

Concept Note

Developing Skills in the Assessment of Herbivore Impacts on Heather Habitats across 3 DMGs in the Cairngorms

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper outlines a proposal to carry out a jointly funded assessment of herbivore impacts on heather habitats across 3 DMGs in the Cairngorms. A map showing the indicative area of heather-dominated habitats is presented at Annex 1.
- 1.2 It is intended that this paper will stimulate a discussion between the joint funding partners which in turn will lead to the implementation of a worthwhile collaborative venture involving public and private sector organisations.
- 1.3 This proposal is considered to be fully in line with the Code of Practice on Deer Management and the Deer Framework for the Cairngorms National Park.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the proposed project is twofold:
 - to obtain up-to-date and reliable information on herbivore impacts on heather habitats across the core Cairngorm area to allow herbivore managers to make informed decisions regarding sustainable management, and;
 - to provide land managers with the skills and competencies that will enable them to carry out repeat assessments of herbivore impacts on heather habitats and to incorporate the data obtained in robust decisions about sustainable management.

3 Inputs

- 3.1 It is considered that there will be 3 major inputs: financial contributions from the joint funding partners, herbivore impact assessment by a suitably qualified and experienced contractor and time from staff employed on the properties within the project area.
- 3.2 It is suggested that CNPA and SNH will be the joint funding partners. A financial memo of agreement may be drawn up setting out the details of joint funding arrangements.
- 3.3 It is suggested that a contractor is appointed to deliver a training programme aimed at enabling estate staff to carry out an assessment of herbivore impacts on heather habitats, collate and report survey findings and use the data to inform management decisions. An actual survey of impacts on heather will be incorporated within the training programme. A statement of requirements may be drawn up to set out what a contractor may be expected to deliver.

4 Outcome and Outputs

- 4.1 The key outcome of the project will be the ability to demonstrate that CNPA, SNH and 3 DMGs are working together to deliver sustainable management in accordance with relevant public policy.
- 4.2 Key outputs will include a repeatable method for an assessment of impacts on heather, a report on the 2012 impact levels (prepared by the contractor) and estate staff qualified to carry out reliable assessments of herbivore impacts.

5 Partners

- 5.1 Partners in the project will include CNPA, SNH, a contractor, 3 DMGs (Cairngorms/Speyside DMG, West Grampian Tayside DMG and East Grampian DMG Sub-area 5) and estate staff.

6 Indicative Costs and Timing

- 6.1 It is anticipated that the main cost will be to the joint funding partners and will be associated with hiring a contractor to deliver the project. The overall cost of hiring a contractor may be in the region of £11,000. The project may be jointly managed by the funding partners. Upper indicative costs and timings are illustrated below. An important variable is the number of surveyors or sample plots surveyed: more surveyors or plots = higher cost.

#	Task	Lead	Timing	Indicative Upper Cost*
1	Prepare Memo of Agreement & Contract Specification	CNPA/SNH	February 2012	na
2	Invite tenders for contract	CNPA/SNH	March 2012	na
3	Award contract	CNPA/SNH	March 2012	na
4	1 Day session (x3 DMGs) – Survey method & Plan identification	Contractor	April 2012	£2,400
5	Fieldwork (x20 days) – Training estate staff and carrying out assessment	Contractor	April & May 2012	£12,000
6	Data collation & analysis	Contractor	June 2012	£2,400
7	Report preparation	Contractor	July 2012	£2,400
8	1 Day session (x3 DMGs) – Data interpretation & decision making	Contractor	August 2012	£2,400
9	Project appraisal & review	CNPA/SNH	November 2012	na
				£21,600

* Based on contractor rate of £300/day

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 It is suggested that the next step is for appropriate staff in SNH and CNPA to meet to discuss the above proposal and to agree the best way forward. Relevant staff may include Donald Fraser SNH Operations Manager), Iain Hope (SNH Wildlife

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Officer), Mike Cottam (SNH Best Practice Officer), Fiona Morris (CNPA) and Will Boyd Wallis (CNPA).

Annex 1 Map Showing Indicative Area of Heather-Dominated Habitats



