

West Lochaber Deer Management Group

Second Meeting with Railway Operators ref Steam Train Fire Control Measures and Impacts to Adjoining Land

Wednesday 8th May 2019

10.30 – 11.30hrs

SNH office, Torlundy & Site Visit to Tom-Na-Faire depot

Minute

Attendees:

Alistair Gibson - WLDMG Chairman, Glenfinnan
 Bruce Taylor - WLDMG Secretary, Fassfern
 Paulo Berardelli - Glen Mamie
 Andrew MacMaster - SNH
 Cathy Mayne - Ecological consultant, Ardnish
 Gary Servant - Ecological consultant, Arisaig
 Ian Stone - Network Rail
 Gary Maxtone - Network Rail
 Dan Fedriksson – NWR
 Ian Helstrip NWR
 Stuart Grey – Riley & Son
 Ian Riley - Riley & Son
 Colin Robb – Fire Scotland

Apologies:

Peter Stewart- Sandeman - Ardnish Estate
 James and Ann MacNaughton - Glen Mama Farm
 James Colston -Arisaig
 Alan Currie – Fassfern
 Finlay Clark - ADMG

No.	Summary	Action
1	<p><u>Apologies and Introductions</u></p> <p>As recorded above. Andrew thanked the attendance for effort to make meeting, some from NWR having travelled a distance.</p> <p>Glen Beasdale SSSI/SAC is an Upland Oak assemblage which has been assessed by SNH in 2017 as being in “Unfavourable Condition” due to fire, herbivore browsing and non-native species (rhododendron). The aim is to get recovery via collaboration by all involved.</p> <p>A map was circulated to show the extent of fires this year to 24/04/19. The open hill coverage is evident but under tree canopy does not show so well. Ground truthing shows all areas to be burnt.</p> <p>First fire is 11th- 12/04 80-100 acres at Glen Mamie, 6pm. Second 18th April at Lochailort/Princes Cairn and third on 24th Arnipol. Others recorded on 9th April, West of Princes Cairn and 22nd April Arnipol. No fires recorded after 24th April.</p>	

2	<p><u>Representations</u></p> <p>Fire brigade Wildfire risk is currently high in very dry conditions. Uncontrolled burning of grazings/hill ground as well as Easter increase in tourism . Start of steam train season implies increased numbers of people and higher fire risk; not necessarily caused by train. Evidence from 2018 and 2019 satellite imagery suggests the fires were not caused by the steam train although, over past years, there is a link of 50% to steam train activity. Fire brigade does not operate in woodland/forestry = owners responsibility. Landowners collaboration to control. Aim is to drive down risk of fire. So diesel days and private vegetation control are ways of achieving this. Arisaig/Mallaig area has been an area of risk for a long time via muirburns. Fire brigades are legally obliged to respond to call outs unless previously notified that it is a controlled burn and only one or two calls from public. No fires start naturally in this area.</p>	
3	<p><u>Network Rail</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. WCR fire truck WCR vehicle is marked and staffed by WCR personnel. The Fire truck will follow train when assessments are high. When diesel working then fire truck not used as it is a first line of defense 2. NR recorded fires since last time / fire risk assessments showing diesel days so far this year (provided/available) Diesel days started from 19th April when steam train started, pushing train from back. Known to be drier than last year so mitigation measures taken on most days to date. Records presented of fire risk. Second train starts next week which then must run only with a diesel locomotive in high fire risk periods. 3. NR recruitment of off track team/priority veg areas for this year (in progress) Network rail recruited from off track via Ian who has a team of 4 (5 intended) based in Fort William who can do cut & burn of rail sides on West Highland Line. Also same size of team in Crianlarich. Can control invasive species such as rhododendron via cut & burn mainly as bushes currently over 4 feet tall. Follow up by chemical methods required in following years which the team will attend to with assistance from specialists on steep ground. Survey of rhododendron intended. Smaller sites can be handled by FW team but larger sites will need a specialist contract squad and collaboration with landowners. Will take few years to get back to invasive free rail sides after a period of inactivity. 4. Fire brigade access to tackle fires Communication required between Network Rail and Fire Brigade on active fires where trains need to be stopped or slowed down. There is procedure = caution and stop. Caution = if people are on or near line = fire brigade. Stop allows others to be involved. Contact NWR and use mileage post reference. Or use TrackLocator app to give references within 15m of railway (available in android and IOS and can be found in PlayStore). Fences can be cut for access and repaired immediately by NR afterwards. 	

4	<p><u>Discussion:</u></p> <p>Main causes of fire, if not the train, to be identified and addressed eg barbecues, camp stoves and controlled burnings. In past the rail side was constantly burned when steam trains ran regularly. Reducing combustible material is a way of minimising fires. New woodland increases risk as more combustible material created = increased insurance and cost, or abandoned schemes .</p> <p>With Scottish Government pressure to get woodlands established and the SSSI/SAC into Favourable Condition there needs to be further thought given to means to reduce fire risk arising from all sources. Native habitats and woods may not be there for future generations if we do not act.</p> <p>No Fires signage in lay-bys and public areas could be erected? By who ? Catching people fire raising is difficult. But creating an environment that there are criminal consequences could deter potential fire raisers.</p> <p>Peter Stewart-Sandeman, pre-meeting, sent a YouTube video of fire associated with steam train for all to review in the light of past fires: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4lt64mXNS4</p> <p>Improvements in procedures made in the past 8 months will hopefully make this a less common occurrence.</p> <p>The importance of a strategic approach and chemical control of Rhododendron was highlighted by SNH, the Ecological consultants and others. It was agreed chemical treatment post cutting and follow up chemical control treatment was imperative to for effective control. SNH also stated one of the reasons Glen Beasdale SSSI is in unfavorable condition is due to presence of Rhododendron.</p>	
5	<p><u>ACTIONS COVERED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Team of 3-5 men provided by Network Rail ex Crianlarich may carry out vegetation control. Priority areas to be identified and proposals to be discussed at next meeting ✓ Exotics - Network Rail to consider with specialists and report via SNH ✓ Fire reports - monthly log to be maintained by Network Rail and distributed to stake holders. ✓ Satellite update to track fires in Glen Beasdale area -SNH ✓ Mapping of fire locations reported in other areas - SNH ✓ Signs on West Coast Rail follow vehicle with contact number to be considered ✓ Rail operators to be proactive in dealing with fires and mechanisms that are available to reduce fire risk and introduce any new or improved engineering solutions. ✓ Stats for April 2019 will be brought to next meeting. (Steam trains start again on Good Friday = 19th April. ✓ Fire service representative to be invited to next meeting on the 8th of May <p><u>NEW ACTIONS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future meeting of all parties to be organized to collaborate on control of rhododendron • Network Rail, SNH and Landowners work collaboratively / strategically to eradicate Rhododendron on the SSSI. 	<p>NR</p> <p>NR NR</p> <p>SNH SNH SNH</p> <p>WCR WCR NR</p> <p>ALL</p>

6

Date of Next Meeting:

Wednesday 6th November 10.30am at SNH Torlundy. (Steam train operations finish on 19th October for season)

Site Visit

Thanks to Network Rail, Riley & Son and West Coast Railways for the site visit opportunity and explanation of the steam train's systems for limiting sparks and fire risks associated with their operations. Main sources of sparks = chimney, ash pan (with hopper) and train's cast iron brake blocks on wheels (all trains have this issue). Stuart Grey gave a detailed explanation of how the sparks in the front smokebox, below the chimney, are effectively diminished by a cast iron plate, cinder guards and circulation before being expelled as dust.

