



Trustees' Annual Report
for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

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: Tigh A'chiobair, Ord, Teangue, Isle Of Skye IV44 8RN.

The Trustees during the review period were:

Eileen Armstrong
Roger Cottis
James Merryweather
Lindsay Thatcher
Robert David Ware
Melanie Watt

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:

SLEF.

Mammal instruction courses continued this year, with a focus on pine martens. Subsequently, advice about pine marten den box siting was given to a member. Trail camera footage revealed potential cat attacks on a female marten could have led to young kits dying.

Continuing from the previous year's mammal instruction courses, the badger element continued to reveal interesting observations, which were recorded on trail cameras. Significant activity showed an increase in sett size with holes being added at two locations. Footage revealed one of the resident pair of badgers was half erythristic, which was a genetic trait not seen before.

One of our Trustees who is a specialist in ferns organised a walk on 2nd September 2023 to instruct Members on local fern species. A total of seven Members attended and a variety of habitats were visited. The finer points of identification were seen by all. During the walk several other interesting wildlife subjects were also recorded.

Following a new collaboration between Loughborough and Keele Universities with the view of taking the 'Fifty Years of Litter on Skye' (50YOLOS) project forward by way of a social inclusion element, SLEF was approached by Keele University to work in collaboration with Keele academics via the Keele Active Partnership Programme (KAPP). SLEF's role was to: hold the funds and administer payments for the project, contact other potentially interested parties around Skye for beach clean information and participation in interviews and publicise the project and questionnaires through social media via the SLEF website and Facebook page. The project was due to be undertaken throughout 2024.

Together with a supplementary report submitted to the Scottish Government on 23rd November 2023 illustrating the current status of bird populations which would come into conflict with a proposed windfarm in south Skye, a document illustrating infrasound stress levels in certain mammals was also submitted.

During the year, SLEF continued to publish its regular newsletters with articles relating to environmental issues across the region. SLEF members, Trustees and other environmental groups and interested individuals contributed articles and photos on a very wide-ranging selection of environmental topics across the region.

SLEF also continued to publicise environmental events and issues of both local and wider interest through social media. A number of films made by one of our Trustees were added to the SLEF You Tube channel.

South Skye Seas initiative (SSSi).

SSSi is the marine surveying arm of SLEF. It is a member of the Coastal Communities Network (CCN), a community led network of local groups committed to the preservation and safeguarding of Scotland's coastal and marine environments. A member of SSSi sat on the CCN Council, and 3 members attended the 2-day CCN gathering at Gartmore, for a very useful networking event.

In May, one of our members attended a training event in oyster regeneration with Seawilding and Caolas.

Also in May, thanks to the generosity of William Grant funding, a mobile pontoon was purchased for use with the boat that is made available to us for surveying. This has improved accessibility and safety and made surveying by GoPro and ROV much easier. Two trips were undertaken in June, with a previously recorded seagrass bed revisited.

In June, the decision was made for SSSi to split from SLEF. Unfortunately, this was necessary as SLEF was unable to obtain any insurance whilst it undertook marine activities. Funds donated specifically for marine surveying have been allocated to SSSi, but remain in the SLEF bank account where the Charity's payment controls will still be in place. The marine survey equipment will remain in SLEF ownership, but on permanent loan to SSSi (now renamed Skye Seas Surveys Initiative).

The Scottish Salmon Think-Tank (SST-T)

SST-T has been an arms-length body within SLEF, which challenges the ecological, environmental, social and economic sustainability of open net salmon farming.

Over the period 2023-2024, the SST-T has continued to oppose salmon farming in nets in the sea by objecting to applications for new farms and extensions to existing farms. SST-T has maintained email and Zoom conversations with other coastal community groups via the Coastal Communities Network and the Salmon Aquaculture Reform Network, Scotland and has attended meetings (mostly online) with NGO's such as WildFish and Our Seas and with Statutory Bodies such as SEPA and NatureScot.

SST-T members have written articles for publication and letters to newspapers while creating teaching and publicity aids, and have also held dialogues with politicians, informing them of our views.

In June of 2023 it was unanimously agreed by all trustees that SST-T would separate from the Skye and Lochalsh Environment Forum to allow the group to maintain its stated aims and therefore be wholly independent from SLEF.

Approved by the Trustees on 22nd December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Roger Cottis
Chairman.