NOVEMBER 2001

Hebridean Mink Project

QUARTERLY BULLETIN

Since receiving confirmation in July that the EU LIFE Nature Fund would provide 50% of the £1.65m required for the ‘Hebridean Mink Project’, the project management group has been busy getting things off the ground. The purpose of this bulletin is to keep interested parties informed of the aims of the project and the progress being made.

NEWS

◆ Local jobs created

Significant employment opportunities have been created by the project. A manager and ten trappers are required, creating at least 11 jobs, though this could be more if some opt for part-time. The manager will be based in south Harris. Four trappers will also be based there creating a mink-free ‘buffer zone’ to prevent them from crossing the Sound and recolonising the Uists. The other six trappers will trap mink intensively throughout North Uist and Benbecula.

◆ Project manager appointed

Paul Tyler of Lewis, has been appointed Project Manager and has recently been involved in the recruitment of the equivalent of ten full-time trappers required for the work. Paul will co-ordinate the work of the trappers as well as keeping interested parties informed of progress and reporting back to the Project Management Group. Paul has lived on the island for more than 25 years. After more than a decade working as a science teacher in Harris he has been involved in a number of projects including working on nature reserves in St Abbs and St Kilda, and more recently working with the Minch Project and the Western Isles Coastal Access Project. It is expected he will be based in Harris for the duration of the mink project. In the meantime he can be contacted on 01859 550327.

◆ Liaison group to be set up

A local liaison group is to be set up to help keep local people informed of the Project’s aims and objectives and progress, and to enable local expertise to be fed into the process. The group is expected to include representtives from community councils, scottish crofters’ union, landowners and managers, and former members of the Mink Groups of the Uists and of Lewis and Harris. Anyone intrested in becoming a member should contact project manager, Paul Tyler.

◆ Mink Project to go ‘on line’

A webiste dedicated to the Hebridean Mink Project is to be set up. This will form part of the Scottish Natural Heritage website and will include information about the species and the project and of the many bird species and other interests under threat from mink. News releases and up-date bulletins about the Project will also be posted on the site, and there will be links to the websites of the main partners behind the project.

BACKGROUND

◆ The trouble with mink

Mink are not native to the Western Isles or even to the UK. Their presence in the area stems from mink farms which closed down in the 1960s. They pose particular threat to wild birds as they will eat eggs, chicks and adult birds from internationally important bird sites. The Uists include some of Europe’s most important wild bird sites and these are afforded protection under the European Wild Birds Directive in designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The UK is required by the Directive to protect the interests of SPAs. As well as nature conservation, the damaging effects of mink also impact, directly or indirectly, upon crofting, fishing, fishfarming and tourism. The mink situation is very much a shared problem, and it is in all our interests to find a solution. Unfortunately, the only permanent solution is eradication.

◆ The aims of the project

The ‘Hebridean Mink Project’ aims to eradicate the alien predator, American mink, from the Uists and to dramatically reduce their numbers in Harris. The Project is being carried out in the interests of nature conservation, namely to protect threatened bird colonies of international significance. It has been underpinned by community liaison on the main issues and detailed research in the form of a feasibility study carried out by Central Science Laboratory. This project will be crucial in determining how the much bigger task of wider eradication throughout Lewis and Harris could be approached.

◆ The funding and the partners

The Hebridean Mink Project is bringing more than £1.65m of European, public and other funding to the Western Isles. It has been made possible after the presence of several European nature conservation areas in the Uists were used to attract half the money from the EU LIFE Nature Fund. This Fund aims to help the protection of ‘Natura’ sites designated under the EC Habitats and Wild Birds Directives. As part of the application, SNH confirmed a £443,000 contribution to the project, along with £150,000 from The Scottish Executive, £100,000 from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, £52,000 from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, £42,000 from Central Science Laboratory and £35,000 from Western Isles Enterprise. The Project constitutes a new novel partnership of these organisations.

For further information about the Hebridean Mink Project, contact Scottish Natural Heritage in Stornoway (Tel. 01851 705258) or the project manager, Paul Tyler, on 01859 550327.

AN T-SAMHAIN 2001

Pròiseict Mìonc nan Eilean Siar

FIOSRACHADH RÀITHE

Bhon a chaidh a dhearbhadh san luchar gun robh an stòras airgead nàdarra Eòrpach LIFE a dol a thoirt seachad leth dhen £1.65m a bha ri fhaotainn airson a phròiseict, tha buidheann stiùiridh na pròiseict air a bhith trang a faighinn gnothaichean a'dol. 'Se amas an aithris seo fiosrachadh a chumail ris an fheadhainn aig a bheil ùidh, air amasan na pròiseict agus an t-adhartas a tha ga dhèanamh.

NAIDHEACHDAN

◆ Obraichean ionadal air an cruthachadh

Tha am pròiseict air cothroman cosnaidh bhrìgheil a chruthachadh. Tha neach stiùiridh agus 10 neach glacaidh rim faotainn a cruthachadh co dhiù aon deug obair ged a dh'fhaodadh barrachd a bhith ann ma thaghas daoine obair pàirt ùine a dhèanamh. Bidh an neach stiùiridh stèidhichte ann an taobh a deas na Hearradh. Bidh ceithir neach glacaidh stèidhichte an sin cuideachd a dèanamh bann a tha saor bho mhionc airson stad a chuir orra bho bhith siubhal tarsaing a' chaolas agus ag ath-shuidheachadh ann an Uibhist. Bidh an sia neach glacaidh eile ag obair air glacadh air feagh Uibhist-a-Tuath agus Beinn a' Fhaoghla.

◆ Neach Stiùiridh a' phròiseict air ainmeachadh

Chaidh Pòl Tyler à Lèodhas ainmeachadh mar neach stiùiridh airson na pròiseict agus tha e air a bhith an sàs ann a bhith a toirt air deich neach glacaidh slàn ùine airson na h-obrach. Bidh Pòl a' stiùireadh obair an luchd glacaidh a bharrachd air a bhith toirt seachad fiosrachadh mu adhartais na pròiseict do bhuidhnean aig a bheil ùidh, agus a bhith cumail fiosrachadh ri buidheann stiùiridh na pròiseict. Tha Pòl air a bhith fuireach 'san Eilean airson còrr 's còig air fhichead bliadhna. As deidh còrr 's deich bliadhna a chuir seachad mar neach teagasg saidheans anns na Hearradh, tha e air a bhith an sàs ann an grùnn phròiseactan mar obair air Tèarmainn Nàdair Nàiseanta ann an St.Abbs agus Hiort. Bho chionn ghoirid bha e ag obair air pròiseict a' Chuan Sgìth agus le pròiseict inntrigidh cladaichean nan Eilean Siar. Tha e na dhùil gum bidh e stèidhichte anns na Hearradh airson fad ùine na pròiseict. An-dràsta gheibhear greim air aig 01859 550327.

◆ Buidheann co-obrachach ga stèidheachadh

Tha buidheann co-obrachaidh ionadal ri bhith air a stèidheachadh airson fiosrachadh a chumail ri muinntir na sgìre mu amasan agus adhartais na pròiseict agus airson beachdan ionadal a' chruinneachadh airson an cuir ris an iomairt. Tha am buidheann an dùil a bhith air a dhèanamh suas le riochdairean bho chomhairlean coimhearsnachd, Aonadh nan Croitearan, uachdairean agus luchd stiùiridh fearainn a bharrachd air buil a b'àbhaist a bhith air na buidhnean mionc ann an Uibhist agus ann an Leòdhas 's na Hearradh. Ma tha ùidh aig duine ann am ballrachd buidheann a cho-obrachaidh, cuireadh iad fios gu neach stiùiridh na pròiseict, Pòl Tyler.

◆ Pròiseict mionc a' dol 'air an lìon'

Tha làrach-lìnn sònraichte airson pròiseict mionc nan Eilean Siar ri bhith air a chuir air bhonn. Bidh seo mar phàirt de làrach-lìnn Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba agus bheir e seachad fiosrachadh mu dheidhinn na creutairean, am pròiseict agus mu iomadach seòrsa eun agus beathach eile fo chunnart bhon mhionc. Bidh sanasan naidheachd agus fiosrachadh mionaideach mun phròiseict air a chuir air an làrach agus bidh ceangaileachan ann le làraich-lìnn de phrìomh bhuidhnean a tha an sàs agus air cuil na pròiseict.

CÙL-FIOSRACHAIDH

◆ An trioblaid le mionc

Chan eil mionc dùthchasach dha na h-Eileanan an Iar no fiù do Bhreatann. Thàinig iad gu bhith ma sgàoil anns na h-Eileanan nuair a dhùin tuathanasan mionc sios anns na trì ficheadan. Tha iad gu h'àraid cunnartach do dh'eòin fhiadhaich oir ithidh iad uighean, iseanan agus eòin mhòra bho làraich chudthromach eòin eadar-nàiseanta. Tha na h-Uibhistean nan dachaigh do chuid dhe na h-eòin is cudthromaiche 'san Roinn Eòrpa agus tha iad seo air an dìon fo Ordugh Eòin Fhiadhaich na Roinn Eòrpa le Àitean Sònraichte Dìona (SPA). Tha e mar uallach air Breatann nan làraich seo a dhìon a thaobh riaghailtean na Roinn Eòrpa. A bharrachd air glèidhteachais nàdair, tha droch bhuaidh aig a' mhionc air croitearachd, iasgach, tuathanachas eisg agus turasachd. Tha suidheachadh a' mhionc na dhuilgheadas do mhòran agus tha e mar ghnothach dhuinn uile freagart fhaighinn dhan cheist. Gu mì-fhortanach an aon fhreagart buan a th'ann 'se am beathach a sgrios.

◆ Amasan na pròiseict

Tha e mar amas aig 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' am beathach gallda, am mionc Aimearaigeanach a sgrios bho na h-Uibhistean agus àireamhan den bheathach a lughdachadh anns na Hearradh. A' beachdachadh air glèidhteachais nàdair, tha am pròiseict a gabhail àite airson àireamhan eòin de bhrìgh eadar-nàiseanta a dhìon.

Tha a' choimhearsnachd gu mòr air cùil na pròiseict agus air a bhith a' beachdachadh air na prìomh cheistean agus tha an Seòmar-obrach Saidheans Meadhanach air a bhith dèanamh sgrùdadh mionaideach air dè tha gu bhith comasach a rèir na pròiseict. Bidh am pròiseict seo riatanach ann a bhith a dearbhadh dè an dòigh as fhearr air am beathach a sgrìos bhon roinn as motha an Leòdhas 's na Hearradh.

◆ Taic airgead agus an co as a thàinig e

Tha 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' a toirt còrr is millean trì fichead 'sa còig mìle not dè dh'airgead Eòrpach, poblach agus eile do na h-Eileanan an Iar. Chaidh seo a dhèanamh comasach le na sgìrean glèidhteachais nàdair anns na h-Uibhistean a' tàladh leth dhen airgead bho stòras airgead nàdarra Eòrpach LIFE. Tha an stòras airgead seo ag amas air làraich 'Natura', air an ainmeachadh fo Ordugh Eòin Fhiadhaich agus Àrainnean Eòrpach, a' chuideachadh an dìon. Mar phàirt den iarrtas chuir Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba suas ri leth mhillean not ris a' phròiseict comhla ri ceud gu leth mìle not bho Riaghaltas na h-Alba, ceud mìle not bho Chomhairle nan Eilean Siar, còrr is leth cheud mìle not bho Chomann Rìoghail Dìon nan Eun, còrr is dà fhichead mìle not bhon Seòmar-obrach Saidheans Meadhanach agus còig deug air fhichead mìle not bho Iomairt nan Eilean Siar. Tha am pròiseict a toirt ri chèile co-chomann uir dè na buidhnean seo.

Airson barrachd fiosrachadh mu Phròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar cuir fios gu Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ann an Steòrnabhagh (Fòn: 01851 705258) no gu neach-stiùiridh na pròiseict, Pòl Tyler air 01859 550327.