



Minutes
from the
Bracken Control Group meeting
held as part of the event in
The Ingram Valley, Northumberland
on
20th June 2019

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The meeting was held in Ingram Village Hall and included a site visit in the Ingram Valley.
- 1.2 The Attendance List, which includes Apologies & Guests is at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 As guests were invited to attend, an emphasis was placed on discussing bracken control issues rather than governance of the Bracken Control Group.
- 1.4 John and Ross Wilson of Ingram Farm were thanked for their help in setting up the meeting. Northumberland Estates were thanked for giving approval for the visit to the bracken control plots.

2 Asulam

- 2.1 For the benefit of the guests, the history of the development of Asulam was outlined.
- 2.1 The usage statistics for Asulam produced by the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) for the last 20 years were presented.
 - 2.1.1 Over the last 6 years to 2018 on asulam had been applied by helicopter to average of 5,000 ha of bracken.
 - 2.1.2 If the area of bracken in the UK is 2 million ha, the treated area represents 0.225% of this.
 - 2.1.3 Bracken is thought to expand at the rate of 2-3% p.a. Therefore, the current treated area is much less than the annual increase through expansion of bracken stands.
- 2.2 Registration of Asulam & Asulox
 - 2.2.1 The application for the registration of the active substance (Asulam) is still being processed by the EU authorities. A decision is now not expected before mid-2020. The requirement to carry out [Endocrine Disruptor \(ED\) Assessment](#) has been added to the process and this is delaying the decision.

The Heather Trust, PO Box 7749, Lochmaben, Lockerbie DG11 9AE

Coordinator: S P R Thorp BSc(Hons) CEnv MRICS

Tel / Fax : 01387 723201

Email: info@brackencontrol.co.uk

Web: www.brackencontrol.co.uk

- 2.2.2 After registration of the active substance is obtained, an application for registration of the product will be required. This is likely to take up to two years to process.
 - 2.2.3 On these timings, it is likely that approval for Asulox will not be achieved before mid-2022.
 - 2.2.4 Therefore, if Asulam is to remain available without a break, three more successful applications for Emergency Authorisations (EA) will be required.
- 2.3 Emergency Authorisation
- 2.3.1 The dates included in the 2019 EA were confirmed. Asulam can be applied from 1st July. The EA period ends on 16th September and the use-up period continues until 31st October.
 - 2.3.2 An application for the 2020 season is in preparation. The intention is to submit this in mid-July to allow it to be considered at the meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticides, on 24th September 2019. **Action: Simon Thorp**
 - 2.3.3 To support the application, more detail about usage of asulam is being gathered and UPL will provide a position statement to summarise the progress of the registration process.
- 2.4 In discussion, it was suggested that the timings of the season and restrictions on the use of Asulam owed as much to tradition as scientific assessment. When registration is achieved, there will be an opportunity to review the current arrangements; these might not change but it would be beneficial to have an up to date assessment of all the issues.

3 Aerial Application of Asulam

- 3.1 Three of the aerial contractors were represented at the meeting.
- 3.2 There were concerns that the area for spraying was reducing; it is getting harder for landowners and managers to commit to bracken control, which requires a long-term commitment. The uncertainties surrounding Brexit, and the future of agri-environment funding, made it difficult to commit to a long-term programme of work.
- 3.3 While the benefits from controlling bracken are widely recognised, due to the high initial cost, little aerial spraying will take place without grant funding. Until the future of agri-environment schemes is known, the aerial contractors are expecting to find it more difficult to find work.

4 Future grant aid support for bracken control

- 4.1 The Bracken Control Report

- 4.1.1 The concept of this report was introduced during the meeting. It is proposed as a high-level summary of bracken control issues from a BCG perspective.
 - 4.1.2 More detail could be developed on specific topics under the umbrella of the report, if requested or proposed by BCG members. This could be developed into guidance.
 - 4.1.3 The main target audience will be policy makers in government and other organisations. The report, or extracts from it, may be used as part of the EA application for 2020.
 - 4.1.4 Adapted / tailored versions could be produced for different purposes. This might be relevant for the governments in other parts of the UK.
 - 4.1.5 The report will also be valuable for the developers of the agri-environment schemes.
 - 4.1.6 The report will be drafted and circulated for comment to members of the BCG and other key people for comment and input. **Action: Simon Thorp**
- 4.2 Bracken control issues, and the work of the Bracken Control Group, has already been discussed with the Environmental Land Management Team in Defra. This team is developing the Environmental Land Management system that will be introduced from 2024.
- 4.2.1 The Bracken Control report can be used to promote the work of the Group with those developing agri-environment schemes in other parts of the UK.

5 Alternatives to Asulam

- 5.1 Roy Brown gave a presentation about the National Bracken Trials that have been running since 2012.
- 5.2 Highlights:
 - 5.2.1 The trials covered 32 sites on a range of habitats.
 - 5.2.2 Work on most sites has been completed, but final survey work will take place on some sites in 2019.
 - 5.2.3 Several different pesticides, with some variation of strengths, and some mixtures of chemicals have been included in the trial.
 - 5.2.4 No follow-up treatment was carried out and the trials do not consider bracken in woodland or as part hedgerows. An analysis of the impact on soil mesofauna¹ has still to be completed.

¹ Soil Mesofauna are invertebrates between 0.1mm and 2mm in size, which live in the soil or in a leaf litter layer on the soil surface. Soil mesofauna feed on a wide range of materials including other soil animals, microorganisms, animal material, live or decaying plant material, fungi, algae, lichen, spores, and pollen.

- 5.2.5 In the trial results, Asulam comes out top when considering efficacy and impact on non-target species.
- 5.2.6 It is essential that the products are applied correctly and in the right conditions, to achieve the results reported in the trial.
- 5.2.7 A comprehensive summary of the trials will be published, this summer.

6 Secondary treatment of Bracken

- 6.1 Roderick Robinson gave a presentation that emphasised the importance of secondary treatment (follow up) as part of a bracken management strategy.
- 6.2 Highlights:
 - 6.2.1 Re-growth is guaranteed after any initial treatment of bracken.
 - 6.2.2 Treatments of re-growth are a vital part of all bracken-management.
 - 6.2.3 There are a range of different management strategies: grazing management, containment, releasing and clearance.
 - 6.2.4 Follow-up by chemical spot treatment had been provide to be effective but this technique is not approved under the Emergency Authorisations.
 - 6.2.5 Complete clearance by primary treatment is not possible. At 98% control, there will be ~1 frond/m² the following year. This will increase in subsequent years in proportion to the number of dormant buds on the rhizomes.
 - 6.2.6 Pre-cutting the bracken, prior to chemical treatment, is thought to reduce the amount of regrowth.
 - 6.2.7 Bracken management and vegetation recovery require a long-term approach - there is no quick-fix. Sufficient resources must be allocated to complete the full control programme.

7 Other Bracken Management Issues

- 7.1 There was support for the proposal that the approach to the management of bracken should be reviewed and brought up to date.
 - 7.1.1 New techniques should be considered that include a proposal for a more joined-up approach between the different techniques.
 - 7.1.2 There may be benefit from combining control techniques and/or using different techniques during separate stages of the control programme.

- 7.2 Drones are seen as having potential and will provide another tool for survey and/or chemical application. Currently, drones are not authorised to apply chemicals.
 - 7.2.1 The UMG will support further developments.
 - 7.2.2 This cannot happen until data is provided to allow chemical application by drone to be authorised.
- 7.3 Other uses for bracken are often identified and these can provide a source of income to cover harvesting, processing and distribution costs. It is difficult for the BCG to support these initiatives, as often they can only function successfully on a local basis.
 - 7.3.1 Composting bracken has proved to be the longest lasting commercial use, but several schemes have failed.
 - 7.3.2 In some areas, the rising cost of bedding straw has renewed interest in using bracken as an alternative.
 - 7.3.3 Techniques to compress bracken for use as a fuel have been developed and the 'brackettes' sold commercially.
 - 7.3.4 Extracting bioethanol from bracken is possible but difficult to get to a commercial scale.

8 Historic England

- 8.1 Tom Gledhill provided some background to the bracken control project that the plots at Ingram are part of.
- 8.2 The project covers:
 - 8.2.1 Continued monitoring of mechanical and grazing treatments at Ingram Farm,
 - 8.2.2 A new set of chemical treatments at Fawdon Farm (adjoins Ingram Farm) in collaboration with Roy Brown,
 - 8.2.3 A new set of chemical and mechanical treatments at Challacombe Farm, Dartmoor,
 - 8.2.4 New methodology for monitoring impact on earthworks using a drone, and
 - 8.2.5 A new trial using drone-mounted RGB camera to monitor bracken.
- 8.3 During the site visit, discussion took place on the plots that had been subject to mechanical and grazing treatments.
- 8.4 It was pointed out that as the work was a trial limited amount of treatment work had taken place. If the aim had been to control the bracken, a more intensive treatment regime could have been used.
- 8.5 Ingram Farm has organic status, and therefore, a combination of chemical and mechanical treatment was not an option.

9 BCG Administration

9.1 The actions from the Minutes of the last meeting that was held on 26th September 2017 were reviewed (see Appendix 2).

9.1.1 The actions allocated to CRD had produced an exchange of e-mail messages but the issues will best be addressed as part of the proposed review of bracken control issues discussed earlier in the meeting.

9.1.2 There had been no further news about discussions about the SPO and NAAC that Stuart Ring was addressing. An update will be sought.

10 Any other business

10.1 Historic England is organising a bracken conference in October. Details have to be confirmed, but the likely format will be a site visit to the bracken control plots at Challacombe, Dartmoor on Monday 21st October, followed by a conference in Exeter, on 22nd October. Details will be circulated when available. **Action: Tom Gledhill, Simon Thorp**

11 Date of Next Meeting

11.1 There was support for the meeting format to be repeated and this will be considered, when planning the next meeting of the Group.

11.2 In view of this, it is likely that the next meeting will include a site visit and be held in late June 2020. Offers to host the meeting will be welcome.

Bracken Control Group Meeting – Ingram Valley – 20th June 2019
Attendance List

Name		Organisation	Replacements
Roy	Brown	R&D Applied Biology (North Yorks)	
Peter	Hall	Polo Aviation (North Somerset)	
Bruce	Morton	UPL Europe Ltd (Cheshire)	
Geoff	Hailstone	UPL Europe Ltd (Cheshire)	
Tom	Gledhill	Historic England (Northumberland)	
Duncan	Glen	Landmarc (Wiltshire & UK)	
Andrew	McGillivray	Skyhook (Scotland))	
Colin	Palmer	Confor (Herefordshire)	
Jo	East	Heli-Lift Services (Oxfordshire)	
Roderick	Robinson	Landward Consultancy (North Yorks)	
Simon	Thorp	BCG Coordinator	
Tracey	Ware	CRD, Pesticides Policy Team	
Cécile	Smith	Scottish Natural Heritage (Edinburgh)	
Anne	Gray	Heather Trust (Dumfries-shire)	
Gillian	Dinwoodie	Scottish Water (Edinburgh)	
Lauren	Dixon	Scottish Water (Edinburgh)	
Bob	Cussen	Natural England (Northumberland)	
Apologies			
Alastair	Burn	Natural England (Peterborough)	Bob Cussen
Andrew	Midgley	NFUS (Edinburgh)	
Duncan	Bogie	CRD (York)	Tracey Ware
Mike	Davies	MD Air Services (Shropshire)	
Eddie	Eastham	National Sheep Association (Worcestershire)	
Don	Pendergrast	UPL Europe Ltd	Bruce Morton, Geoff Hailstone
Jacqueline	Tait	Scottish Water (Edinburgh)	Lauren Dixon
Dafydd	Jarrett	NFU Cymru (Gwynedd)	
Alastair	Leake	Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (Leicestershire)	
Fraser	McAuley	Country Land & Business Association (London)	
Ian	Purnell	Polo Aviation (North Somerset)	
Carmel	Ramwell	Environmental Scientist, FERA	
Stuart	Ring	Heli-Lift Services (Oxfordshire)	Jo East
Grant	Stark	CRD (York)	Tracey Ware
Ian	Willoughby	Forestry Commission (Surrey)	
George	Winn-Darley	Moorland Association (North Yorkshire)	
Simon	Gibson-Poole	SRUC	
Ross	Wilson	Ingram Farm (Northumberland)	
Guests			
Stephen	Crees	College Valley Estate (Northumberland)	
Tony	Fisher	CRD, Efficacy Team	
Nicholas	Mason	North York Moors NPA	
Colin	Matheson	College Valley Estate (Northumberland)	
Barry	Neill	CRD, Pesticides Delivery Team	
Hamish	Waugh	Effgill Farm (Dumfries-shire)	
Rebecca	Wilson	Ingram Farm (Northumberland)	
John	Wilson	Ingram Farm (Northumberland)	

Actions Summary – BCG Meeting, 26th September 2017

Ref	Details	Action by
2.2.1	Basis for adopting 1 July as season start date	CRD
2.5.3	Dilution rates in Forestry	CRD
3.3.5	Registration of aircraft under SPO & NAAC	Stuart Ring