



Trustees' Annual Report

for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

The Trustees have pleasure in presenting their report together with the financial statements and the Independent Financial Examiner's report for the above mentioned period.

Reference & Administrative Information

Charity Name: Skye and Lochalsh Environment Forum

Charity No: SCO40820

Address of Principal Office: The Old Police Station, Isleornsay, Isle of Skye, IV43 8QR.

Currently the Trustees are:

Eileen Armstrong

David Ashford

Roger Cottis

Lindsay Thatcher

Melanie Watt

All served as Trustees throughout the period.

Structure Governance & Management

Constitution:

The Charity became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 4th September 2013. It is governed by its SCIO Constitution which was adopted on 18th November 2013.

Appointment of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, which normally meets at least thrice annually, consists of the charity's Trustees. Trustees are elected at the Annual Members' Meeting. Under the constitution, there must be a minimum of three and not more than nine elected Trustees. The Trustees may co-opt a further three Trustees if they consider it would be in the interests of the charity to do so. Membership of the Board is open to all Members of the charity.

Management:

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity, whilst day-to-day running is delegated to the Secretary.

Objectives & Activities

Charitable purposes:

To be a forum for members of the public and organisations in or associated with Skye and Lochalsh in order to promote and care for the landscape and biological diversity of natural and cultural habitats throughout for the benefit of present and future generations and to

promote awareness, enjoyment, research, understanding and sustainable use of the Area's natural and cultural environment and biodiversity.

Activities:

Most of the equipment purchased over many years related to several projects was retrieved from the National Trust at Balmacara, who had stored the items. With current potential funding opportunities, it was deemed necessary to have the equipment at hand for future use.

SLEF members contributed to a UK wide project 'Carbon Storage in Intertidal Environments' (C-SIDE). Soil sampling from 13 local saltmarshes was undertaken in conjunction with Bangor University in North Wales and St Andrews University, Scotland.

South Skye Seas Initiative (SSSi) project to survey Loch Eishort, Loch Slapin and Loch Scavaig to better understand the biodiversity around the shoreline and underwater continued at pace throughout the year. The Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), an underwater drone purchased in the previous year was successfully tested and deployed from shore and boat. This enabled extensive underwater surveys to be undertaken. Surveys were also undertaken using a GoPro camera deployed from a kayak and additional sets have been purchased for use next year. Of major importance Priority Marine Features (PMFs) were targeted and multiple seagrass meadows and maerl beds were discovered and duly reported to SNH's Marine Team to augment the PMF consultation due to be undertaken. SSSi as part of coastal Communities Network contributed to a meeting in June at Oban where the ROV was deployed and demonstrated, followed by a discussion on survey training techniques. Subsequently several requests were received for the equipment to be used. However the Covid-19 virus intervened and research into herring spawning off Gairloch needed to be abandoned. A result of the extensive underwater surveys using the ROV highlighted certain problems with tangling seaweed, which at times severely curtailed survey time. Mitigation to help resist seaweed affecting the thruster units was designed and 3D printed, but too late to be trialled at sea. Shoreline data were collated from previous years and submitted to SNH for inclusion in the SSSi project, creating an important baseline for future research. Further surveys have been planned for 2020-21, in liaison with SNH, subject to Covid-19.

Membership and contact have been maintained through SSSi in the Coastal Communities Network, currently administered by Fauna & Flora International, which has involved input into various projects and consultations.

Apart from the website as a useful resource, Scottish Salmon Think-Tank activities were superseded with the formation of Salmon Aquaculture Reform Network Scotland and associated Skye Communities for Natural Heritage. The latter in response to several proposed salmon farms in north east Skye.

Having been involved with SLEF from inception, Forestry Commission Scotland underwent a radical restructuring becoming Forest and Land Scotland. Contact was maintained when Colin Leslie joined SLEF following the departure of Giles Drake Brockman.

Members continued to be alerted to committee meetings and several attended. However, under current circumstances with the constraints of the Covid-19 virus, video conferencing will be used to maintain a degree of normality for Board meetings.

Approved by the Trustees on 26th October 2020 and signed on their behalf by:



David Ashford
Secretary