad suite of other habitats which dominated by far the greater part of the area, and this was agreed by SNH at the time, and confirmed again in summer 2020. The broad thrust of the DMP was therefore to maintain a generally stable deer population, and the culls implemented through to 2019-20 suggest that deer numbers should be the same or possibly slightly lower than they were when the plan was drawn up. There have been increased culls on neighbouring DMG areas, along with at least one year of higher mortality and very low recruitment in Sutherland more generally, so the chances that the C-SA deer population might have increased from the 2016 count would be very low indeed.

The problem of assessing the native woodland

Within the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC area, which includes EB, the native woodland is designated as both an upland birch woodland and an upland western acidic oak woodland. As with the Ardvar woodlands to the north, the oak feature is extremely poor in terms of tree and shrub species which are absent from all but a small proportion of the area. It cannot and will not function naturally as an oak wood, even if browsing levels are reduced. A seed source for the main tree and shrub species is simply not there. At Ardvar, an independent consultant report has recommended that the oak woodland feature is inappropriate to the greater part of the site, and this is likely to be the case within the Inverpolly SAC as well.

As such, it is only fair to consider the native woodland here as an upland birch woodland, which may have a small proportion of other native species within it, and set expectations on that basis. The condition of the native woodlands should therefore be judged by the amount and extent of downy birch regeneration present.

Making an assessment of the condition of the native woodland within the Inverpolly SSSI/ SAC is extremely difficult. Native woodland is extremely fragmented across the area, composed of a series of largely separate and isolated woodland areas, interspersed with open ground habitats. The swathe of woodland that extends across EB and the western part of Inverpolly, extended in to non designated woodland further north, is the only significant area of broadleaved woodland within the area. The other woods are all very small.

On one hand, and despite the fairly low average deer density, many of these small woodlands are very obviously highly impacted with no regeneration and poor ground vegetation. On the other, there have been many enclosures covering the woodland area which have included some planting, others are planned going forwards, and the Native Woods of Scotland Survey (NWSS) shows several areas at low or medium impacts, including some areas which are not fenced.

The problem with assessing these woodland features is how to give an overall summary when there is mixed evidence available as to current condition, but good intent on the part of the owners has clearly been demonstrated in the past.

The Eisg Brachaidh woodland

The EB woodland area is difficult to assess as well, despite being much bigger. There clearly is regeneration present along the coastline, near the road, on steeper ground that is difficult for animals to access, and within areas of gorse which are fairly extensive in areas and which provide good protection for young trees. There are areas of birch regeneration elsewhere around the complex of woodlands, a proportion of which has got away or is likely to in the future. There is regeneration within the small number of enclosures. Looking more widely at the woodland, there are clearly younger cohorts of trees which have become successfully established in the past. It would not be appropriate to describe the woodland as only having older trees. This is clearly not the case, and in this regard, the Press release produced by Woodland Trust Scotland misrepresents the current status of the site by clearly stating that there are no young trees, and that the older trees are rapidly dying out.

There is a very clear parallel here with when SNH issued a Press Release in 2016 which misrepresented the position on the Assynt peninsula to the north, and greatly angered the local population there. The position with the woods here on EB is not quite so obvious, but a clear statement that there is no regeneration and the trees are dying out is more of a campaign message and bears little basis in reality. As a statement made with clear conviction and no ambiguity, it can easily be shown to be false.

There are some areas of mature trees and areas which are obviously in decline without signs of regeneration around them, but this is only a proportion of the total. There are extensive areas of dry heath around some of the remnants which you might expect birch regeneration to be spreading on to, but no such regeneration is present. There are some examples of non- birch species regenerating, but these are extremely limited. In part, this will be a function of the limited seed source, but a greater proportion of willow and possibly hazel would certainly be forthcoming with a sympathetic browsing regime.

An important feature of the EB woodlands is the extensive fire that occurred within them around eight years ago. This clearly took out a large swathe of trees of a younger cohort, and there will undoubtedly have been regeneration within this as well. A side effect of this fire is that regrowth of ground vegetation has made it extremely attractive to deer in the years afterwards, bringing more browsing pressure in to the area more generally, and undoubtedly, the last few years will have seen browsing pressure at higher levels than might have previously have been the case.

When drawing up the DMP previously, I had seen this mixed evidence within the EB woodlands, and was trying to decide whether to be more or less optimistic about how the woodland area was developing, and whether the balance was positive or negative. This is obviously a subjective thought process, but my conclusion at the time was that the fire damage tilted the balance towards a more pessimistic outlook, and that some sort of intervention would be required, either fencing or targeted deer control.

Suitable management of the EB woodlands is therefore both necessary, and beneficial to any assessment of the native woodlands in south Assynt in general.

The question is, *"Is what is proposed the answer?"*

The Current Proposals

DMG members have been aware of the general intention to do something within the EB woodlands for some time, and EB have also had extensive discussions with Inverpolly regarding the possible resumption of around 40 hectares of ground from their leased area.

The proposal to fence the entire property has only been known from this summer, there has been no involvement of the deer group, and the project has been presented as a fait accompli which will begin shortly. Help has been offered to help deal with practical issues arising, but there has been no substantive consultation, and this is where the problem is.

The broad swathe of woodlands in the NW of the DMG area, with EB at its heart, will be one of the most valuable areas for deer shelter and feeding, and will be used proportionately more than the open ground dominating most of the group. The deer issues will certainly be very significant, and these are covered below, but it is not apparent how a range of other issues have been considered either, if indeed they have. These mostly relate to the fence itself.

The fence itself

A twelve mile fence within south Assynt is a very significant issue in itself. While there are a number of fenced enclosures within the area, few of these are visible. This fence is much larger, by several orders of magnitude. It will lie within an important landscape area, and an assessment of the visual impact of this will need to be made. It is not apparent that this has been done. It is difficult to see how a range of national access organizations would not object to this proposal. While the fence is not going near the high mountains, the lochs of Assynt are very popular for fishing and walking and camping, and it is the open, unrestricted landscape that people value.

The proposed fenceline is very conspicuous in that a very high proportion of the length is next to lochs, watercourses or the sea, much of which is designated. It is likely that this will channel deer in to the narrow riparian zone outwith the fence, and this can only have negative consequences, potentially tracking or trampling this sensitive zone, and possibly facilitating predator access which could further damage protected bird species. The presence of so much fencing in proximity to water bodies in itself should trigger the need for an Environment Impact Assessment, as both the water bodies and the riparian zone around them are protected at both SSSI and SAC levels, as well as the breeding bird life they sustain. Fences are most usually considered as a risk of bird strike in relation to ground nesting black grouse and capercaillie, but it might be expected that extensive fencing within an area of sensitive hill lochs would become a similar problem, particularly as some of the bird species will be migratory. It is understood that there is fishing let alongside the River Kirkaig, and inappropriate fencing could well be detrimental to the amenity and hence the value of fishing activity in that area.

The fence proposed could well cost £300- 350,000 or more for its installation alone, with ongoing maintenance costs. It is not clear to me that such a fence is actually required.

Deer Issues

The local deer group have not been consulted, and no analysis of the proposal has been undertaken. Removing such a sheltered area from the deer range will have a significant impact on the C- SA open range deer population, and this needs to be properly assessed in advance, not as an afterthought. There will be welfare issues, increased trampling risk and economic impact considerations to be analysed. Deer are likely to be diverted on to the grazings at Inverkirkaig, and further on in to Lochinver where there already is an issue that needs to be addressed. This can only exacerbate that.

It is proposed that a population of deer is retained within the 2000 ha enclosure, but a small number of deer kept within an enclosure can often create more damage than a larger number which have the freedom to come and go as they please. The woods of Assynt appear to hold significant numbers of deer in winter, sometimes up to 20 per sq km or more, with flies and midges forcing them out on to the higher tops in summer. Stopping them from moving as they naturally would is going to create welfare issues, and stressed deer will respond to this by damaging more trees. There are few, if any, publicly funded enclosures in Scotland where regeneration is desired and deer are actively retained within them. The desired density is usually zero, even if this is not actually achieved, particularly with sika deer and roe within the area as well.

The lack of consultation

If this was a Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) application, a full range of biodiversity, access, archaeology, deer and local community interests would need to be consulted, and almost certainly, a full Environmental Impact Assessment would be required, given the range of potential impacts within a highly designated area.

This proposal is highly unusual in that funding has apparently been obtained from another public source, but an EIA will still be required, and it is difficult to see how many of these issues could be successfully accommodated.

There has been a tendency in Scotland in recent years for ambitious conservation projects to be taken forwards without any local input on important issues, and this has been exacerbated by the Deer Working Group report which downplays the importance of collaboration, community engagement or deer management groups.

It may be that consultation has taken place on some of the issues above, but none of this appears to be in the public domain. The full public investment in the scheme is listed through a Press Release at £420,000, funded largely by SNH at a time when they have no money for even most of their routine work which they are having to cut back on.

In my opinion, trying to take forward such a proposal without obvious consultation of any significant sort risks very serious reputational damage to all those concerned. For this reason alone, the timeline needs to be re- considered, and the project developed properly.

The particular role of SNH

It appears that SNH have made available a very significant amount of funding for this project, making them a significant project partner, and implying that this is the sort of project and approach that they wish to be associated with. In their regulatory role, SNH will have to oversee any deer related issues created by their own actions, but there is no evidence that any of this was considered before money was allocated, in the way that Scottish Forestry are required to do. To me, it appears that SNH have created a conflict of interest for themselves, and in not considering deer related issues in particular at the outset, they especially are risking reputational damage for themselves.

Is the fence required?

This is the key question.

The rationale for the project says the objective is to reduce grazing and browsing to improve a broad range of habitats, implying all are currently being negatively impacted, but the majority of designated habitats are in Favourable or Recovering condition already, with the exception of the native woodlands. SNH confirm that this is the situation in summer 2020. The signature habitat within the area is blanket bog, and this is recovering across the area, and fencing may well risk trampling and tracking damage to bogs alongside side it. The most dominant habitat is wet heath, at Favourable condition already. The dry heath is at Unfavourable status (assessed 2004), but it is not readily apparent if any such impacted areas are within EB. Any dry heath areas around the woodland resource will certainly regenerate with trees if browsing is reduced. Paradoxically, this will also downgrade the dry heath to Unfavourable status unless the assessment processes are changed.

There is no evidence that open ground habitats require to be fenced, and that the S7 process was already delivering the necessary condition.

The fence really only therefore applies to the native woodlands, and these could be enclosed by a much smaller enclosure than proposed, or possibly a number of smaller enclosures. The question, which is admittedly subjective, is whether a fence is required? A better consultation would inform this decision more effectively.

There is good evidence elsewhere in Assynt that birch regeneration can be achieved by deer control alone if the area concerned is of a significant enough size, and if pressure can be applied in the spring months when regeneration is most vulnerable.

There is certainly a big enough area of trees on EB to consider a deer management approach without any fences. Out of Season authorizations would certainly be required for the spring months to deter stags in particular, and this would put pressure on that resource, but the likelihood is that an enclosure would have a much larger overall effect. The advantage that EB would have over Ardvär is that they seem to have a much larger area of dry heath around their woodlands, which is more likely to regenerate, particularly if the ground could be scarified by trampling with cattle in the autumn and early winter months, as the EB proposal suggests. For many areas in Scotland, a deer management only approach would not be practicable, but there is certainly enough at EB to suggest that it could work well if the main objective was a significant increase in downy birch regeneration. Targeted but possibly modest deer control measures combined with cattle trampling/ scarifying would produce the best response, with the latter probably being the more important

if that can be delivered. The larger the area that can be generated, the more likely it is to get away.

Many people in Scotland will be confused as to why environmental NGOs and SNH are moving directly to a huge fenced scheme to deliver regeneration in an area where fencing may not be required, when they have spent many years campaigning for more regeneration through deer reductions. No proper evaluation of the options has been carried out here. In terms of the damaging effects of fences, it would be difficult to envisage a more inappropriate location for what is proposed.

Targeted deer control is unlikely to produce much in the way of oak regeneration when so little seed supply is available. It may be appropriate to create a number of smaller enclosures on suitable ground and produce a future seed source to supplement whatever birch regeneration that can be achieved.

The effect of the recent fire will shortly begin to fall away as well, with vegetation becoming less attractive to deer again as it gets older, and this is likely to reduce impact levels within the area, meaning that achieving more regeneration might then become easier than is currently apparent.

Economic Appraisal

Within the DMG assessment process, there is a requirement that the economic effect of significant changes in management be quantified. The methodology is highly complex and probably unworkable in most areas, but this is a very significant scheme, SNH have seen fit to fund it, and I would argue that SNH now have a moral duty to conduct an economic appraisal of the project according to their own methodology, or insist that the project managers do this. As the DMG has not been consulted, it would not be appropriate to expect them to do this.

Timing

There is a suggestion that these works will begin in September, and be complete by February 2021. It is not possible for a DMG to assess a project and deliver mitigating culls in such a short time period, and it also risks significant welfare problems or displacement of more deer in to crofting areas or in to Lochinver.

Deer management activities have also been very significantly disrupted because of the current pandemic, and this could happen again over the winter, with activity possibly not being allowed again or with no markets for venison.

It would be better to postpone the project for a year and provide for more time for consultation and delivery of any mitigating actions.

Questions

I would ask the following questions:

- 1 Who has been consulted on this proposal?
- 2 What information was used to secure funding?
- 3 Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been undertaken or scoped out?
- 4 What is the proposed deer density within the enclosure?
- 5 What is the anticipated density then outside the enclosure?
- 6 Have habitat impact assessments been undertaken on open ground habitats within the area as part of the development of this plan? If not, how does the project justify saying that they are in poor condition when the accepted position is that this is not the case?
- 7 Has HIA been conducted within the woodland area, regeneration quantified, or age profiles created? If not, how is the suggestion that the wood is dying off in places justified?

Recommendations

- 1 This project, as described, will not become an exemplar of good practice. Quite the opposite, and there is likely to be very significant reputational damage on the back of it. It is not wise to present it as such.
- 2 There needs to be a proper consultation from the outset, and an extensive Environmental Impact Assessment will be required.
- 3 The rationale noted in the proposed Woodland Trust press statement does not accurately describe the site, and overstates the environmental damage that requires to be restored. It reads like a campaign document which might convince an interested outsider, but which is not persuasive to a more local land management and practical or community audience. Such a Press Release is likely to be counterproductive if issued. (I note that PR has now been circulated, and it will therefore be important to put on record an alternative view).
- 4 It appears to me that a very much smaller enclosure focused only on the woodlands would suffice if this is deemed necessary, or possibly a combination of smaller enclosures. The eastern half of the proposed enclosure is almost certainly unnecessary, and this is where the negative impacts are most likely to be.
- 5 My own instinct is that a targeted deer management effort would work more effectively, and would eliminate the cost and negative environmental impacts of a fence through such sensitive landscapes. The maintenance costs alone would be very high. If funding is available, it would be better spent in supporting and improving current deer management activities and monitoring, and that would deliver benefits to the wider south Assynt area beyond EB. Authorizations for out of season culling would be required, combined with focused cattle grazing and regular monitoring. Small enclosures to help secure a seed source of non- birch species may also be beneficial, especially for building an oak resource.
- 6 The C- SA deer plan needs to be re- drafted to accommodate the new situation, irrespective of whether the fencing or deer management approach is followed.
- 7 An upgraded deer plan needs to consider the cumulative impact of a scheme here in combination with changes within North Ross and possibly also the Assynt Peninsula, as well as any other significant changes in land use which might happen in the coming five years.
- 8 The best long term approach would be best informed by undertaking an economic appraisal of the two options, and SNH need to insist on this as a condition of funding from project management. This would test their own methodology and see whether it was fit for purpose.
- 9 There also needs to be a risk assessment on future wildfire events within the area, as this has significant implications for a publicly funded fenceline.
- 10 Information on a current assessment of the woodland area needs to be provided, so that the current situation can be more readily understood. This may or may not be available.
- 11 If a significant enclosure is agreed, the DMG should look to facilitate the opening up of an equivalent area of woodland elsewhere in the group, encouraging support for the FGS removal of fences if required to deliver this. Taking away old redundant fences within the Assynt landscape on a risk-assessed basis would be a much better use of the significant available funding than what is being proposed.

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[REDACTED]

The Press Release “The Eìsg Brachaidh Revival” circulated on 14th August describes a massive conservation project at the very heart of Assynt. It purports to be an exemplar of good practice, but there has been no consultation whatsoever on this initiative which plans to put almost 12 miles of deer fence right in the heart of our most important landscape area. The justification for the project is to protect a wide range of designated habitats, but the majority of these are at Favourable or Recovering condition already, and it is not clear that such a fence is necessary.

The Australian landowners with Perth based conservation organization Woodland Trust Scotland have developed a £420,000 project with Scottish Natural Heritage behind closed doors under the cover of COVID lockdown, to be implemented in two weeks’ time in the middle of a global pandemic, and neighbouring landowners and crofters are expected to clear up the mess with no opportunity to input in advance. There is no transparency or due process involved, and all those organizations charged with protecting landscape, bird life, archaeology, access, deer management and local community interests appear to have been bypassed in the rush to spend this money. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) appear to have sanctioned and funded a huge project without any due diligence or analysis, and have therefore created a huge conflict of interest for themselves, and are risking reputational damage for all those involved.

Any initiative or inward investment to improve our natural heritage must be encouraged in this area, but people locally need to have a voice, and direct neighbours must be given the time and space to consider how this is best implemented.

This project needs to be put on hold so that it can be properly considered and amended. As it stands, the local community are only being given a few days to respond, and that is not right.

[REDACTED],
Chair, Coigach- South Assynt Deer Group and Inverpolly Estate.

The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

An exciting initiative to restore woodland, heath and peatland across the 2000ha Eisg Brachaidh Estate has secured more than £420,000 thanks to support from the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Challenge Fund and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is also being sought from Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Eisg Brachaidh project area forms part of the Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project aims to restore a range of habitats including saving irreplaceable old woodland remnants and improving the condition of heathland communities on this part of the Inverpolly SAC.

Key to its success is reducing grazing pressure from deer. There are no young trees growing on the Estate and the few mature trees that do remain are fading fast. Wet and dry heathland and bogs are also suffering from over browsing and trampling. We need to act now to stop further loss of woodland and help rare heathland and peatland habitats recover.

We plan do this by installing a deer fence around the estate boundary. Deer will remain within the fence but numbers will be kept at a sustainable level alongside continued cattle grazing. Cattle have a different grazing style from deer and it is this mix of grazing that's important to support natural habitat improvements.

Open public access will be maintained throughout the project with suitably placed gates, cattle grids and stiles.

We appreciate that when an area is fenced it can be difficult to predict the knock-on effect of deer movements in the surrounding area. These impacts can be managed however, and the project partners are committed to dealing with any problems that may arise for neighbours. The movement and number of deer will be monitored to help with this.

As lead partner for the CALLP woodland projects, Woodland Trust Scotland will be responsible for work on the ground in association with Eisg Brachaidh Estate under guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage regarding deer and designated habitats.

This is an exciting large-scale restoration project that will be delivered over many years to create healthy Assynt habitats for the next generation to enjoy. We look forward to getting started!

If anyone has any queries please do get in touch. Contact [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk) before 1 September 2020.

Thank you.

Sharon Phipps

From: Graeme Taylor
Sent: 18 August 2020 09:43
To: SNHMEDIA
Cc: Vicki Mowat; Jimmy Hyslop; Katherine Leys; Chris Donald; Graham Boyle
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence
Attachments: 501341 - 47 - EB press release - from [REDACTED].obr; 501341 - 47 - RE Eisg Brachaidh woodland project.obr; 501341 - 47 - Information Note for Inverpolly Estate- August 2020 (2).obr; 501341 - 47 - 5ddfaf5834ff3_GOODPRACTICE-routemap-web.obr

Hi Folks,

BCF received an email yesterday about an application to the scheme which has been passed and is about to be delivered in South Highland. There's some significant deer fencing and it has caused some upset with local landowners. As you will see there's a press release in the email, at this stage I've no idea if it's been picked up. Presume we may want to have something put together prior to that happening? I am sure between South Highland and BCF we can assist. There's also an associated complaint to Francesca which we received yesterday and we will be responding to in due course.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 17:08
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme,
Further from [REDACTED] Chair of the DMG,
Jimmy

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 17 August 2020 16:32
To: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Sharon Phipps

From: Graeme Taylor
Sent: 19 August 2020 08:17
To: Katherine Leys; SNHMEDIA
Cc: Vicki Mowat; Jimmy Hyslop; Chris Donald; Graham Boyle; Emma Keenan; Tim Hancox; Cat Synnot
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Kath,

Thanks for that. We had a good meeting between the South Highland team and Jimmy yesterday where we knocked about most of the relevant issues. We are still waiting on confirmation from Forestry Scotland of whether the scheme will need an EIA (which has statutory consultation included) once we get that we'll be able to finish off the release and the letter from Francesca.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Ley@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:45
To: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>; Emma Keenan <Emma.Keenan@nature.scot>; Tim Hancox <Tim.Hancox@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme cc others

Here is the first draft of a response. I have refrained from pointing out some of the obvious things – like the application came from a partnership so not just one applicant and the BCF deadline was more than a month before Covid, and I haven't gone into any details about the other things that have been tried to reduce numbers. Some of your Area team would be able to supply that detail if we want it.

Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity | Scottish Natural Heritage | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Àrainn Elmwood | Rathad Carslogie | Cùbar | Fìobha | KY15 4JB | nature.scot –
Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

Please be aware that all Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) email addresses have changed to this new format: firstname.lastname@nature.scot. My new email address is katherine.leys@nature.scot

In accordance with government instructions, I am working from home. I can be contacted by all the usual methods, except in person as the office is currently closed.

From: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:14

To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>; Emma Keenan <Emma.Keenan@nature.scot>; Tim Hancox <Tim.Hancox@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme

Thanks for this. Yes, we'll need to get a line ready. Would it be yourself and Kath best placed to help make a start with that?

The information note attached – is that an independent assessment of the situation? I presume not if the project is pushing on as planned?

Cheers
dom

Dominic Shann | Communications Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Great Glen House | Leachkin Road | Inverness | IV3 8NW | t: 01463 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir | Rathad na Leacainn | Inbhir Nis | IV3 8NW
nature.scot – Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 09:43
To: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Folks,

BCF received an email yesterday about an application to the scheme which has been passed and is about to be delivered in South Highland. There's some significant deer fencing and it has caused some upset with local landowners. As you will see there's a press release in the email, at this stage I've no idea if it's been picked up. Presume we may want to have something put together prior to that happening? I am sure between South Highland and BCF we can assist. There's also an associated complaint to Francesca which we received yesterday and we will be responding to in due course.

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Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme,
Further from [REDACTED] Chair of the DMG,
Jimmy

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 17 August 2020 16:32

To: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 19 August 2020 09:27
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Graeme Taylor
Subject: RE: Update re: local feedback

Hi [REDACTED],

[REDACTED] has copied SNH in to a complaint to the Scottish Land Commission on the lack of consultation and has just requested the grant application form and supporting documents, which I will send on to him.

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 18 August 2020 15:15
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: Update re: local feedback

Hi Jimmy,

I just wanted to keep you abreast of the activity that has been going on locally regarding the project. As you know, there have been discussions with the local deer management group, landowners and community members regarding the project since early in 2020, as part of our effort to consult with the local population in line with SNH and CALLP project requirements. Last week, we invited all local residents to feedback their views on the project via a household door-drop leaflet and information notices in business premises, with a response deadline of 1st September. So far, we have received messages of support, but also some negative feedback in the form of the attached press release, which you may already be aware of.

I will keep you updated with the feedback we receive by 1st September.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

The information contained in this e-mail along with any attachments may be confidential, legally privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure. It is intended for the named individual(s) or entity who is/are the only authorised recipient(s). If this message has reached you in error please notify the sender immediately and delete it without review.

Anything in this email which does not relate to the Woodland Trust's official business is neither given nor endorsed by the Woodland Trust. Email is not secure and may contain viruses. We make every effort to ensure email is sent without viruses, but cannot guarantee this and recommend recipients take appropriate precautions. We may monitor email traffic data and content in accordance with our policies and English law. Thank you.

The Woodland Trust is a charity registered in England (No. 294344) and in Scotland (No. SC038885).

A non-profit making company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England No. 1982873.

Registered Office: Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL.

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 19 August 2020 10:14
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate
Attachments: 501341 - APPLICATION - Woodland Trust Scotland - Eisd Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project - Application Form.pdf; 501341 - APPLICATION - MAP - Woodland Trust Scotland - Eisd Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project - Project Area Map - Eisd Brachaidh.pdf; 501341 - APPLICATION - Woodland Trust Scotland - Eisd Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project - Project Finances V2.xlsx

Hello [REDACTED]
Attached are the application form and supporting documents for this project, as requested,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 08:26
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

Would it be possible to have copy of the application and associate documents, please.

Thank you
[REDACTED]

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]
Sent: 23 June 2020 14:44
To: info@inverpolly.com
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],
Woodland Trust Scotland has been successful in its application to our Biodiversity Challenge Fund for this project,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR | t:0131 314 [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach Chluaidh | G81 2NR
nature.scot – Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

SNH staff will be at home trying to work until further notice. Please use the usual email addresses to contact us. Our office phone numbers are diverted to our mobile or land line numbers.

If you receive an auto-reply that a particular member of Grants staff is not working, due to illness or leave, please forward the email to grants@nature.scot.

Please let us know if we should use any different contact details or methods to communicate with you during this time.

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 22 June 2020 20:49

To: BCF <BCF@nature.scot>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the Agricultural Tenant on Eisg Brachaidh Estate.

I have heard the entire Estate is to be deer fenced and I was wondering if you are providing the funding.

The application may have come from CALL(Coigach Assynt Living Landscape) with the help of the Woodland Trust.

This would be in the latest round of funding as I don't think the contract has been signed yet.

Apologies if this is nothing to do with you.

Thank You

[REDACTED]

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED] <assyntcc@gmail.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 20:34
To: info@coigach-assynt.org; INVERNESS_SERVICE_DELIVERY_TEAM
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

For Your Information

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 August 2020 13:59
To: Roseanna.Cunningham@scottish.parliament.uk; Gail.Ross.msp@scottish.parliament.uk;
ian.blackford.mp@parliament.uk; [REDACTED]
Cc: [Kirsteen Currie](mailto:Kirsteen.Currie); Kirsteen.Currie.cllr@highland.gov.uk; [REDACTED] @woodlandtrust.org.uk;
[REDACTED] @gmail.com; info@inverpolly.com; [WSDMG](#); [REDACTED] @msn.com; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] @scotbooks.freeuk.com; [REDACTED] @icloud.com
Subject: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Good afternoon,

This week, Assynt Community Council received the follow e-mail from the Woodland Trust:

The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

An exciting initiative to restore woodland, heath and peatland across the 2000ha Eisg Brachaidh Estate has secured more than £420,000 thanks to support from the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Challenge Fund and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is also being sought from Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Eisg Brachaidh project area forms part of the Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project aims to restore a range of habitats including saving irreplaceable old woodland remnants and improving the condition of heathland communities on this part of the Inverpolly SAC.

Key to its success is reducing grazing pressure from deer. There are no young trees growing on the Estate and the few mature trees that do remain are fading fast. Wet and dry heathland and bogs are also suffering from over browsing and trampling. We need to act now to stop further loss of woodland and help rare heathland and peatland habitats recover.

We plan do this by installing a deer fence around the estate boundary. Deer will remain within the fence but numbers will be kept at a sustainable level alongside continued cattle grazing. Cattle have a different grazing style from deer and it is this mix of grazing that's important to support natural habitat improvements.

Open public access will be maintained throughout the project with suitably placed gates, cattle grids and stiles.

We appreciate that when an area is fenced it can be difficult to predict the knock-on effect of deer movements in the surrounding area. These impacts can be managed however, and the project partners are committed to dealing with any problems that may arise for neighbours. The movement and number of deer will be monitored to help with this.

As lead partner for the CALLP woodland projects, Woodland Trust Scotland will be responsible for work on the ground in association with Eisd Brachaidh Estate under guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage regarding deer and designated habitats.

This is an exciting large-scale restoration project that will be delivered over many years to create healthy Assynt habitats for the next generation to enjoy. We look forward to getting started!

This was the first time we were made aware of this new project.

Following this press release, the Vice Chair of the Coigach and South Assynt Deer Management Group and Inverpolly Estate responded as follows

The Press Release "The Eisd Brachaidh Revival" circulated on 14th August describes a massive conservation project at the very heart of Assynt. It purports to be an exemplar of good practice, but there has been no consultation whatsoever on this initiative which plans to put almost 12 miles of deer fence right in the heart of our most important landscape area. The justification for the project is to protect a wide range of designated habitats, but the majority of these are at Favourable or Recovering condition already, and it is not clear that such a fence is necessary.

The Australian landowners with Perth based conservation organization Woodland Trust Scotland have developed a £420,000 project with Scottish Natural Heritage behind closed doors under the cover of COVID lockdown, to be implemented in two weeks' time in the middle of a global pandemic, and neighbouring landowners and crofters are expected to clear up the mess with no opportunity to input in advance. There is no transparency or due process involved, and all those organizations charged with protecting landscape, bird life, archaeology, access, deer management and local community interests appear to have been bypassed in the rush to spend this money.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) appear to have sanctioned and funded a huge project without any due diligence or analysis, and have therefore created a huge conflict of interest for themselves, and are risking reputational damage for all those involved.

Any initiative or inward investment to improve our natural heritage must be encouraged in this area, but people locally need to have a voice, and direct neighbours must be given the time and space to consider how this is best implemented.

Assynt Community Council shares the same concerns.

This is not the first time SNH has shown a complete disregard for the local community by failing to consult with those who are directly impacted by their actions. It's clear they have given full support to yet another local project that could well result in further displacement of the existing deer herds without community consultation.

The road between Ledmore Junction and Lochinver has already seen a dramatic increase in deer numbers over the years leading to several road accidents. Currently, there are three separate herds of deer marauding through Lochinver village causing damage, defecating in public spaces and generally roaming at will. Most have been driven to lower, semi-urbanised habitats as a result of the widespread fencing off of nearby plantations. So we find it difficult to feel any enthusiasm towards the Woodland Trust's latest announcement of plans to fence off another local estate.

No doubt, Carbon Capture grants have encouraged estate-owners to use public money for tree planting and subsequent fencing to drive deer off their natural habitat. The Scottish Government has targets for the planting of trees, which is a good thing as a principle.

However, as a lot of the Central Belt and Southern Scotland is unsuitable, it leaves areas like ours to suffer the indirect consequences of widespread afforestation. There has been little if any discussion with actual communities regarding the adverse impact such practices have created. Several estates in our area have been fencing off large areas to protect trees, using the project money as a cash cow to keep the estates running.

The Woodland Trust implies in its press release that they should be capable of addressing any problems caused by displaced deer, 'as and when they arise'. However, displaced deer are already a major problem in Assynt and elsewhere. We feel the Woodland Trust and SNH should be held accountable for their premature action which might well exacerbate the problem. We request that this particular project be deferred for at least 3 months (and any future plans for the fencing off of large estates for the purpose of tree planting be put on hold) until they have been adequately risk assessed, the full impact has been taken into account and the local community has been allowed to express its concerns.

Yours respectfully,

██████████ (Secretary Assynt Community Council)

██████████@live.co.uk

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 20 August 2020 09:10
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],
Please note that SNH's decision on this grant application was made when it was approved by the panel in March,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] :
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 22:24
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I have had a chance to read through the application and have a few comments to make.

Section 7.

Red Squirrels are not present.

There has been no routine Muirburn for over 35 years.

Regeneration was good as confirmed by [REDACTED] when he was Chairman of Deer Commission Scotland.

Most regeneration was lost in a wild fire about 8 years ago.

Deer numbers were under control within the designated site under a sect. 7 agreement.

It is only because of the fresh growth after the fire that deer numbers (like the tide) have been difficult to control.

This effect is starting to wear off and by year 12 I would expect no effect at all.

Project Proposal

Fencing the Estate will block the natural movement of deer through to Inverpolly where stalking is a very important economic activity helping to maintain two full time jobs and several part time jobs.

The 5 miles of deer fence on the North side will guide deer into Inverkirkaig and compound existing deer/human conflicts all the way up the coast including Lochinver.

Para 2 see above.

The Map shows new fenced enclosures.

The Agricultural Tenants will be impacted.

They will have to spend considerable amounts of time moving stock, that were free to roam, through the new fence. SNH have not stopped the tenant from grazing sheep on this ground.

Sect 20

The Agricultural Tenant has not been consulted.

The current consent is for 50 cows and 561 ewes and gimmers (reduced from 1200 under AECS and previous schemes).

Sect 21

The map shows new enclosures.

Sect 25 + 26

If they are vat reg why can they not reclaim?

Budget

The National Lottery Heritage Fund CALL money has not been confirmed.

I hope this new information will help you review your decision.

Regards

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 19 August 2020 10:14

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hello [REDACTED],

Attached are the application form and supporting documents for this project, as requested,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: [REDACTED]s <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 19 August 2020 08:26

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Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

Would it be possible to have copy of the application and associate documents, please.

Thank you

[REDACTED]d

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 23 June 2020 14:44

To: info@inverpolly.com

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],

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Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR | t:0131 314 [REDACTED]

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach Chluaidh | G81 2NR
nature.scot – *Connecting People and Nature in Scotland* – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

SNH staff will be at home trying to work until further notice. Please use the usual email addresses to contact us. Our office phone numbers are diverted to our mobile or land line numbers. If you receive an auto-reply that a particular member of Grants staff is not working, due to illness or leave, please forward the email to grants@nature.scot. Please let us know if we should use any different contact details or methods to communicate with you during this time.

From: [REDACTED] info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 22 June 2020 20:49

To: BCF <BCF@nature.scot>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Dear Sir/Madam

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I have heard the entire Estate is to be deer fenced and I was wondering if you are providing the funding. The application may have come from CALL(Coigach Assynt Living Landscape) with the help of the Woodland Trust. This would be in the latest round of funding as I don't think the contract has been signed yet.

Apologies if this is nothing to do with you.

Thank You

[REDACTED]

NatureScot is the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Sharon Phipps

From: Tamara Lawton
Sent: 20 August 2020 10:09
To: Graeme Taylor; Sinclair Coghill
Cc: Holly Deary; Jimmy Hyslop
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival
Attachments: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

This was sent in to us but appears to be for info, rather than requiring a direct response.

Also for info - I did chat to [REDACTED] briefly yesterday morning as she was about to spend 3 days walking the fenceline with the fencers.

They are considering the press release as a starting point for any issues to be raised – rather than the 1st September being a final deadline for consultation.

In terms of the EIA, [REDACTED] has been in contact with [REDACTED] of SF about the screening opinion and she has yet to make their submission although hopes to get it in next week – they are working on the basis of the indication they were given from the meeting they held last year with [REDACTED] is that an EIA won't be required.

Cheers,
Tamara

From: NORTH_AREAS_CASEWORK <NORTH_AREAS_CASEWORK@nature.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2020 09:49
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Ben Leyshon <Ben.Leyshon@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Tamara, Ben

Attached email for information.

I wasn't sure who to send this to or whether it requires a response or not.

Please forward as appropriate.

Thanks,
Alec (triaging Thursday 20th)

Alexander Macdonald | Area Officer, Northern Isles and North Highland

NatureScot | The Links, Golspie Business Park, Golspie, Sutherland KW10 6UB | 01463 7[REDACTED]
nature.scot | @nature_Scot | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: INVERNESS_SERVICE_DELIVERY_TEAM <INVERNESS_SERVICE_DELIVERY_TEAM@nature.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2020 08:45
To: SOUTH_HIGHLAND <SOUTH_HIGHLAND@nature.scot>
Subject: Forwarded to Dave Mackay, Valerie Wilson, Sue Agnew -Enquiry

Good Morning,

We received the attached e-mail via our mailbox. Please respond directly to the enquirer or pass to the appropriate officer. Please keep the enquirer informed should there be any change to who is dealing with this enquiry.

Kind Regards,

██████████

██████████ | **Service Delivery Team**

Scottish Natural Heritage | Great Glen House | Leachkin Road | Inverness | IV3 8NW | t: 01463 ██████████

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir | Rathad na Leacainn | Inbhir Nis | IV3 8NW

nature.scot – *Connecting People and Nature in Scotland* – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 20 August 2020 11:24
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eìsg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi [REDACTED],
I had a quick catch up with local colleagues this week and they mentioned that they did not yet have the necessary information to allow them to assess for the SSSI consent and undertake a Nature assessment. I realise that you will be very busy but I wonder if you could give me a quick, brief update on your timeline for the various stages through to the start of the work?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 20 August 2020 11:26
To: Tamara Lawton
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh

Hi Tamara,

You mentioned that you were still waiting for information from Woodland Trust before you could look at the SSSI consent. What do you need, in case it has already been provided in the grants discussions?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 20 August 2020 12:30
To: Tamara Lawton; Graeme Taylor; Sinclair Coghill
Cc: Holly Deary
Subject: RE: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Hi all,

After our meeting I am very conscious that the Woodland Trust has a number of things still to do before it can give the go ahead to contractors and am very worried that it may have left some of these rather late to allow for project completion by 31 March. From a grants point of view I will keep in regular touch with the applicant to report progress and demonstrate that it can deliver, as we are doing with other BCF applicants, and have asked [REDACTED] for a brief timeline for these.

Has anyone had a chance to raise the collaborative deer management consultation issue with the Woodland Trust yet? I remember Holly and Graeme mentioning that it was impossible for anyone to demonstrate that they had met the expectations but, as a starting point, maybe WT should be pulling together a record of when it contacted various groups to discuss the proposals, identify who it still needs to talk to and a plan for this.

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] [nature.scot](https://www.nature.scot) | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2020 10:09
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>
Cc: Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

This was sent in to us but appears to be for info, rather than requiring a direct response.

Also for info - I did chat to [REDACTED] briefly yesterday morning as she was about to spend 3 days walking the fenceline with the fencers.

They are considering the press release as a starting point for any issues to be raised – rather than the 1st September being a final deadline for consultation.

In terms of the EIA, [REDACTED] has been in contact with [REDACTED] SF about the screening opinion and she has yet to make their submission although hopes to get it in next week – they are working on the basis of the indication they were given from the meeting they held last year with [REDACTED] is that an EIA won't be required.

Cheers,
Tamara

From: NORTH_AREAS_CASEWORK <NORTH_AREAS_CASEWORK@nature.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2020 09:49
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Ben Leyshon <Ben.Leyshon@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Tamara, Ben

Attached email for information.

I wasn't sure who to send this to or whether it requires a response or not.

Please forward as appropriate.

Thanks,
Alec (triaging Thursday 20th)

Alexander Macdonald | Area Officer, Northern Isles and North Highland

NatureScot | The Links, Golspie Business Park, Golspie, Sutherland KW10 6UB | 01463 [REDACTED]
nature.scot | @nature_Scot | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: INVERNESS_SERVICE_DELIVERY_TEAM <INVERNESS_SERVICE_DELIVERY_TEAM@nature.scot>

Sent: 20 August 2020 08:45

To: SOUTH_HIGHLAND <SOUTH_HIGHLAND@nature.scot>

Subject: Forwarded to Dave Mackay, Valerie Wilson, Sue Agnew -Enquiry

Good Morning,

We received the attached e-mail via our mailbox. Please respond directly to the enquirer or pass to the appropriate officer. Please keep the enquirer informed should there be any change to who is dealing with this enquiry.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | **Service Delivery Team**

Scottish Natural Heritage | Great Glen House | Leachkin Road | Inverness | IV3 8NW | t: 01463 [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir | Rathad na Leacainn | Inbhir Nis | IV3 8NW
nature.scot – *Connecting People and Nature in Scotland* – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 20 August 2020 15:46
To: Tamara Lawton
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh
Attachments: 501341 - APPLICATION - Map 1 of 5 EB BCF app - NW.obr; 501341 - APPLICATION - Map 2 of 5 EB BCF app - SW.obr; 501341 - APPLICATION - Map 3 of 5 EB BCF app - S.obr; 501341 - APPLICATION - Map 4 of 5 EB BCF app - E.obr; 501341 - APPLICATION - Map 5 of 5 EB BCF app - N.obr

Hi,
I don't have everything but, in terms of the construction and planting timescale for works in the grant, they are all to be delivered by 31 March 2021.

The fence line and enhancement planting areas are shown in the attached.

This probably doesn't get you much further forward, but heigh ho!

Jimmy

From: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2020 15:40
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh

Hi Jimmy, I agree, lots of the info we need for the consent we will already have from the grant application process, however some of the detail on construction of the fence for example they will not have got to us yet. I sent the following list to them a couple of weeks ago so that they had it all together:

What: describe the project - what will actually happen on the ground, so eg. The length of fence, what type (wooden posts and wire?); also not just the fencing but the changes in management for the lifetime of the 'project'. This will need to include the deer management plan and any other activities such as enrichment planting etc. this can be a set of principles rather than complete details if you don't have that yet.

Where: a map of the fenceline and areas where there will be additional management e.g. planting or if there are particular areas of higher impacts that may need a concentrated effort to cull deer. Any routes that you will be using for vehicles or principles that will guide how you will choose routes.

How: include the details of how the fence will be constructed – eg methods, what vehicles will be required, how will you transport the materials, how they will be stored.

When: this is important as the Consent will be time limited. Start and end dates of work – you may wish to break this down into the fence and the other aspects. I.e. have a period for constructing the fence (as the timing will be key for deer welfare) and the other management over the lifetime of the project – ie over the next 10 years. The dmp should cover most of this but if you have a plan for the planting and other internal fences for example it might be useful to roughly allocated this in years.

Cheers,
Tamara

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2020 11:26

To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh

Hi Tamara,

You mentioned that you were still waiting for information form Woodland Trust before you could look at the SSSI consent. What do you need, in case it has already been provided it in the grants discussions?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED] <assyntcc@gmail.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 20:34
To: info@coigach-assynt.org; INVERNESS_SERVICE_DELIVERY_TEAM
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

For Your Information

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 August 2020 13:59
To: Roseanna.Cunningham@scottish.parliament.uk; Gail.Ross.msp@scottish.parliament.uk;
ian.blackford.mp@parliament.uk; [REDACTED]
Cc: [Kirsteen Currie](mailto:Kirsteen.Currie); Kirsteen.Currie.cllr@highland.gov.uk; [REDACTED] @woodlandtrust.org.uk;
[REDACTED] @gmail.com; info@inverpolly.com; [WSDMG](#); [REDACTED] @msn.com; [REDACTED];
[REDACTED] @scotbooks.freeuk.com; [REDACTED] @icloud.com
Subject: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Good afternoon,

This week, Assynt Community Council received the follow e-mail from the Woodland Trust:

The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

An exciting initiative to restore woodland, heath and peatland across the 2000ha Eisg Brachaidh Estate has secured more than £420,000 thanks to support from the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Challenge Fund and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is also being sought from Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Eisg Brachaidh project area forms part of the Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project aims to restore a range of habitats including saving irreplaceable old woodland remnants and improving the condition of heathland communities on this part of the Inverpolly SAC.

Key to its success is reducing grazing pressure from deer. There are no young trees growing on the Estate and the few mature trees that do remain are fading fast. Wet and dry heathland and bogs are also suffering from over browsing and trampling. We need to act now to stop further loss of woodland and help rare heathland and peatland habitats recover.

We plan do this by installing a deer fence around the estate boundary. Deer will remain within the fence but numbers will be kept at a sustainable level alongside continued cattle grazing. Cattle have a different grazing style from deer and it is this mix of grazing that's important to support natural habitat improvements.

Open public access will be maintained throughout the project with suitably placed gates, cattle grids and stiles.

We appreciate that when an area is fenced it can be difficult to predict the knock-on effect of deer movements in the surrounding area. These impacts can be managed however, and the project partners are committed to dealing with any problems that may arise for neighbours. The movement and number of deer will be monitored to help with this.

As lead partner for the CALLP woodland projects, Woodland Trust Scotland will be responsible for work on the ground in association with Eisd Brachaidh Estate under guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage regarding deer and designated habitats.

This is an exciting large-scale restoration project that will be delivered over many years to create healthy Assynt habitats for the next generation to enjoy. We look forward to getting started!

This was the first time we were made aware of this new project.

Following this press release, the Vice Chair of the Coigach and South Assynt Deer Management Group and Inverpolly Estate responded as follows

The Press Release "The Eisd Brachaidh Revival" circulated on 14th August describes a massive conservation project at the very heart of Assynt. It purports to be an exemplar of good practice, but there has been no consultation whatsoever on this initiative which plans to put almost 12 miles of deer fence right in the heart of our most important landscape area. The justification for the project is to protect a wide range of designated habitats, but the majority of these are at Favourable or Recovering condition already, and it is not clear that such a fence is necessary.

The Australian landowners with Perth based conservation organization Woodland Trust Scotland have developed a £420,000 project with Scottish Natural Heritage behind closed doors under the cover of COVID lockdown, to be implemented in two weeks' time in the middle of a global pandemic, and neighbouring landowners and crofters are expected to clear up the mess with no opportunity to input in advance. There is no transparency or due process involved, and all those organizations charged with protecting landscape, bird life, archaeology, access, deer management and local community interests appear to have been bypassed in the rush to spend this money.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) appear to have sanctioned and funded a huge project without any due diligence or analysis, and have therefore created a huge conflict of interest for themselves, and are risking reputational damage for all those involved.

Any initiative or inward investment to improve our natural heritage must be encouraged in this area, but people locally need to have a voice, and direct neighbours must be given the time and space to consider how this is best implemented.

Assynt Community Council shares the same concerns.

This is not the first time SNH has shown a complete disregard for the local community by failing to consult with those who are directly impacted by their actions. It's clear they have given full support to yet another local project that could well result in further displacement of the existing deer herds without community consultation.

The road between Ledmore Junction and Lochinver has already seen a dramatic increase in deer numbers over the years leading to several road accidents. Currently, there are three separate herds of deer marauding through Lochinver village causing damage, defecating in public spaces and generally roaming at will. Most have been driven to lower, semi-urbanised habitats as a result of the widespread fencing off of nearby plantations. So we find it difficult to feel any enthusiasm towards the Woodland Trust's latest announcement of plans to fence off another local estate.

No doubt, Carbon Capture grants have encouraged estate-owners to use public money for tree planting and subsequent fencing to drive deer off their natural habitat. The Scottish Government has targets for the planting of trees, which is a good thing as a principle.

However, as a lot of the Central Belt and Southern Scotland is unsuitable, it leaves areas like ours to suffer the indirect consequences of widespread afforestation. There has been little if any discussion with actual communities regarding the adverse impact such practices have created. Several estates in our area have been fencing off large areas to protect trees, using the project money as a cash cow to keep the estates running.

The Woodland Trust implies in its press release that they should be capable of addressing any problems caused by displaced deer, 'as and when they arise'. However, displaced deer are already a major problem in Assynt and elsewhere. We feel the Woodland Trust and SNH should be held accountable for their premature action which might well exacerbate the problem. We request that this particular project be deferred for at least 3 months (and any future plans for the fencing off of large estates for the purpose of tree planting be put on hold) until they have been adequately risk assessed, the full impact has been taken into account and the local community has been allowed to express its concerns.

Yours respectfully,

██████████ (Secretary Assynt Community Council)

██████████@live.co.uk

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 20 August 2020 14:19
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I am afraid I could not sit back and ignore the inaccuracies in the application without telling you. It is up to you whether you think my points are important enough to review the grant. I am surprised you did not require a visual impact survey.

Regards

From: Jimmy Hyslop [mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot]
Sent: 20 August 2020 09:10
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],

Please note that SNH's decision on this grant application was made when it was approved by the panel in March,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 22:24
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisd Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I have had a chance to read through the application and have a few comments to make.

Section 7.

Red Squirrels are not present.

There has been no routine Muirburn for over 35 years.

Regeneration was good as confirmed by [REDACTED] when he was Chairman of Deer Commission Scotland.

Most regeneration was lost in a wild fire about 8 years ago.

Deer numbers were under control within the designated site under a sect. 7 agreement.

It is only because of the fresh growth after the fire that deer numbers (like the tide) have been difficult to control.

This effect is starting to wear off and by year 12 I would expect no effect at all.

Project Proposal

Fencing the Estate will block the natural movement of deer through to Inverpolly where stalking is a very important economic activity helping to maintain two full time jobs and several part time jobs.

The 5 miles of deer fence on the North side will guide deer into Inverkirkaig and compound existing deer/human conflicts all the way up the coast including Lochinver.

Para 2 see above.

The Map shows new fenced enclosures.

The Agricultural Tenants will be impacted.

They will have to spend considerable amounts of time moving stock, that were free to roam, through the new fence. SNH have not stopped the tenant from grazing sheep on this ground.

Sect 20

The Agricultural Tenant has not been consulted.

The current consent is for 50 cows and 561 ewes and gimmers(reduced from 1200 under AECS and previous schemes).

Sect 21

The map shows new enclosures.

Sect 25 + 26

If they are vat reg why can they not reclaim?

Budget

The National Lottery Heritage Fund CALL money has not been confirmed.

I hope this new information will help you review your decision.

Regards

██████████

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 19 August 2020 10:14

To: ██████████

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hello ██████████

Attached are the application form and supporting documents for this project, as requested,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 ██████████ | mob:

██████████ nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: ██████████ <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 19 August 2020 08:26

To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

Would it be possible to have copy of the application and associate documents, please.

Thank you

██████████

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 23 June 2020 14:44

To: info@inverpolly.com

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],

Woodland Trust Scotland has been successful in its application to our Biodiversity Challenge Fund for this project,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR | t:0131 314 [REDACTED]

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach Chluaidh | G81 2NR

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SNH staff will be at home trying to work until further notice. Please use the usual email addresses to contact us. Our office phone numbers are diverted to our mobile or land line numbers.

If you receive an auto-reply that a particular member of Grants staff is not working, due to illness or leave, please forward the email to grants@nature.scot.

Please let us know if we should use any different contact details or methods to communicate with you during this time.

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 22 June 2020 20:49

To: BCF <BCF@nature.scot>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the Agricultural Tenant on Eisg Brachaidh Estate.

I have heard the entire Estate is to be deer fenced and I was wondering if you are providing the funding.

The application may have come from CALL(Coigach Assynt Living Landscape) with the help of the Woodland Trust.

This would be in the latest round of funding as I don't think the contract has been signed yet.

Apologies if this is nothing to do with you.

Thank You

[REDACTED]

NatureScot is the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Sharon Phipps

From: Katherine Leys
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:27
To: Jimmy Hyslop; Eileen Stuart; Gillian Macdonald; Graeme Taylor
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi Jimmy,

Thanks. This is a very helpful summary of where we are. I'm sure Graeme will find it useful for responding to the media enquiries. I agree, we don't have the funds to carry over such a substantive project from this years' allocation into next year.

Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
NatureScot | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 [REDACTED]
nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

In accordance with government instructions, I am working from home. I can be contacted by all the usual methods, except in person as the office is currently closed.

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:17
To: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Subject: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi all,

SNH made our announcement on the BCF projects on Friday 10 July and asked the Woodland Trust to complement our media release by publicising its award with local media after it had accepted our offer. Woodland Trust accepted our funding offer on 06 August and issues a press release on 14th.

The local Deer Management Group discussed the project on 18 August. [REDACTED], the Chair (who is also the estate's agricultural tenant and the neighbouring landowner), had concerns about it but the group was generally supportive of the project.

On the back of the WT press release:

- SNH has been copied in to a complaint to the Scottish Land Commission from [REDACTED].
- Francesca as received a complaint from the contractor who wrote the Deer Management Plan.
- SNH has been forwarded a complaint to MSPs and others from Assynt Community Council.

Lack of consultation with the local community and deer management group are recurring themes in these.

Before it can go ahead with the work on the project, the applicant still needs to:

- 1 provide necessary information to SNH so that we can undertake Nature assessment and issue SSSI consent,
- 2 complete the process with Scottish Forestry to establish whether an EIA is required and, if so, undertake an EIA. The Area will check this with Scottish Forestry.
- 3 demonstrate that it has complied with the guidance on collaborative deer management approach. The Area and Wildlife Management consider that the Woodland Trust has not done so and this is probably the clincher for us. Starting meaningful consultations now (when the tendering process was completed

sometime ago) clearly poses some major **questions about the feasibility of the project and the ability to deliver in the agreed timescale**. I have contacted the Woodland Trust and requested a timeline for this process through to work starting on the ground. We will then be able to gauge the likelihood of completion of the works by the end of March 2021.

Another approach which was suggested would be to put the project off until next year, giving the Woodland Trust time to complete a proper consultation and other processes. Clearly we do not have £200k available for 2021-22.

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 21 August 2020 12:03
To: Graeme Taylor; Katherine Leys; Eileen Stuart; Gillian Macdonald
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi Graeme,
No, the requirements for EIA were not communicated to the applicant at the point of award of funding.

It's up to the applicant to undertake the necessary legal and other processes before starting projects. The standard grant condition in the grant offer is

"All relevant permissions must be confirmed before work commences and are the responsibility of the applicant. This includes permissions relating to designated sites, felling licences and SEPA licences as required. You must provide evidence of permissions prior to starting your project, unless we have agreed otherwise."

From Tamara's e-mail yesterday,

"In terms of the EIA, [REDACTED] has been in contact with [REDACTED] SF about the screening opinion and she has yet to make their submission although hopes to get it in next week – they are working on the basis of the indication they were given from the meeting they held last year with [REDACTED] is that an EIA won't be required." So clearly WT knows what it needs to do and has done work quite some time, it just hasn't done it yet.

The issue of an EAI wasn't mentioned in the pre-application feedback from SNH to the Trust. It's not information that is requested in the application form. No one raised this issue during the assessment process or at the Panel. First I heard about EIA was in [REDACTED]' Information Note for [REDACTED] which we received on 17 August.

[REDACTED] is asking why we didn't require evidence of this as part of the application process or a visual impact assessment. Maybe something to consider for our grants processes for the future.)

Jimmy

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:29
To: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi Jimmy,

That's great really helpful. We definitely want to get these issues resolved to let the scheme proceed.
One remaining question from me- were the requirements for EIA communicated to the applicant at point of award?

Thanks,

Graeme

From: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:27
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
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Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

NatureScot | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 [REDACTED]
nature.scot | @nature_scot | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

If you want to speak to me face to face contact me via - <https://call.lifesizecloud.com/5044982>

In accordance with government instructions, I am working from home. I can be contacted by all the usual methods, except in person as the office is currently closed.

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Sent: 21 August 2020 11:17

To: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>

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Hi all,

SNH made our announcement on the BCF projects on Friday 10 July and asked the Woodland Trust to complement our media release by publicising its award with local media after it had accepted our offer. Woodland Trust accepted our funding offer on 06 August and issues a press release on 14th.

The local Deer Management Group discussed the project on 18 August. [REDACTED] the Chair (who is also the estate's agricultural tenant and the neighbouring landowner), had concerns about it but the group was generally supportive of the project.

On the back of the WT press release:

- SNH has been copied in to a complaint to the Scottish Land Commission from [REDACTED].
- Francesca as received a complaint from the contractor who wrote the Deer Management Plan.
- SNH has been forwarded a complaint to MSPs and others from Assynt Community Council.

Lack of consultation with the local community and deer management group are recurring themes in these.

Before it can go ahead with the work on the project, the applicant still needs to:

1 provide necessary information to SNH so that we can undertake Nature assessment and issue SSSI consent,

2 complete the process with Scottish Forestry to establish whether an EIA is required and, if so, undertake an EIA. The Area will check this with Scottish Forestry.

3 demonstrate that it has complied with the guidance on collaborative deer management approach. The Area and Wildlife Management consider that the Woodland Trust has not done so and this is probably the clincher for us. Starting meaningful consultations now (when the tendering process was completed sometime ago) clearly poses some major **questions about the feasibility of the project and the ability to deliver in the agreed timescale**. I have contacted the Woodland Trust and requested a timeline for this process through to work starting on the ground. We will then be able to gauge the likelihood of completion of the works by the end of March 2021.

Another approach which was suggested would be to put the project off until next year, giving the Woodland Trust time to complete a proper consultation and other processes. Clearly we do not have £200k available for 2021-22.

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob:
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: Dominic Shann
Sent: 21 August 2020 13:40
To: Graeme Taylor; Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: Chris Donald; Katherine Leys; Graham Boyle
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Yep thanks all for your help.
Best
dom

Proposed response:

SNH /NatureScot? Said:

“We have been involved in discussions on the future of this site including different fencing options for a number of years prior to this application. We expect that the Woodland Trust will continue with this local discussion as the scheme progresses, and comply with statutory requirements for a scheme of this type. The local Deer Management Group has decided to revise its deer management plan to take into account revised site management and this should deal with any changes to local deer movements.”

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Dominic Shann | Communications Officer

NatureScot | Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV2 3AQ | 01463 [REDACTED] | Mob: [REDACTED]

nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

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Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

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That's me done revising the attached to take into account the P&J questions.

Out now, back at 1pm if needed.

Regards,

Graeme

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Sent: 18 August 2020 11:45
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Hi Graeme cc others

Here is the first draft of a response. I have refrained from pointing out some of the obvious things – like the application came from a partnership so not just one applicant and the BCF deadline was more than a month before Covid, and I haven't gone into any details about the other things that have been tried to reduce numbers. Some of your Area team would be able to supply that detail if we want it.

Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity | Scottish Natural Heritage | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Àrainn Elmwood | Rathad Carslogie | Cùbar | Fìobha | KY15 4JB | nature.scot – *Connecting People and Nature in Scotland* – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

Please be aware that all Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) email addresses have changed to this new format: firstname.lastname@nature.scot. My new email address is katherine.leys@nature.scot

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Sent: 17 August 2020 17:08

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Sent: 17 August 2020 16:32

To: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 21 August 2020 14:52
To: Gillian Macdonald
Subject: REQUEST FOR ADVICE - 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh

Hi Gillian,

██████████ is the agricultural tenant on the land in question as well as being the owner of the neighbouring Inverpolly Estate and Chair of the Deer Management Group. He requested the application form and supporting information and has come back with a variety of points, some of which are not actually relevant to the assessment. I don't really want to get into point by point discussion with him.

I think that we might want to standardise our asks of the Areas across our different grant schemes as the Peatland Action prompts would have brought up the EIA issue and others, e.g. the Area did not mention the omission of the 561 sheep allowed to graze the project area.

Anyway, here is my suggested response to him.

"Many thanks ██████████
Some of the issues below have been addressed through the assessment process.

The unconfirmed funding mentioned in the application is always confirmed before a project is able to start.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment usually forms part of the environmental assessment and I understand that the applicant has already had discussions about whether an EIA is required. This is separate from the grant assessment process and we expect this to have been done and any necessary consents provided before any work starts.

Some other points that you raise are matters to be discussed between the landowner and the tenant."

What do you think?

Jimmy

From: ██████████ <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 20 August 2020 14:19
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I am afraid I could not sit back and ignore the inaccuracies in the application without telling you.

It is up to you whether you think my points are important enough to review the grant.

I am surprised you did not require a visual impact survey.

Regards

██████████

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]
Sent: 20 August 2020 09:10
To: ██████████
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi ██████████

Please note that SNH's decision on this grant application was made when it was approved by the panel in March,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 19 August 2020 22:24

To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I have had a chance to read through the application and have a few comments to make.

Section 7.

Red Squirrels are not present.

There has been no routine Muirburn for over 35 years.

Regeneration was good as confirmed by [REDACTED] when he was Chairman of Deer Commission Scotland.

Most regeneration was lost in a wild fire about 8 years ago.

Deer numbers were under control within the designated site under a sect. 7 agreement.

It is only because of the fresh growth after the fire that deer numbers (like the tide) have been difficult to control.

This effect is starting to wear off and by year 12 I would expect no effect at all.

Project Proposal

Fencing the Estate will block the natural movement of deer through to Inverpolly where stalking is a very important economic activity helping to maintain two full time jobs and several part time jobs.

The 5 miles of deer fence on the North side will guide deer into Inverkirkaig and compound existing deer/human conflicts all the way up the coast including Lochinver.

Para 2 see above.

The Map shows new fenced enclosures.

The Agricultural Tenants will be impacted.

They will have to spend considerable amounts of time moving stock, that were free to roam, through the new fence.

SNH have not stopped the tenant from grazing sheep on this ground.

Sect 20

The Agricultural Tenant has not been consulted.

The current consent is for 50 cows and 561 ewes and gimmers (reduced from 1200 under AECS and previous schemes).

Sect 21

The map shows new enclosures.

Sect 25 + 26

If they are vat reg why can they not reclaim?

Budget

The National Lottery Heritage Fund CALL money has not been confirmed.

I hope this new information will help you review your decision.

Regards

██████id

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 19 August 2020 10:14

To: ██████████

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hello ██████████,

Attached are the application form and supporting documents for this project, as requested,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 ██████████

██████████ nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: ██████████ <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 19 August 2020 08:26

To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

Would it be possible to have copy of the application and associate documents, please.

Thank you

██████████

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 23 June 2020 14:44

To: info@inverpolly.com

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi ██████████

Woodland Trust Scotland has been successful in its application to our Biodiversity Challenge Fund for this project,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR | t:0131 314 ██████████

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach Chluaidh | G81 2NR

nature.scot – *Connecting People and Nature in Scotland* – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

SNH staff will be at home trying to work until further notice. Please use the usual email addresses to contact us. Our office phone numbers are diverted to our mobile or land line numbers.

If you receive an auto-reply that a particular member of Grants staff is not working, due to illness or leave, please forward the email to grants@nature.scot.

Please let us know if we should use any different contact details or methods to communicate with you during this time.

From [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>

Sent: 22 June 2020 20:49

To: BCF <BCF@nature.scot>

Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the Agricultural Tenant on Eisg Brachaidh Estate.

I have heard the entire Estate is to be deer fenced and I was wondering if you are providing the funding.

The application may have come from CALL(Coigach Assynt Living Landscape) with the help of the Woodland Trust.

This would be in the latest round of funding as I don't think the contract has been signed yet.

Apologies if this is nothing to do with you.

Thank You

[REDACTED]

NatureScot is the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Sharon Phipps

From: Dominic Shann
Sent: 21 August 2020 15:50
To: Graeme Taylor; Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: Chris Donald; Katherine Leys; Graham Boyle
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Ok Thanks Graeme.
Sending this off now. Will send to Marianne too.
Cheers
dom

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The Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF) seeks applications from ambitious projects and this one seeks to protect and enhance the remnants of ancient woodland on 2,000ha of the Eisg Brachaidh Estate. It plans to enhance and restore nature across most of the estate.

The Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project has been awarded just under £200 000 from the fund. The project recipient, Woodland Trust Scotland, submitted the application in February, acting on behalf of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscapes Partnership and the owners of Eisg Brachaidh Estate.

This should probably be shared with Marianne in SG comms.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Dominic Shann <Dominic.Shann@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 13:40
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Cc: Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Yep thanks all for your help.

Best
dom

Proposed response:

SNH /NatureScot? Said:

“We have been involved in discussions on the future of this site including different fencing options for a number of years prior to this application. We expect that the Woodland Trust will continue with this local discussion as the scheme progresses, and comply with statutory requirements for a scheme of this type. The local Deer Management Group has decided to revise its deer management plan to take into account revised site management and this should deal with any changes to local deer movements.”

Background

The Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF) seeks applications from ambitious projects and this one seeks to protect and enhance the remnants of ancient woodland on 2,000ha of the Eisg Brachaidh Estate. It plans to enhance and restore nature across most of the estate.

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Dominic Shann | Communications Officer

NatureScot | Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV2 3AQ | 01463 [REDACTED] | Mob: [REDACTED]

nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 13:35
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Dominic Shann <Dominic.Shann@nature.scot>
Cc: Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

All done.

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 12:47
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Dominic Shann <Dominic.Shann@nature.scot>
Cc: Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme,
A couple of suggestions.

The first follows on from the ambitious point

“The Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF) seeks applications from ambitious projects and this one seeks to protect and enhance the remnants of ancient woodland on 2,000ha of the Eisg Brachaidh Estate. It plans to enhance and restore nature across most of the estate.

We have been involved in discussions on the future of this site including different fencing options for a number of years prior to this application. We expect that the Woodland Trust will continue with this local discussion as the scheme progresses, and comply with statutory requirements for a scheme of this type. The local Deer Management Group has decided to revise its deer management plan to take into account revised site management and this should deal with any changes to local deer movements.” and the second is that the group decided something, rather than agreeing (with anyone else).

I hope that this helps,

Jimmy

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 12:33
To: Dominic Shann <Dominic.Shann@nature.scot>
Cc: Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Dom,

That's me done revising the attached to take into account the P&J questions.

Out now, back at 1pm if needed.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:45
To: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>; Emma Keenan <Emma.Keenan@nature.scot>; Tim Hancox <Tim.Hancox@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme cc others

Here is the first draft of a response. I have refrained from pointing out some of the obvious things – like the application came from a partnership so not just one applicant and the BCF deadline was more than a month before Covid, and I haven't gone into any details about the other things that have been tried to reduce numbers. Some of your Area team would be able to supply that detail if we want it.

Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity | Scottish Natural Heritage | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 458809 | m: 07776 163986

Please be aware that all Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) email addresses have changed to this new format: firstname.lastname@nature.scot. My new email address is katherine.leys@nature.scot

In accordance with government instructions, I am working from home. I can be contacted by all the usual methods, except in person as the office is currently closed.

From: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:14
To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>; Emma Keenan <Emma.Keenan@nature.scot>; Tim Hancox <Tim.Hancox@nature.scot>; Cat Synnot <Cat.Synnot@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Graeme

Thanks for this. Yes, we'll need to get a line ready. Would it be yourself and Kath best placed to help make a start with that?

The information note attached – is that an independent assessment of the situation? I presume not if the project is pushing on as planned?

Cheers

dom

Dominic Shann | Communications Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Great Glen House | Leachkin Road | Inverness | IV3 8NW | t: 01463 725157 m: 07768 294873
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir | Rathad na Leacainn | Inbhir Nis | IV3 8NW
nature.scot – Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 18 August 2020 09:43
To: SNHMEDIA <SNHMEDIA@nature.scot>
Cc: Vicki Mowat <Vicki.Mowat@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Chris Donald <Chris.Donald@nature.scot>; Graham Boyle <Graham.Boyle@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

Hi Folks,

BCF received an email yesterday about an application to the scheme which has been passed and is about to be delivered in South Highland. There's some significant deer fencing and it has caused some upset with local landowners. As you will see there's a press release in the email, at this stage I've no idea if it's been picked up. Presume we may want to have something put together prior to that happening?
I am sure between South Highland and BCF we can assist. There's also an associated complaint to Francesca which we received yesterday and we will be responding to in due course.

Regards,

Graeme

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 17 August 2020 17:08
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>; Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Holly Deary <Holly.Deary@nature.scot>
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

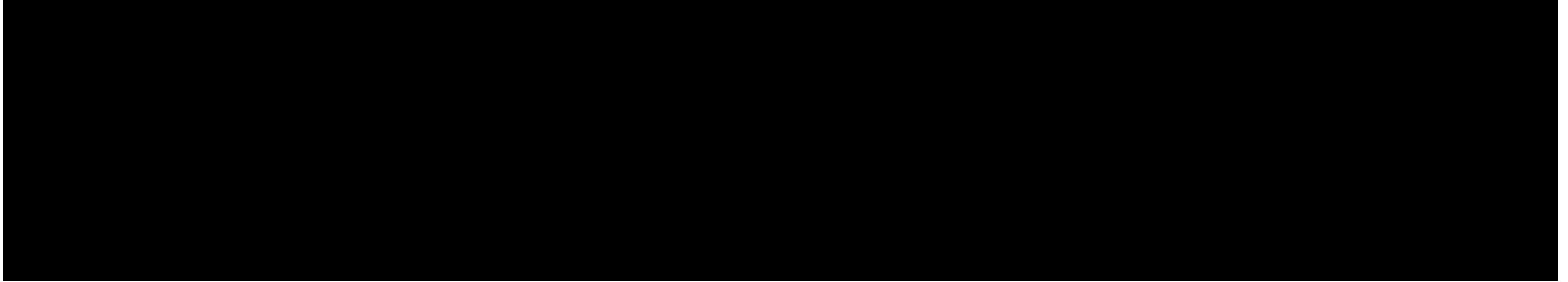
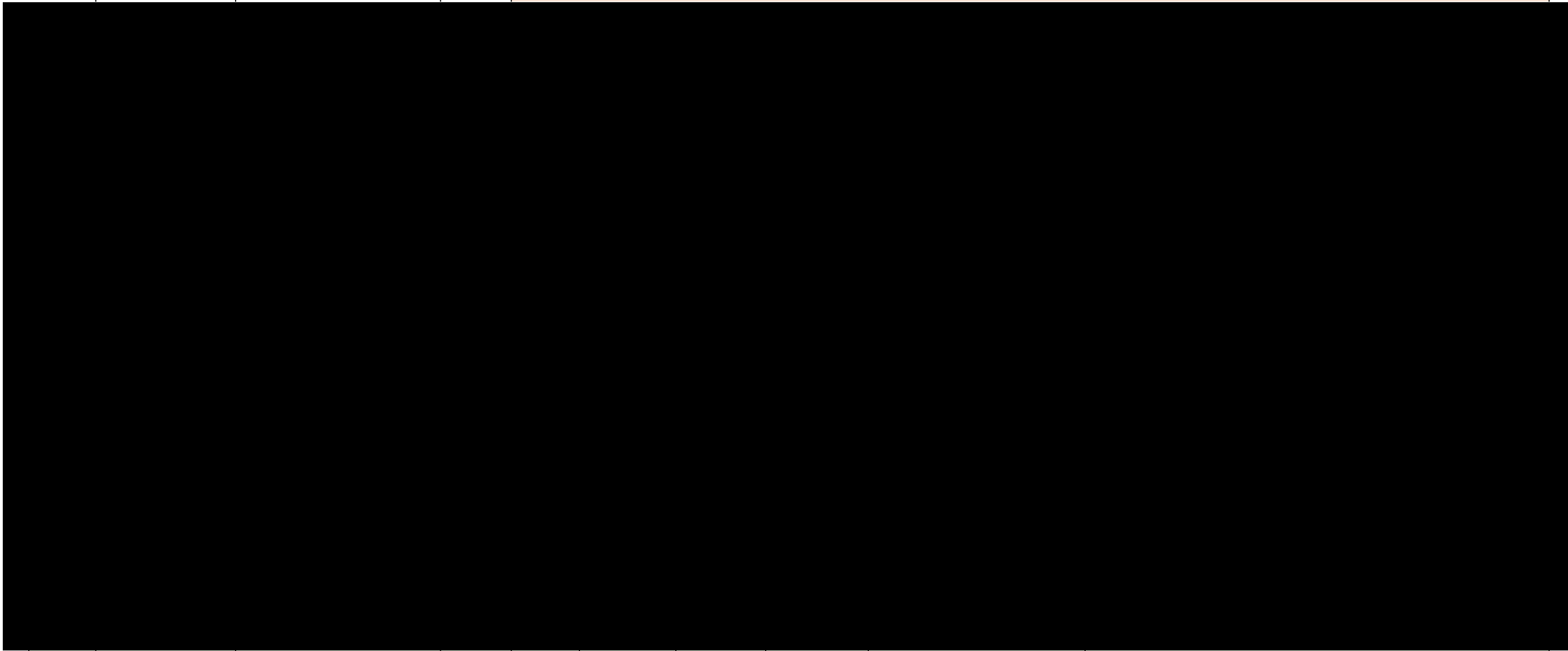
Hi Graeme,
Further from [REDACTED] Chair of the DMG,
Jimmy

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 17 August 2020 16:32
To: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Deer Fence

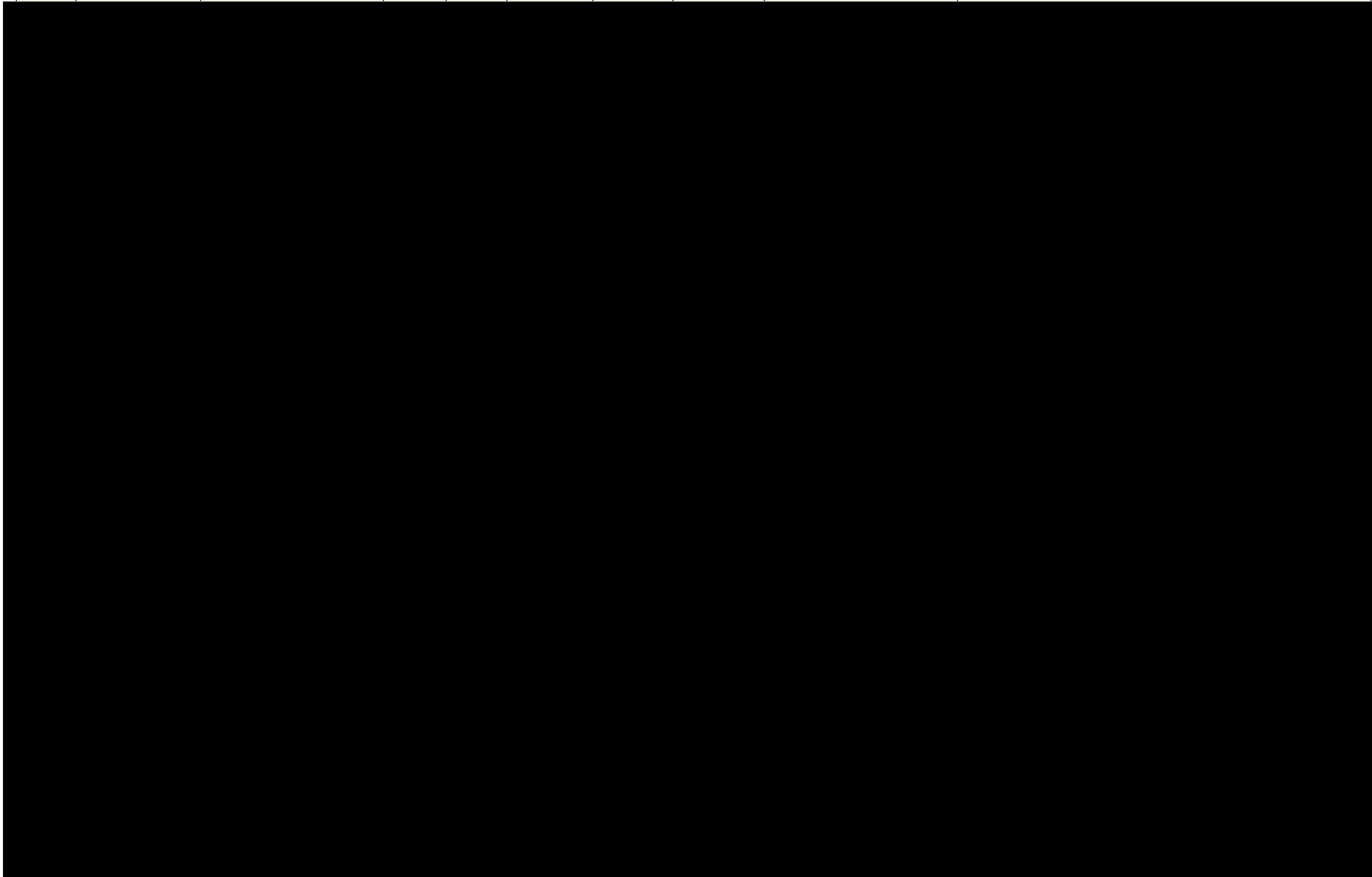
BCF2 Panel Decisions - 12 March 2020

Fund
Reject
Defer

Based on applied value



501341	Woodland Trust	Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project	Jimmy	Fund	198,341	0	0	Panel supportive subject to Wildlife Mgt support and need for comms strategy to manage any reputational impacts. FO to follow up.	WT agent in this case with £ from Landscape partnership. Fencing entire boundary to prevent deer encroachment that is stopping regeneration. Question of SNH paying for fencing on estate. Wildlife management team asked for feedback to confirm. Neighbouring land owner grazing and preventing Forestry income. SSSI land with deer issues - all other alternatives have been tried. Approve in principle and seeks comment for colleagues on deer management techniques and reputational risk impact. Also liaison with local access group to be a condition of Offer
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Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@btinternet.com
Sent: 21 August 2020 00:05
To: Tamara Lawton
Subject: Fwd: RE: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Tamara

Please find an exchange of emails with the Woodland Trust

[REDACTED]

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]s@btinternet.com" [REDACTED]@btinternet.com>
To: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Cc: "[REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Sent: Friday, 21 Aug, 20 At 00:01
Subject: RE: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Dear [REDACTED]

I really don't feel that I have actively engaged with [REDACTED] about this project. It's a while since I was aware that it was being considered and much appears to have happened in the interim.

Furthermore, I have since checked and a number of other residents of Inverkirkaig have not received the document. They are crofters and this scheme bounds the Inverkirkaig common grazings. If a document is produced headed Inverkirkaig Resident then it really should be delivered to every resident on the same day and giving adequate time for queries to be raised.

It is of little import as to what SNH require. A project such as this, with huge impact, utilising significant amounts of public expenditure, demands public consultation based on detailed proposals. And I mean consultation rather than engagement.

I would like details: where is the fence going to go; where will this 'enrichment' go; will there be plantations; how will it be planted. The whole issue of the impact on deer movements has not been explained to me satisfactorily. I merely ask these as examples of questions which should have been covered.

As I said previously, the document gives a misleading impression of the current situation. With due respect to [REDACTED] I have walked this land for 50 years and there is much more woodland now than there was in 1970: there would have been even more had there not been a serious fire.

I am a lover of trees and woodlands. However, the way in which the Woodland Trust has gone about its business here does not inspire me with confidence and I fear you are losing public trust. I feel you are being economical with the truth: that may be wrong and I apologise if it is indeed not the case. But feelings and perceptions are what drive people.

The opinions expressed are mine alone.

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>

To: "[REDACTED]@btinternet.com" [REDACTED]@btinternet.com>

Cc: [REDACTED]coigach-assynt.org>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, 20 Aug, 20 At 20:31

Subject: RE: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Hello [REDACTED] I hope this finds you well.

My apologies if you felt out of the loop re the resident's information door drop. I suspect [REDACTED] didn't include you on the list because she believed you were aware of what was happening having actively engaged with her via email about the project, as had [REDACTED]. I'm sorry if you feel this is not the case. The intent was never to be anything less than inclusive.

The door drop and the communication with community councils was intended to kickstart engagement with the wider community and solicit queries about the project. It wasn't intended to be a 'press release' or a formal 'consultation' (the latter is not required by SNH). We are however keen to listen to feedback from the wider community as a basis for longer term engagement, so welcome questions.

The woods are assessed by SNH as being in unfavourable condition and [REDACTED] has surveyed the gradual loss of woodland area over many years. I agree with you that natural regeneration should be allowed to develop as naturally as far as is possible - this is the principal aim of the scheme. Natural regeneration is fine when the seed source of the trees you desire are already on site. Because minor species have been largely lost over the years, a very limited amount of strategic enrichment planting using sessile oak, hazel and aspen is proposed in small groups (8000 trees over the whole property) to improve the future characteristics of the woodlands in the longer term. I'm thinking things like enhancing lichen habitat. The overwhelming majority of Eisg Brachaidh will be allowed to develop in a completely natural way.

A limited number of deer will be retained within the fenced boundary together with the extensive stock grazing that [REDACTED] already carries out. This mixed grazing will support as natural result as possible and maximise the development of localised habitat niches.. This will also prevent regeneration areas having a "plantation feel" with hard edges. The heathland peatland areas will be left to recover in their own time.

It is difficult to predict how much extra woodland will eventually spring up by taking this 'back to nature' approach but I am anticipating that most of the open areas and the estate will retain the same character for many years to come.

Hope that answers your questions and happy to discuss further.

Best regards

From: [REDACTED]@btinternet.com [REDACTED]@btinternet.com]

Sent: 20 August 2020 15:24

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for answering this question.

I have learnt today that a letter addressed to Inverkirkaig residents has been issued looking for queries by 1 September. Neither I nor my neighbour have received a copy.

I spoke to the [REDACTED] today and mentioned the lack of consultation. Although I appreciate that the project has in some senses been many years in the making it now appears to be steaming ahead at an unseemly pace. I note that [REDACTED] has been on the hill today with fencers.

The press release itself is remarkably devoid of detail, overeggs the case, and does not really enable anyone to come to a view as to whether the project is desirable or whether the ends could be achieved by less public funding. It is not the consultation document which the situation requires.

One point on which I am particularly interested in whether there is to be any planting or whether regeneration can take place in as naturally a way as possible. This is not mentioned in the press release. I understand, however, that there may be some 'enrichment' planting. How will this be carried out? You are aware of my concerns about the establishment of plantations as opposed to woodlands in the north west Highlands so, if this is indeed the case, you are going have to work very hard to convince me that any plantations are indeed desirable or necessary.

I suspect that some (though not all) of the concern which is being expressed in various quarters might not have arisen if there had been a greater degree of openness and more information available.

I should stress that these are personal opinions.

[REDACTED]

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
To: [REDACTED]@btinternet.com" [REDACTED]@btinternet.com>
Cc: "[REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>
Sent: Tuesday, 18 Aug, 20 At 07:06
Subject: Re: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Hello [REDACTED]

Hope this finds you well. To answer your question, at present carbon funding hasn't been investigated, but I can confirm that any monies raised for the project will be spent purely on the project works and that the Estate won't benefit financially.

Best regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@btinternet.com
Sent: Saturday, 15 August 2020 08:06
To: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Subject: Fwd: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

[REDACTED]

I received a copy of the Press release as a member of Assynt Community Council - presumably carbon money is involved as well?

Thanks

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]@hotmail.co.uk
To: "Assynt Community Council" <assyntcommunitycouncil@groups.outlook.com>
Cc: [REDACTED] <assyntcc@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, 14 Aug, 20 At 15:45
Subject: Fwd: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Hi All,

Please see email from Woodland Trust below.

Thanks

[REDACTED]
Get Outlook for iOS<<https://aka.ms/o0ukef>>

From: [REDACTED]@highland.gov.uk
Sent: Friday, August 14, 2020 2:58:37 PM
To: [REDACTED]@hotmail.co.uk
Subject: FW: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

[REDACTED]
Harbours HQ
Culag Pier
Lochinver
IV27 4LE

Tel: 01349 [REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Sent: 14 August 2020 14:57
To: [REDACTED]@highland.gov.uk
Subject: The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

Dear [REDACTED]

For information of the community council.

Please see below a text we have just sent out to the Ullapool News and Assynt News.

Would it be possible for this to be shared on the community council's facebook page?

Many thanks.

The Eisg Brachaidh Revival

An exciting initiative to restore woodland, heath and peatland across the 2000ha Eisg Brachaidh Estate has secured more than £420,000 thanks to support from the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Challenge Fund and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is also being sought from Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Eisg Brachaidh project area forms part of the Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project aims to restore a range of habitats including saving irreplaceable old woodland remnants and improving the condition of heathland communities on this part of the Inverpolly SAC.

Key to its success is reducing grazing pressure from deer. There are no young trees growing on the Estate and the few mature trees that do remain are fading fast. Wet and dry heathland and bogs are also suffering from over browsing and trampling. We need to act now to stop further loss of woodland and help rare heathland and peatland habitats recover.

We plan do this by installing a deer fence around the estate boundary. Deer will remain within the fence but numbers will be kept at a sustainable level alongside continued cattle grazing. Cattle have a different grazing style from deer and it is this mix of grazing that's important to support natural habitat improvements.

Open public access will be maintained throughout the project with suitably placed gates, cattle grids and stiles.

We appreciate that when an area is fenced it can be difficult to predict the knock-on effect of deer movements in the surrounding area. These impacts can be managed however, and the project partners are committed to dealing with any problems that may arise for neighbours. The movement and number of deer will be monitored to help with this.

As lead partner for the CALLP woodland projects, Woodland Trust Scotland will be responsible for work

on the ground in association with Eisd Brachaidh Estate under guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage regarding deer and designated habitats.

This is an exciting large-scale restoration project that will be delivered over many years to create healthy Assynt habitats for the next generation to enjoy. We look forward to getting started!

If anyone has any queries please do get in touch. Contact [redacted] [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or [redacted] [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk<mailto:[redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>) before 1 September 2020.

[redacted]
PR & Communications Officer

Telephone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk<mailto:[redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Woodland Trust, South Inch Business Centre, Perth, Perthshire, PH2 8BW
01738 635 544

<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.woodlandtrust.org.uk%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187155813&data=rWXGDvy%2BIZ%2BjVnLe5rbib0uOno3ar5gdARNsfXJ2CCI%3D&reserved=0><<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.woodlandtrust.org.uk%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187155813&data=rWXGDvy%2BIZ%2BjVnLe5rbib0uOno3ar5gdARNsfXJ2CCI%3D&reserved=0>>

[Fb]<<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fthewoodlandtrust%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187155813&data=noHYBP0Ai6U934cwUvIyE7BhaB3mwSbjAA00UNC5CbA%3D&reserved=0>> [Tw]<<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FWoodlandTrust%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187165808&data=O4iCLjJwCbJyfp6B6sndU0Ptiri2wNoeKpM9UP9GaA%3D&reserved=0>> [Yt]<<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fuser%2Fwoodlandtrust%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187165808&data=krMDvLBqJD7PjXnwiEqmZkiOXOEFSDcdfwriZoZDugU%3D&reserved=0>>

[Woodland Trust
Scotland]<<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.woodlandtrust.org.uk%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187165808&data=ramCfoUio5JxgQ8jqfUZJg%2FPvGfJ5Epkz7No8uaImeY%3D&reserved=0><<https://eur05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.woodlandtrust.org.uk%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C66271928e1b842c996bb08d8405a24cc%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637330103187165808&data=ramCfoUio5JxgQ8jqfUZJg%2FPvGfJ5Epkz7No8uaImeY%3D&reserved=0>>>

Stand up for

Sharon Phipps

From: Sinclair Coghill
Sent: 24 August 2020 14:34
To: Graeme Taylor; Tamara Lawton
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Boundary Fence

Just to keep everyone in the loop, I got email below from [REDACTED], my reply below after checking with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Woodland Trust Estate Manager Wildlife Management, was on the phone late on Friday afternoon looking for some background information following his colleagues asking him for advice. He has asked for the last count map so he can get an idea of how deer use the area. I am getting this done via wetransfer/ dropbox or whatever IS currently support [REDACTED] has a good grip of deer management and should be a great help to them

Sinclair

Sinclair Coghill | Area Officer, South Highland

NatureScot | Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV18 0JZ | DD: 01463 [REDACTED]

nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: Sinclair Coghill
Sent: 21 August 2020 15:27
To: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Boundary Fence

Dear [REDACTED]

As you will be aware a number of different fencing proposals have been drafted over the years. I am not aware of EB applying to anyone else for the current scheme. This came to me last May as an idea and I made my assessment of it as advice.

Regards

Sinclair

Sinclair Coghill | Area Officer, South Highland

NatureScot | Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV18 0JZ | DD: 01463 [REDACTED]

nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 20 August 2020 19:02
To: Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Boundary Fence

Dear Sinclair,

Did EB apply for a previous grant scheme?

I am wondering what prompted you to do the assessment in May 2019?

Regards

██████████

From: Sinclair Coghill [<mailto:Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>]
Sent: 01 July 2020 10:48
To: ██████████
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Boundary Fence

Dear ██████████

Please see attached assessment of the proposed fence I made last year with accompanying map.

I also advised "Deer Management Plan required and DMG plan will require revision to take account of this." In an email exchange on 23 January this year.

Hope this finds you all well and look forward to meeting on 16 or 17 July

Kind regards

Sinclair

Sinclair Coghill | Wildlife Management Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Great Glen House | Leachkin Road | Inverness | IV3 8NW | t: 01463 ██████████

██████████

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir | Rathad na Leacainn | Inbhir Nis | IV3 8NW
nature.scot – *Connecting People and Nature in Scotland* – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

From: ██████████ <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 30 June 2020 15:32
To: Sinclair Coghill <Sinclair.Coghill@nature.scot>
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Boundary Fence

Dear Sinclair

Please would you send me a copy of your advice regarding deer and the project to Boundary fence Eisg Brachaidh.

Thank you

██████████

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Tha am post-dealain seo agus fiosrachadh sam bith na chois dìomhair agus airson an neach no buidheann ainmichte a-mhàin. Mas e gun d' fhuair sibh am post-dealain seo le mearachd, cuiribh fios dhan manaidsear-siostaim no neach-

Sharon Phipps

From: Eileen Stuart
Sent: 25 August 2020 07:35
To: Jimmy Hyslop; Graeme Taylor; Katherine Leys; Gillian Macdonald
Cc: Emma Keenan
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh (READ EMAIL CHAIN)

Jimmy,

Thanks for copying me into the email.

Graeme, can you keep me in the loop with any external communications about the case. We are currently pitching for additional funding for a further BCF round so if this case is likely to gather more attention it would be good to be able to input – if needed.

Thanks

Eileen

Eileen Stuart | Deputy Director People and Nature

NatureScot | Great Glen House, | Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW | t: 01463 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[nature.scot](https://www.nature.scot) | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

You can video call me at: <https://call.lifefizecloud.com/3343065>

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Sent: 21 August 2020 12:03

To: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>; Katherine Leys <Katherine.Leys@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>

Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh (READ EMAIL CHAIN)

Hi Graeme,

No, the requirements for EIA were not communicated to the applicant at the point of award of funding.

It's up to the applicant to undertake the necessary legal and other processes before starting projects. The standard grant condition in the grant offer is

"All relevant permissions must be confirmed before work commences and are the responsibility of the applicant. This includes permissions relating to designated sites, felling licences and SEPA licences as required. You must provide evidence of permissions prior to starting your project, unless we have agreed otherwise."

From Tamara's e-mail yesterday,

"In terms of the EIA, [REDACTED] has been in contact with [REDACTED] SF about the screening opinion and she has yet to make their submission although hopes to get it in next week – they are working on the basis of the indication they were given from the meeting they held last year with [REDACTED] is that an EIA won't be required." So clearly WT knows what it needs to do and has done work quite some time, it just hasn't done it yet.

The issue of an EAI wasn't mentioned in the pre-application feedback from SNH to the Trust. It's not information that is requested in the application form. No one raised this issue during the assessment process or at the Panel. First I heard about EIA was in [REDACTED]'s Information Note for [REDACTED] which we received on 17 August.

[REDACTED] is asking why we didn't require evidence of this as part of the application process or a visual impact assessment. (Maybe something to consider for our grants processes for the future.)

Jimmy

From: Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:29
To: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Ley@nature.scot>; Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi Jimmy,

That's great really helpful. We definitely want to get these issues resolved to let the scheme proceed. One remaining question from me- were the requirements for EIA communicated to the applicant at point of award?

Thanks,

Graeme

From: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Ley@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:27
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi Jimmy,

Thanks. This is a very helpful summary of where we are. I'm sure Graeme will find it useful for responding to the media enquiries. I agree, we don't have the funds to carry over such a substantive project from this year's allocation into next year.

Kath

Dr Katherine Leys | Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
NatureScot | Elmwood Campus | Carslogie Road | Cupar | Fife | KY15 4JB | t: 01738 [REDACTED]
nature.scot | @nature_scot | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

[REDACTED]

In accordance with government instructions, I am working from home. I can be contacted by all the usual methods, except in person as the office is currently closed.

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2020 11:17
To: Katherine Leys <Katherine.Ley@nature.scot>; Eileen Stuart <Eileen.Stuart@nature.scot>; Gillian Macdonald <Gillian.Macdonald@nature.scot>; Graeme Taylor <Graeme.Taylor@nature.scot>
Subject: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Easg Brahaidh

Hi all,

SNH made our announcement on the BCF projects on Friday 10 July and asked the Woodland Trust to complement our media release by publicising its award with local media after it had accepted our offer. Woodland Trust accepted our funding offer on 06 August and issues a press release on 14th.

The local Deer Management Group discussed the project on 18 August. [REDACTED], the Chair (who is also the estate's agricultural tenant and the neighbouring landowner), had concerns about it but the group was generally supportive of the project.

On the back of the WT press release:

- SNH has been copied in to a complaint to the Scottish Land Commission from [REDACTED]
- Francesca as received a complaint from the contractor who wrote the Deer Management Plan.
- SNH has been forwarded a complaint to MSPs and others from Assynt Community Council.

Lack of consultation with the local community and deer management group are recurring themes in these.

Before it can go ahead with the work on the project, the applicant still needs to:

1 provide necessary information to SNH so that we can undertake Nature assessment and issue SSSI consent,

2 complete the process with Scottish Forestry to establish whether an EIA is required and, if so, undertake an EIA. The Area will check this with Scottish Forestry.

3 demonstrate that it has complied with the guidance on collaborative deer management approach. The Area and Wildlife Management consider that the Woodland Trust has not done so and this is probably the clincher for us. Starting meaningful consultations now (when the tendering process was completed sometime ago) clearly poses some major **questions about the feasibility of the project and the ability to deliver in the agreed timescale**. I have contacted the Woodland Trust and requested a timeline for this process through to work starting on the ground. We will then be able to gauge the likelihood of completion of the works by the end of March 2021.

Another approach which was suggested would be to put the project off until next year, giving the Woodland Trust time to complete a proper consultation and other processes. Clearly we do not have £200k available for 2021-22.

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob:

[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 26 August 2020 17:24
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Jimmy,

I've now had a timeline back from the project team. (Attached). I hope this helps.

Please do ask if there is anything else you need at this time.

Kind regards

From: Jimmy Hyslop [mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot]
Sent: 20 August 2020 11:24
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: 501341 - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi [REDACTED],
I had a quick catch up with local colleagues this week and they mentioned that they did not yet have the necessary information to allow them to assess for the SSSI consent and undertake a Nature assessment. I realise that you will be very busy but I wonder if you could give me a quick, brief update on your timeline for the various stages through to the start of the work?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

NatureScot is the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

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EISG BRACHAIDH RESTORATION PROJECT

PROJECT SUMMARY

Eisg Brachaidh Estate in the Sutherland has biodiversity conservation as its primary objective. It is a partner in the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project which will manage this biodiversity project.

With habitat restoration at the land-scape scale, the aim is to re-establish the richness, diversity and connectivity, of healthy self-sustaining native species and communities. At 2,000 ha it has oligotrophic lochs, rivers and streams amongst low-lying hills, an estuary, extensive coastline and nearshore islands. It was previously part of the Inverpolly National Nature Reserve (1961-2004), it remains an important part of the Inverpolly SSSI and SAC, the Inverpolly, Loch Urigill & Nearby Lochs SPA, the Assynt – Coigach National Scenic Area (NSA) and is classed as a wild area. The surviving woodland (250-300ha including sparse remnants) is a Plantlife Important Plant Area in addition to its SAC status and is a focus area for the Saving Scotland's Rainforest Project.

Some of the important features on Eisg Brachaidh include western acidic oak woodland, wet heath, dry heaths, blanket bog, upland assemblage and upland birch woodland, otter, black throated diver, red throated diver, breeding heron and fresh water pearl mussel. The woodland elements are currently in unfavourable condition and the wet heath habitats assessed as unfavourable recovering. Small area of dry heath and montane scree which are less susceptible to overgrazing damage could be classed as in favourable condition. Effectively reducing and mitigating the effects of excessive grazing and trampling by high deer numbers is by far the most important factor for biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration on Eisg Brachaidh.

After many years of trying to find a solution to the deer grazing levels it has been concluded that the only way to protect this valuable habitat against further loss is to fence the estate boundary against Deer, and then reduce the deer numbers within the estate to around 1 deer per square kilometre. Currently information would suggest that the number of deer rise seasonally to above 5 deer per square kilometre (2016 helicopter count).

The proposed fence line (see map) is approximately 17.5 Km in length and has to closely follow the estate boundary. It is proposed to start at the point by Poll Loisgann to Loch Buine Mhor and fenced into the loch. The fence resumes on the far side and again flows the boundary up to Fionn Loch then down the Kirkaig River on the south side and out along the coast to opposite Sgeir Mhor. The fencing work will commence in autumn 2020 and remain unclosed for the winter to allow the normal overwintering deer to access. The fence will then be closed at the end of winter and a cull carried out within the fence to achieve the desired 1-2 deer per square kilometre level. Indications are that this will involve the culling of around 80 animals.

The reduction in deer grazing will allow existing regeneration to come away and expand in a natural way giving dynamic ecotones with the open heathland, and boost the woodland tree numbers and age structure making it more resilient into the future. It is proposed to maintain the cattle grazing at its current level of around 30 animals seasonally grazed over the whole area to ensure a low level mixed grazing regime. Herbivore impacts will be actively monitored on a regular basis running from the start of the works into the future to allow the deer numbers to be managed at a sustainable level with the cattle grazing and achieve the project aims.

Over decades and longer the woodlands have become less diverse and some species that would have been present are now found in very low numbers. It is planned to enrich by small scale planting within some of the existing native woodland remnant areas with these species: aspen, oak,

holly, alder, wych elm, bird cherry, guelder rose, juniper and willows (grey, goat and eared), dog rose and honeysuckle. Trees will be sourced from seed as close as possible to Eisd Brachaidh and it is hoped to get them from the local tree nursery at Little Assynt only 10 miles away.

HOW:

The fencing works will be to FGS specification to exclude both red deer and sika deer: 1.8m high deer fence constructed from wooden posts, 3 horizontal wires with a bottom net of C8/80/15 rylock and top net of C6/90/30 rylock, or alternatively a single net HT13/190/15. All underbuilt where necessary with water gates constructed for burn crossings. Included are full height management access gates and self-closing pedestrian gates at strategic points to be finalised after community consultations. A new deer grid will be installed on the public road leading south out of the estate by Loch Buine Mhor.

Fencing materials will be transported to a suitable bundling site off the public road from Lochinver tbc. From there most materials are to be helicopter distributed lifted to the fence line in 100m length bundles. Any roadside sections and nearby will be distributed 4x4 pick-ups and trailers/appropriate ATV's where there is sufficient access.

Personnel movement around site will be using a Hagglund BV206, Argo or 4x4 quads as appropriate and access allows. Access will avoid soft ground, bog areas and stick to drier ground to reduce impact, and they will make use of the existing argo tracks currently used only by the stalker. All refuelling will be done off site at an agreed fuelling locations away from watercourses and other sensitive locations. Fuel spill kits will be available for use.

Culling of deer numbers will be undertaken by suitably qualified stalkers working in association with the estate.

Enrichment planting will be on hand mounds, planted with slow release fertiliser added and then tubed with short tubes (0.6m). To be planted with minor species, mostly sessile oak, aspen, holly, alder and grey, eared and goat willows. Locally sourced plants will be used from Little Assynt Tree Nursery and supplied as transplants. This planting will be carried out by a combination of volunteer planting days and contractors.

Location of the enrichment planting to be at the locations indicated in the enclosed maps with a red cross.

WHEN:

It is planned to start the fencing works in October 2020. The fence will be left unclosed for the winter period and closed during March 2021 after when a cull of the deer population inside the fence will be carried out. Enrichment planting will be carried out in February/ March 2021.

ONGOING MANAGEMENT NEXT 10 YEARS

An HIA will be carried out upon fencing to act as a baseline picture for the project progress. Monitoring of both the impact of herbivores and the effect of the enclosure on local deer movements will be carried out regularly. In the case of the HIA within the enclosure, at least every three years initially to give a picture of the improvement in woodland and other habitats and to guide management. Deer numbers will be monitored closely particularly in the area to the west of Loch Buine Mhor for deer ingress over the loch and outwith the fence to the north of the Kirkaig River and around Inverkirkaig so that appropriate mitigation can be carried out. (See mitigation plan enclosed)

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Sent: 26 August 2020 11:13
To: Tamara Lawton
Cc: [REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org); Sinclair Coghill
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh SSSI consent information
Attachments: Attachments.html

Citrix Attachments Expires February 22, 2021

Eisg Brachaidh Fencing Proposals Mitigatio...20.docx	24.2 KB
EISG BRACHAIDH SSSI Consent 240820.docx	555.1 KB
Map 1 of 5 EB BCF app.pdf	2.3 MB
map 2 of 5 EB BCF app.pdf	2.4 MB
Map 3 of 5 EB BCF app.pdf	2.1 MB
Map 4 of 5 EB BCF app.pdf	2.1 MB
Map 5 of 5 EB BCF app.pdf	2.3 MB

[Download Attachments](#)

Peter Lowe uses Citrix Files to share documents securely.

Hello Tamara, I've enclosed the information that you asked for to make the SSSI consent decision. If there is anything further you need or any clarifications/questions let us know.

Best regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Senior Outreach Adviser

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk

The Woodland Trust, South Inch Business Centre, Perth, Perthshire, PH2 8BW

01738 635 544

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk



Date	Audience	Activity
26-Aug	Scottish Forestry	██████ submit EIA determination request to SF
26-Aug	SNH	██████ to submit finalised information for SSSI consent process
1 to 6 Sep	Local residents	Community drop-in at village hall/s – opportunity to ask Qs about the project
14-Sep	All stakeholders	Closing date for comments on plans - due to funding timescale and C-19
30-Sep	EB SNH WTS	██████ to draw up monitoring plan
14-18 Sep	WT	WT looks at feedback
20-Sep	SF/All	EIA determination complete
20-Sep	SNH/all	SSSI consent received
21-25 Sep Oct	WT / Eisd Brachaidh Estate (EBE) / SNH	Suggested changes to plans are discussed with EBE & SNH & SF (If substantial change) to EIA
28-Sep	WT / Eisd Brachaidh Estate (EBE) / SNH	Plans finalised
15-Oct	EB SNH WTS	Carry out 'before' picture record, HIA at strategic points
w/c 2 Nov	Contractor/EB/All	Removal of old fencing and fencing work begins

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@coigach-assynt.org>
Sent: 02 September 2020 09:52
To: Tamara Lawton; Sinclair Coghill
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: EB - local article release
Attachments: EBRP - project summary FINAL.docx

Dear Tamara and Sinclair,

Please find attached article circulated to the community councils yesterday, it is also going up in the local shops this morning.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]
This email has been sent from The Scottish Wildlife Trust. The content of this email (including any attachments) is strictly confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, please advise the sender immediately, delete this email and destroy any copies. We do not accept liability for any loss or damage which may result from this email or any file attached.

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EISG BRACHAIDH REVIVAL PROJECT – A SUMMARY

Background – where we are now

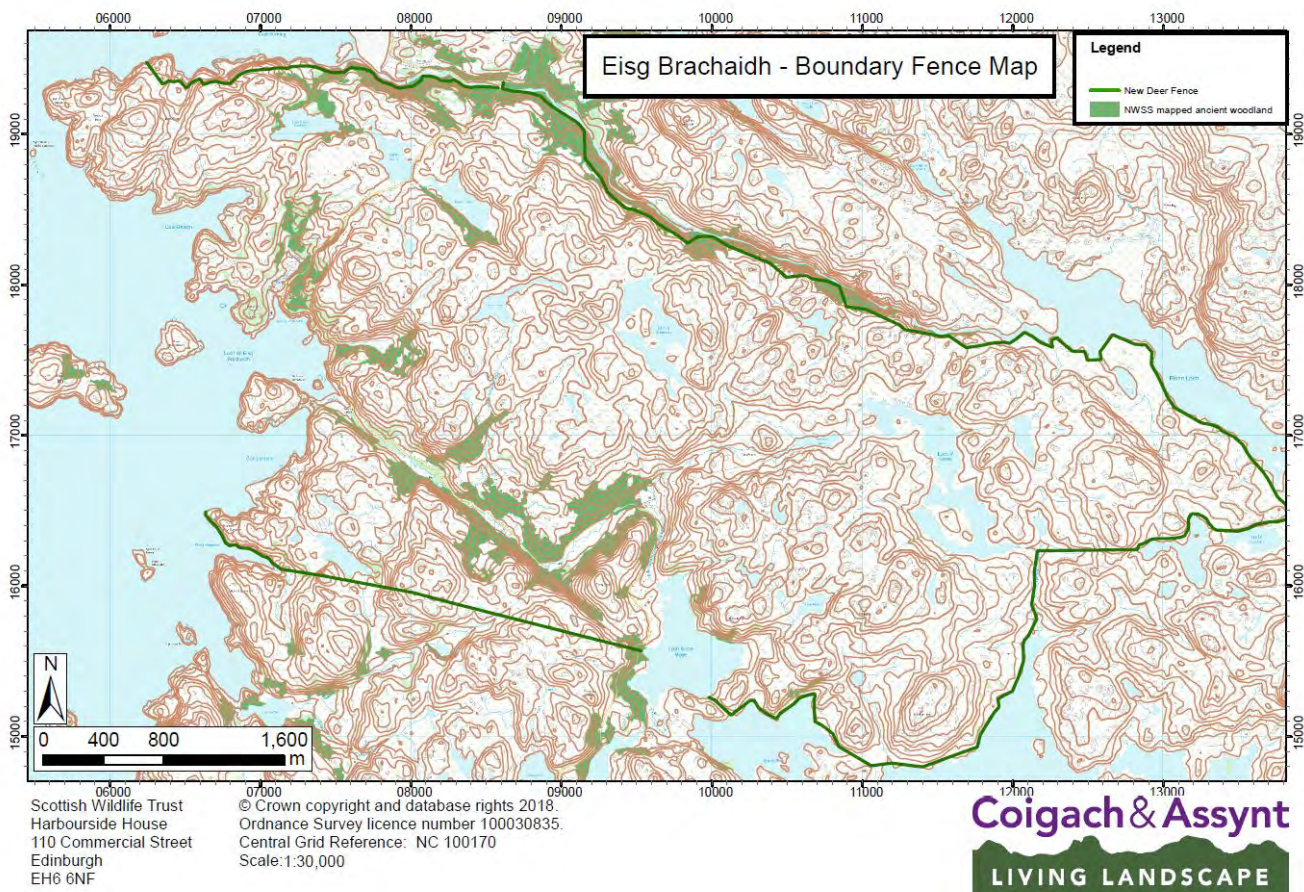
Eisg Brachaidh Estate lies to the south of Inverkirkaig and is 2000ha of heath, Atlantic rainforest and peatlands: all part of the larger Inverpolly Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation. It is a very valuable area for nature but it is fragile.

The SSSI habitats are in a varied condition. Wet Atlantic heaths were assessed as ‘favourable’ by Scottish Natural Heritage before the major fire in 2011 but dry heaths and woodlands are assessed as ‘unfavourable’ and ‘unfavourable declining’ respectively. Woodland habitats (including an important remnant of Scotland’s rare and unique rainforest) have been in decline for centuries, due mostly to fire and grazing. This decline has continued over the last few decades due to old age and overgrazing.

Eisg Brachaidh is in danger of losing many of its smaller woods forever because the new, young trees are unable to replace the veterans. The health of a wood depends on new young trees replacing old ones but this replacement or ‘regeneration’ process has been interrupted for many years because of high levels of grazing from overwintering deer venturing onto the Estate. Overgrazing has depleted all but the most unpalatable tree species as well as a many of the plants and shrubs you would expect to find in a healthy Coigach landscape. The woodland along the roadside where disturbance is frequent doesn’t reflect what is happening away from the roadside where many wooded remnants are reduced to a handful of moribund trees.

Proposal – what we aim to do and when

The work at Eisg Brachaidh aims to reduce grazing pressure and reverse woodland decline before it is too late. To do this it is proposed we erect a deer fence around the boundary of the estate as shown on the map.



The plan is to start fencing in October 2020 and for the fence to remain open in places until March 2021 – this will allow deer to overwinter as usual. The fence will then be completed and deer numbers reduced significantly with a limited number of deer being retained within the fence alongside resident grazing cattle. The impact of grazing and the impact of the fence on deer movements will be monitored regularly to ensure the balance is right to allow the woodland to recover through natural regeneration. Our approach to delivering this project has received support from SNH, members of the local Deer Management Sub-Group, neighbouring landowners and Scottish Forestry.

Unightly and derelict roadside deer fencing and old enclosures will be removed at the same time as fencing is installed. The fence will be checked regularly and maintained for a minimum of 15 years.

Public access will be via the public road as it is now, with an additional deer grid being installed on the road by Loch Buine Mhor. Pedestrian gates will be fitted over the winter at strategic access points, as will stock and deer management gates. (Highland Council Access Officers, SNH, The Ramblers and the Scottish Canoe Association have all contributed to this access plan.)

The majority of Eisd Brachaidh will be allowed to regenerate in a completely natural way but small numbers of native trees that are depleted will be planted at scattered locations across the estate (maps provided on request). This 'enrichment planting' will include oak, alder, willow, hazel, aspen, dog rose and honeysuckle provided by Little Assynt Nursery. There will be no large scale or commercial planting. Native planting will begin in early Spring 2021.

There are opportunities for community members to volunteer and get involved in habitat restoration works e.g. monitor herbivore impacts, conduct habitat assessments and plant trees. Training will be provided and Covid permitting we hope to start in Spring 2021, with monitoring extending into the foreseeable future.

If you would like to get directly involved in the conservation management of Eisd Brachaidh do get in touch.

Find out more

We welcome feedback from the community re the plans and invite you to contact [redacted] [redacted]@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or [redacted] [redacted]@coigach-assynt.org) before 14 September 2020. Alternatively come and discuss your questions, concerns and ideas with in person at a community 'drop-in' session.

Eisd Brachaidh Community Drop-In Session

Date: Monday 7th September Time: 1pm to 6pm

Location: CALLP gazebo, Culag Park, Lochinver (outside An Cala)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the project?

To regenerate and revive 2000ha of Atlantic heath, peatland and ancient woodland (part of Scotland's rare and unique rainforest) across Eisd Brachaidh Estate.

2. Who is managing the work?

It is a partnership under the umbrella of the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Project (CALLP) which has been developed between Eisd Brachaidh Estate and Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS). WTS will be overseeing the work under the guidance of SNH (for the SSSI and deer management).

3. Who is funding it?

More than £420,000 has been secured thanks to funding support from the SNH Biodiversity Challenge Fund, Eisd Brachaidh Estate and Woodland Trust Scotland. Further funding is being sought from the CALL project

supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund. All funds raised will go directly to pay for the restoration work on Eisd Brachaidh, not to the owners of the estate.

4. How will the fence impact deer numbers and movements?

As part of our plans at Eisd Brachaidh, deer numbers will be reduced significantly once the fence is closed in March 2021. There should not be an increase in deer numbers on the outside of the fence prior to this because deer that normally winter on Eisd Brachaidh will be able to enter through strategically placed gaps in the fence. Once the gaps are closed there will be a compensatory cull. We will closely monitor the impact of this element of the project. The monitoring plan includes regularly assessing habitats and tracks, and sharing those findings with neighbouring estates and the Deer Management sub-group. Collaborative working and open dialogue between neighbouring estates and with the community is key and quarterly project updates (including monitoring findings) will be shared with neighbours and the community to facilitate this. If any additional deer management is required outside the fence we will act quickly (though we anticipate that if this is needed it will be very localised.) We invite any Inverkirkaig residents with observations or concerns about deer to please contact [REDACTED] directly. This feedback will be passed on to surrounding landowners and the local Deer management sub-group.

5. Is there no alternative to fencing?

Eisd Brachaidh Estate has spent many years exploring other options, including smaller woodland enclosures. These proposals have however failed to be agreed with a key stakeholder. This plan of action is now seen as the only realistic way of protecting this valuable habitat against further loss. The current fencing proposal involves less fencing than a smaller compartment approach and protects all of the designated habitats, making it cheaper and more cost effective. Without a fence, culling deer, at scale, across a much wider landscape would be necessary to reduce the grazing pressure sufficient for ecological recovery.

6. Why this timing, so soon?

Funding is available to undertake this work now and we would like to start in October. If we can close the fence at the end of the winter, any extra deer that overwinter on Eisd Brachaidh can be managed thereby reducing deer welfare issues and the potential impact on Inverkirkaig.

7. Why maintain cattle and deer grazing inside the fence?

Light mixed grazing produces the best results for biodiversity and will support a more natural outcome.

8. Will there be an Ecological Impact Assessment?

Extensive survey and assessment work has already been carried out by the Estate and SNH through this and previous planning processes. This information is currently being assessed by Scottish Forestry.

9. Will there be a formal consultation?

As this is not a Forestry Grant Scheme application, there is no formal consultation process. This proposal has nevertheless been discussed with many stakeholders prior to the Biodiversity Challenge Fund application. We have discussed our engagement approach with SNH and the Scottish Land Commission and although it is a shorter timescale than we'd like due to COVID, staff furlough and grant restrictions, we have been and will continue to, engage actively with stakeholders about this project on an ongoing basis. We recognise deer impacts are of particular interest to the local community and would encourage anyone with feedback both now and as the project develops, to contact [REDACTED] [@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@woodlandtrust.org.uk).

10. What about deer around Lochinver Village?

We are aware of the existing issue with deer entering Lochinver village. Deer movements are complex and not fully understood, but feedback from local stalkers suggests most are entering from land to the North and East. We have surveyed the existing deer fences around the village - as requested by the Community Council - and believe various existing fences could be linked together with additional new fences to prevent deer access to much of the village. We look forward to discussing this at a future community council meeting and at the Community Drop-In Session on 7 September for those whom that suits. Thank you.

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 04 September 2020 08:44
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: [REDACTED]@btinternet.com; [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Eisg Brachaidh Estate
Attachments: Information Note for Inverpolly Estate- August 2020 (2).docx

Hi Jimmy

Sorry to keep bugging you but this is a very controversial scheme which you must review before it is too late. The attached report explains why it is completely unnecessary.

The fence is no longer going around Loch Buine Mhoire but into the Loch.

This is a material change to the application which means there will be free passage of deer into EB rendering the fence ineffective thereby wasting public money.

There will be an enquiry into SNH's management of this scheme so I hope you will start to act on the information I am giving you.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]mailto:info@inverpolly.com]
Sent: 20 August 2020 14:19
To: 'Jimmy Hyslop'
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I am afraid I could not sit back and ignore the inaccuracies in the application without telling you.

It is up to you whether you think my points are important enough to review the grant.

I am surprised you did not require a visual impact survey.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]
Sent: 20 August 2020 09:10
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],

Please note that SNH's decision on this grant application was made when it was approved by the panel in March,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 22:24

To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

I have had a chance to read through the application and have a few comments to make.

Section 7.

Red Squirrels are not present.

There has been no routine Muirburn for over 35 years.

Regeneration was good as confirmed by Prof. Milne when he was Chairman of Deer Commission Scotland.

Most regeneration was lost in a wild fire about 8 years ago.

Deer numbers were under control within the designated site under a sect. 7 agreement.

It is only because of the fresh growth after the fire that deer numbers (like the tide) have been difficult to control.

This effect is starting to wear off and by year 12 I would expect no effect at all.

Project Proposal

Fencing the Estate will block the natural movement of deer through to Inverpolly where stalking is a very important economic activity helping to maintain two full time jobs and several part time jobs.

The 5 miles of deer fence on the North side will guide deer into Inverkirkaig and compound existing deer/human conflicts all the way up the coast including Lochinver.

Para 2 see above.

The Map shows new fenced enclosures.

The Agricultural Tenants will be impacted.

They will have to spend considerable amounts of time moving stock, that were free to roam, through the new fence.

SNH have not stopped the tenant from grazing sheep on this ground.

Sect 20

The Agricultural Tenant has not been consulted.

The current consent is for 50 cows and 561 ewes and gimmers(reduced from 1200 under AECS and previous schemes).

Sect 21

The map shows new enclosures.

Sect 25 + 26

If they are vat reg why can they not reclaim?

Budget

The National Lottery Heritage Fund CALL money has not been confirmed.

I hope this new information will help you review your decision.

Regards

██████████

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]

Sent: 19 August 2020 10:14

To: ██████████

Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hello ██████████,

Attached are the application form and supporting documents for this project, as requested,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED] nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | Scotland's Nature Agency | Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 08:26
To: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi Jimmy

Would it be possible to have copy of the application and associate documents, please.

Thank you
[REDACTED]

From: Jimmy Hyslop [<mailto:Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>]
Sent: 23 June 2020 14:44
To: info@inverpolly.com
Subject: RE: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Hi [REDACTED],
Woodland Trust Scotland has been successful in its application to our Biodiversity Challenge Fund for this project,

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage | Caspian House | Mariner Court | Clydebank Business Park | Clydebank | G81 2NR | t:0131 314 [REDACTED]
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba | Taigh Caspian | Cùirt a' Mharaiche | Bruach Chluaidh | G81 2NR
nature.scot – Connecting People and Nature in Scotland – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

SNH staff will be at home trying to work until further notice. Please use the usual email addresses to contact us. Our office phone numbers are diverted to our mobile or land line numbers.

If you receive an auto-reply that a particular member of Grants staff is not working, due to illness or leave, please forward the email to grants@nature.scot.

Please let us know if we should use any different contact details or methods to communicate with you during this time.

From: [REDACTED] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 22 June 2020 20:49
To: BCF <BCF@nature.scot>
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh Estate

Dear Sir/Madam

[REDACTED] Eisg Brachaidh Estate.

I have heard the entire Estate is to be deer fenced and I was wondering if you are providing the funding. The application may have come from CALL(Coigach Assynt Living Landscape) with the help of the Woodland Trust. This would be in the latest round of funding as I don't think the contract has been signed yet.

Apologies if this is nothing to do with you.

Thank You



NatureScot is the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Sharon Phipps

From: [redacted] <info@inverpolly.com>
Sent: 04 September 2020 19:30
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Eisg Brachaidh

Hi Jimmy

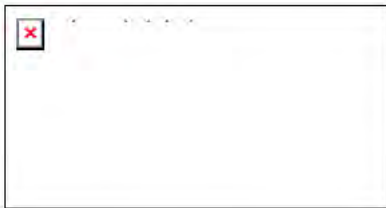
You will see below both WT and CALLP are down as funding confirmed.
This is not true.

The WT "Lost Trees" project was rejected by the Lottery.
CALLP have not yet received lottery approval to draw down money against their budget for this project.

Surely this alone calls the whole application into question.

Regards

[redacted]



Biodiversity Challenge Fund - Project Finances

**Applications must be in the region of £100k to £200k, with projects starting from 1 April 2020.
All projects and their activities must be completed and claimed by 31 March 2021.**

Complete the yellow cells for each of the Project Costs you are requesting funding from us, and for the M In-kind Contributions.

If you need extra rows in any tables, highlight the bottom yellow row and then right-click and select 'Insert above'.

Please do not alter the grey boxes.

Name of Organisation:	Woodland Trust
Project Title:	Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Pro

Table 1. What are the **cash costs** of your project and how much cash are you requesting from SNH? Project Cost Description' should describe the item that will incur a cost, not describe an activity to be delivered. Use additional lines as required. If you are applying for full cost recovery on any staffing resource, this should be on a separate line indicated.

Table 3. Please show all sources of **in-kind contributions** to your project in the table below and whether they are confirmed for the duration of the project. If in-kind contributions are not yet confirmed then please tell us when you expect them to be confirmed so we can come back to hear a decision on the funding.

Description of in-kind contribution	Total In Kind Contribution Value April 2020 to March 2021	Confirmed (if not)
TOTAL	0.00	

CASH COSTS SUMMARY	Amount
Amount of cash you are requesting from SNH	
Amount of cash contributions from you or other funders	
Total cash cost of your project	

Please check that the sum of the total cash cost in Table 1 matches the total cash cost of your project cost.

Amount of in kind contributions from you or other funders	
Total Project Cost	

Sharon Phipps

From: Jimmy Hyslop
Sent: 07 September 2020 11:44
To: Tamara Lawton
Subject: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Tamara,
Hope that you are well.

Looking at the timeline for the various stages in the run up to contractors starting, “██████ to submit finalised information for SSSI consent process” by 26 August. Did you receive all of the necessary information?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 ████████ mob: ██████████ nature.scot | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*

Sharon Phipps

From: Tamara Lawton
Sent: 08 September 2020 10:09
To: Jimmy Hyslop
Cc: Sinclair Coghill
Subject: RE: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Jimmy, [REDACTED] sent the info on 26th August. I am in the process of looking through the info for the HRA and the consent.

I asked for a deer management plan and whilst they have put the info on deer management within the text of the consent application, it isn't a plan per se, so I will be going back to them to ask for a separate document. However, I am aware they are also in the process of having to amend the DMG plan so trying not to make them do it twice. I therefore may need to wait until they have done that piece of work. I will see what they say and let you know.

Cheers,
Tamara

From: Jimmy Hyslop <Jimmy.Hyslop@nature.scot>
Sent: 07 September 2020 11:44
To: Tamara Lawton <Tamara.Lawton@nature.scot>
Subject: 501341 - BCF - Woodland Trust - Eisg Brachaidh Biodiversity Restoration Project

Hi Tamara,
Hope that you are well.

Looking at the timeline for the various stages in the run up to contractors starting, [REDACTED] to submit finalised information for SSSI consent process" by 26 August. Did you receive all of the necessary information?

Jimmy

Jimmy Hyslop | Funding Officer

NatureScot | Caspian House, Mariner Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR | 0131 314 [REDACTED] mob: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [nature.scot](https://www.nature.scot) | [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot) | *Scotland's Nature Agency* | *Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba*