

Appendix 1: The Atlantic hazel woodland audit brief

Assynt Field Club
Atlantic Hazel Woodland Audit Brief
27th February 2017

Contact: Ian Evans
(Recording Officer: Assynt Field Club)
assyntwildlife@gmail.com
Tel: 01571 833241

1. Introduction

Assynt Field Club invites bids to audit the extent and condition of our existing Atlantic hazel woodland in the area of Assynt and Coigach, prepare a report and assist in the presentation of the findings to the public.

Bids should be submitted to Ian Evans via email (assyntwildlife@gmail.com) by 5:00pm on 15th March 2017

Please supply a total price to complete the work, along with an estimate of the number of days involved.

We envisage the project's budget being in the region of £5,000 - £7,000 and include a minimum of 40 days work

The funding for this project is being provided through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) as part of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP).

We will choose a contractor within one week of the closing date. The project will commence on **Monday 3rd April 2017** and is scheduled to complete by the **30th September 2017**.

Before commencing the successful contractor must show a copy of their:

1. Risk Assessment detailing the risks involved, and how such risks will be minimised.
2. Proof of Public Liability Insurance.

2. About the organisation

Assynt Field Club (AFC) was founded in 1986 and is run by a committee of dedicated volunteers. The Club is a constituted group, whose aims are to encourage the study and enjoyment of the Assynt landscape, geology and wildlife. It organises talks and other events in the winter and field trips in the summer. Members participate in a variety of surveys, many of which have resulted in reports or publications. Membership, which is currently around 130, is free and open to all. Funds are raised by donations at meetings and from the sale of publications. AFC has no employees. Members receive circulations in spring and autumn, by e-mail or post, with a programme of events and a summary of recent wildlife observations.

3. Project Background and Description

The Atlantic Hazel woods are one of Scotland's most ancient woodlands. People have made use of the hazel in Assynt and Coigach in many ways over thousands of years. They are important for a whole range of connected species but in recent years they have not been doing very well for a variety of reasons. We know that many of the old hazel stools show little or no regeneration; they are aging and will die if not protected from grazing.

In Assynt, hazel has been recorded from 77/164 tetrads, mainly in the north and west of the parish where it is an important component of our coastal woodland. There is no comparable survey for Coigach. There will be records within the Forestry Commission Scotland and SNH and the now defunct North Highland Forest Trust. Hazel has probably been present in the CALL area, and therefore an important part of our landscape, for over 9,500 years. It has now been recognized as the dominant tree of a climax woodland type, Atlantic hazelwood, which occurs along the western coasts of Scotland and Ireland (Atlantic Hazel: Scotland's Special Woodlands by Sandy and Brian Coppins (2012) published by the Atlantic Hazel Action group). SNH advisory information leaflet; Atlantic Hazel – Scotland's Special Woodlands also highlights the threats.

This project aims to identify the extent of hazel woodland in Assynt and Coigach, where it is and what condition it is in. We envisage most of the work will be in Assynt as that is where most of the hazels are, most of the existing information and most of the volunteers exist. We would aim to map and catalogue all major stands of hazel and to assign an index of importance based on the presence/absence of key indicator species and assign an index of the threats each stand faces. We will search existing records and data bases and consult Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) for information and advice.

In doing so we hope to raise the profile of this important habitat locally and further afield, promote a better awareness of the habitat and instil a sense of pride and local identity, which together with a better understanding about the health and condition of this habitat will allow for better future management decisions to be made.

The project will be coordinated by a steering group of members from the Assynt Field Club and others and delivered mainly by a paid field surveyor. The steering group would set the terms of reference of the project and line manage the field surveyor.

An important part of the project will also be the use of volunteers. Volunteers would be involved in doing a bio-blotz on some of the core and best area of hazel stands. There would be opportunities for volunteers to work alongside the contractor and get on site training in identification.

The findings will be written up in a report, summarized in a free public leaflet and also fed back to the community in a series of public presentations, field trips to the best areas, a leaflet and a public day of celebration for the hazel.

4. Details of work

A/ Desk Based Research

- Collate existing information (from a variety of sources) on Hazels in Assynt and Coigach and other relevant details
- Identify potential volunteer surveyors living close to good hazel patches.
- Map the occurrence of hazel at 1km square level, marking up a 1:50,000 map with assessments of three levels of abundance e.g: present, but only as isolated or scattered trees/ localised clumps or groves/extensive areas of hazel woodland from existing data sources where possible.

B/ Fieldwork

- Supplement and ground truth the 1km hazel distribution map produced and identified as part of the desk based research.
- Identify ten key sites in consultation with the steering group and focus detailed fieldwork, involving volunteers, on these ten specific sites (Mostly in Assynt but at least one in Coigach)
- Detailed fieldwork to include percentage cover of hazel within a stand, dominant habit, pole density (stems/ha), structural class, distance from coast, soil pH, proximity to water course, niche suitability for

expansion, percentage of dead hazel wood, number of seedlings and regenerating poles, indication of basal shoot suppression and other factors to be discussed with steering group as appropriate.

- Detailed fieldwork to include index of biodiversity using key species (e.g. epiphytic lichens and other species to be discussed with steering group).

C/ Reporting & Public Engagement

- Prepare a detailed report summarising the results with appropriate maps and suggestions for future management.
- Prepare a simple short leaflet precis of the report in plain English for the public.
- Assist the steering group in presenting the findings at two public meetings.
- Assist the steering group organise a family day of events celebrating our hazel trees.
- Assist the steering group in running two field trips for the public.

GENERAL CONDITIONS:

Supervision

The Contractor will be responsible for the management of their own time but will consult regularly with and take direction from the steering group (which consists of four members of the Assynt Field Club). The contractor will be responsible for all the work being carried out within the timeframe and within the budget.

Volunteers

The contractor will from time to time be required to work with volunteers.

Access and permissions

The steering group and local volunteers will assist with getting required access from local landowners and tenants as appropriate for the contractor. However the contractor must check that this has been done prior to site visits.

Insurance

The Contractor shall satisfy us that during the whole period of the contract they are covered by insurance in respect of liability for injury of persons, animals, or damage by fire or otherwise to- the landowner, or any third party.

Health and Safety at Work

The Contractor shall carry out all work in a safe manner and prepare, and submit to the Steering Group for approval, -a written risk assessment for site visits.

Submission

A quotation must be received by Ian Evans via email (assyntwildlife@gmail.com), by mid-day by 5:00pm on 15th March 2017.

Invoicing

Contractors should submit invoices periodically (according to an agreed timeframe) to the Scottish Wildlife Trust for time spent /work completed and confirmed by the steering group.

12. Evaluation Criteria

The applications for tender will be assessed on

1. Technical ability of the contractor
2. Previous experience of undertaking similar work
3. Quality and clarity of the response to this brief

4. Ability to do the work within the stated timeframes

5. Value for money offered by the proposal

For any questions or points of clarification please contact Ian Evans.

Ian Evans

Assynt Field Club steering group

27th February 2017