



Barrahormid Trust Trustees' Annual Report

1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025



Barrahormid Trust

Scottish Charity Number: SC052849

Registered Office:

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Our Mission

- Protect and restore the unique natural habitats on the Barraholm Estate and surrounding areas on the Tayvallich Peninsula, Argyll
- Provide land or buildings for rural or affordable housing, or for rural enterprises, to those in need
- Create opportunities for people to experience and be inspired by the nature on Barraholm Estate

Charity Trustees

James Fraser

Victoria Fraser

Tabitha Fraser

Hamish Fraser

John Aitchison

Stan Phillips (from 1 September 2025)

Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document

The charity is set up under a formal constitution which sets out the purposes of the charity, the structure of the board and the powers of the trustees

Trustee recruitment and appointment

The founding trustees are four members of the Fraser family, and a representative of the local community on the Tayvallich peninsula, John Aitchison. John Aitchison is a double Bafta and Emmy winner for his work both as a nature documentary producer and cameraman. John films wildlife around the world, but one of his favourite subjects are the otters that play on the sea shore outside his front door.

In addition, from September 2025, we are delighted to welcome to the board of trustees, Stan Phillips, who brings significant ecological expertise to the charity. Stan had a long career at NatureScot and its predecessor Scottish Natural Heritage, and is an expert on Scottish Rainforest, and in particular its bryophytes.

Achievements and performance

On 25th March 2025, the Barrahormid Trust was able to conclude the purchase of an additional 432 acres of land from Highlands Rewilding (HRL).

This comprised two parts of the original Tayvallich Estate which were split off from the rest of Barrahormid when we purchased the Estate in 2024, but historically have always been part of the farm. “The Isles” comprises the five islands to the South West of Carsaig Bay; Eilean Dubh, Eilean Traighe, Eilean nan Coinean, Eilean Fraoich and Leth Sgeir; and “Central Tayvallich”, a strip of land down the Tayvallich Peninsula between the public road and Linne Mhuirich.

These areas include further important habitats including a former arctic tern colony on the islands, marsh fritillary habitat and coastal marsh along Linne Mhuirich, and An Grianan or “The Puddle” noted for its wildfowl including 1% of the UK’s whooper swan population in the autumn. The land adds parts of a further two SSSI’s to the Trust’s holdings which already encompass two other SSSI’s and an SAC which shows the importance of the area for wildlife and nature.

Environmental management plan

During the year the charity has made good progress on the development of the management plan for the estate. This first step to this plan, which is being developed by expert ecologists at Highlands Rewilding, was to carry out detailed “base-line” surveys of all the habitats and species on our land. These surveys were completed by May 2025 (see table below) and not only help determine the proposed management approach for each area, but will also allow us to measure the impact of our conservation and restoration efforts over the coming decades.

Survey focus	Survey	Details	Status
Biodiversity: habitats	NVC	National Vegetation Classification of plant communities, complete spatial coverage	Complete, processed
	Habitat condition sampling	Targeted quadrat-based surveys to assess condition of specific habitats	Complete, processed
	Woodland censuses	Complete spatial censuses of 1 ha of woodland, recording tree locations, diameters, heights and species	Complete, processed
	Grassland surveys	Quadrat surveys for species presence & % cover, sward height & % bare ground. Additional area level characteristics (% bracken, damaged ground) & condition assessments.	Complete, processed
	Peatland surveys	Peat depth and condition assessments at 194 points.	Complete, processed
	Saltmarsh surveys	Transect and quadrat surveys of 2 saltmarsh sites, 3 transects at each, recording saltmarsh zone, species, % bare ground, sward height, grazing intensity and herbivore present	Complete, processed
Biodiversity: species	Bird transects	Early and late season breeding bird transects using BTO methodology	Complete, processed
	Acoustic monitors (birds)	26 Audiomoths deployed for 1 month during summer to detect birdsong, on grid pattern	Complete, processed
	Acoustic monitors (bats)	2 Audiomoths deployed for one week to detect bat calls	Complete, processed
	Marsh Fritillary	Surveys of Marsh Fritillary habitat distribution, and of species presence	Complete, processed
	Invertebrates	Malaise & pitfall traps deployed in 9 locations across 3 months, with manual sorting and DNA metabarcoding of catches	Complete, processed
	Soil eDNA	17 samples to capture soil fungi and invertebrates across a gradient of woodland condition	Complete, processed
	Field Voles	Quadrat surveys for Field Voles signs in four areas.	Complete, Processed
Potential for reintroductions	Beaver feasibility	Survey to assess habitat suitability for beaver translocation	Complete, processed
Management	Thermal drone survey	Thermal imaging to capture deer numbers	Complete, processed
	Community engagement	Community baselining and engagement on work to date	Complete

Figure 1: Baseline surveys carried out by Highlands Rewilding

With the base-line surveys complete focus turned to specific management actions which centre around the following:

Woodland Regeneration

A core objective of the Trust from the start has been to regenerate large areas of native Scottish temperate rainforest, one of the rarest habitats on the planet, joining up existing fragmented remnants of rainforest on the peninsula and at Taynish NNR. Importantly the new woodland areas will not be a blanket coverage of the land, but have been carefully considered to create and conserve a patchwork of different habitats.

The base-line surveys have identified the areas which are suitable for woodland, and conversely where there are ecologically sensitive features which should be kept clear of scrub and tree cover through grazing.

For example, a significant proportion of the Trust's land is designated as a SSSI for marsh fritillary habitat or as dragonfly "assemblage" which indicates healthy wetland ecosystems. Juniper scrub and coastal marshes are other designated features which require careful management and prevention of formation of tree cover.

Consideration has also been given to ensure that a network of paths and tracks used by walkers and visitors to the estate, viewpoints over the surrounding area and sensitive geological or archaeological sites, are kept open. Leaving these "rides" and other areas of woodland open also ensures that there is a maximum amount of woodland edge and light-filled glades which support significant biodiversity as the trees mature and the canopy closes over within the woodland.

The resulting draft woodland regeneration plan, see Figure 2, covers 530 acres and will require approximately 500,000 native trees. The project's thorough approach reflects a commitment to integrating woodland creation with conserving existing ecosystems. By refining buffer zones and respecting sensitive habitats, the woodland expansion seeks to achieve a balanced outcome that enhances

woodland cover, while safeguarding biodiversity. This approach aligns with broader environmental goals, including climate adaptation and the protection of Scotland's unique natural heritage.

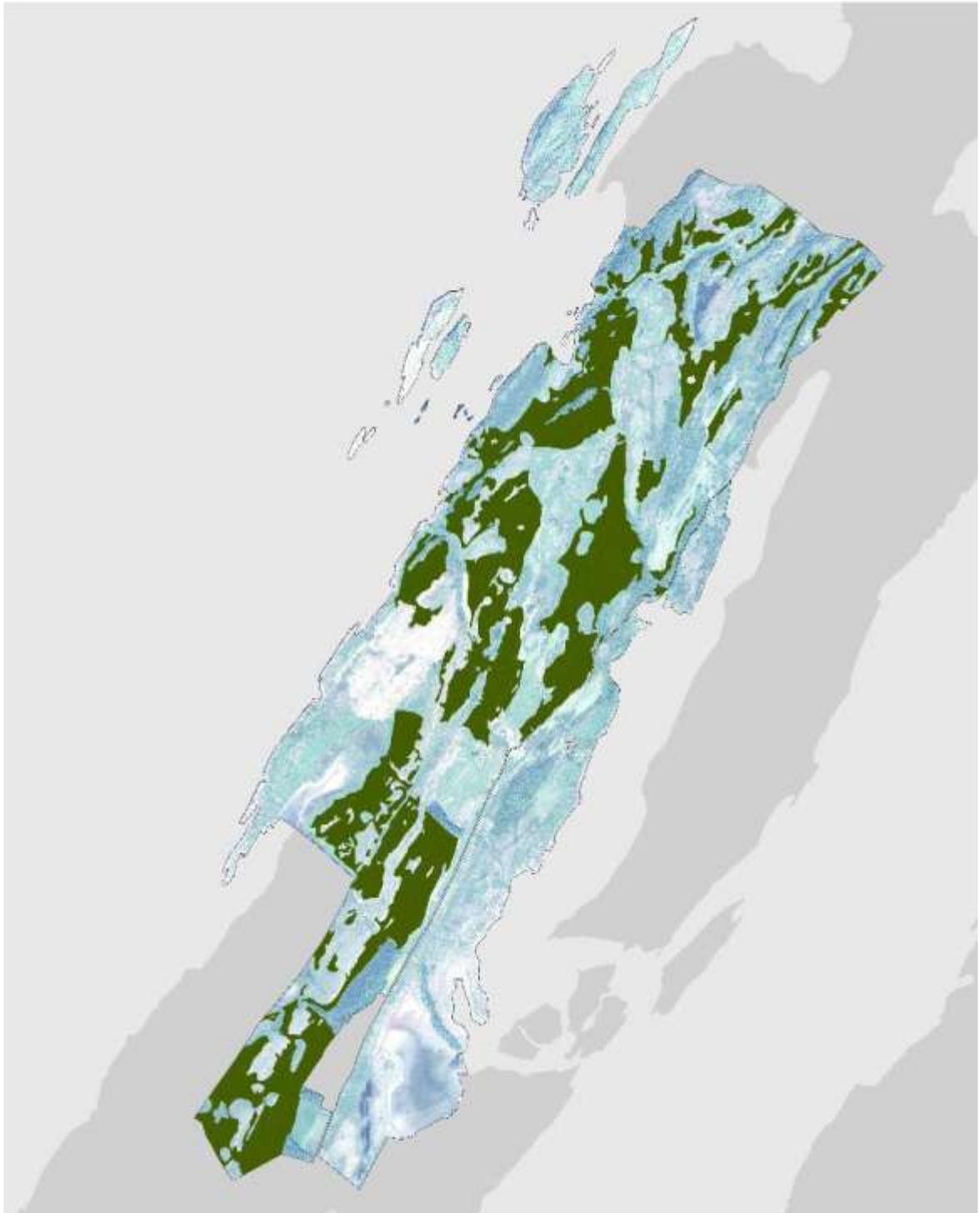


Figure 2: Draft plan of woodland regeneration

The plan is currently being reviewed by various organisations including Scottish Forestry, NatureScot, Argyll and Bute Council, Rural

Payments, and RSPB. Given the many important sites for nature on the Trust's land the approval and funding of the plans is always going to be a slow process. The Trust is also keen to limit the use of deer fencing to protect the new trees, and this means that deer numbers must be significantly reduced before planting can begin.

In advance of that the Trust has been making preparations for the woodland planting by seed collection, removing the non-native and mature conifer plantations on its land, managing bracken, and reducing over-grazing from deer.

Seed collection of native trees from the local area will begin in early 2026 and continue through next year. Using locally sourced seed is important to preserve the genetic heritage of the trees and to ensure they are ecologically adapted to the site thus help them establish quickly. The seeds will be grown by a specialist nursery starting towards the end of 2026.

The **conifer** plantations – mainly sitka spruce – have reached “terminal” height which means that their root system can no longer support the height of the tree, and makes them susceptible to being blown over. Unfortunately, the only way to extract the timber is through Tayvallich village which wasn't designed for heavy lorries. Highlands Rewilding have proposed using half size lorries fitted with a central tyre inflation system to minimise road surface wear, and after consulting with the local community, hope to be able to carry out this operation in late 2026 outside the tourist season.

Bracken is a native fern and a natural component of many woodland ecosystems. However, on open ground and deep soils it has a tendency to dominate which can suppress tree growth and colonisation by other species. The presence of bracken is a good indicator of soils which are suitable for trees, and some ecologists believe it is an indicator of areas of lost woodland.

Barrahormid has extensive areas of bracken as shown in Figure 3. To manage the bracken where possible the Trust is using a roller twice a

year to squash the stems. This reduces the density and rate of growth of bracken which should help the new trees thrive while they grow above the level of the bracken fronds. Total eradication is not the aim (nor possible), as bracken remains a native species which itself supports certain invertebrate species.

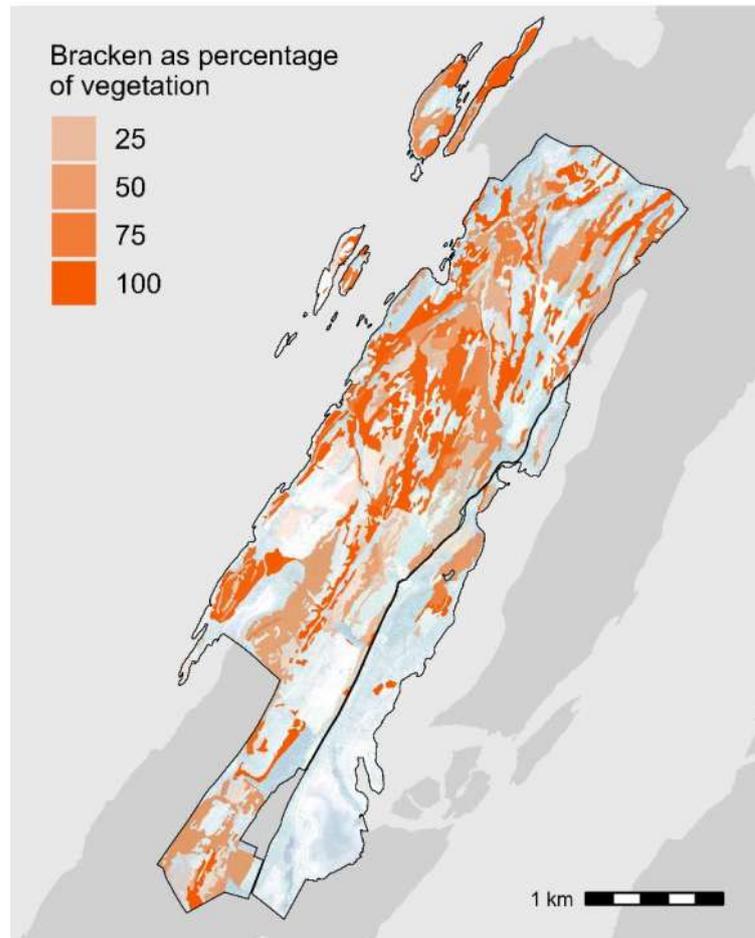


Figure 3: Bracken Coverage at Barraholm mid

Like most of Scotland, Barraholm mid suffers from extensive overgrazing by **deer**. NatureScot states that “The negative impacts of excessive deer numbers can be seen throughout our forests – from preventing new trees from growing to damaging existing woodland. We need to expand our forests and woodlands if we are to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, but it is simply not possible to do this if the high densities of deer are not tackled.”

To address the overpopulation, the cull of deer at Barraholm mid has been significantly increased in the last 18 months from 19 in 2023, to

57 in 2024, and 55 in the first three months of 2025. However thermal drone surveys continue to show very high populations of deer, and so the cull will be increased further in 2025/26.

The Trust is also supportive of a local community initiative to expand the **deer larder** at Barrahornmid. This will enable more deer to be culled on the estate, and will allow the supply of high-quality venison to local residents, pubs and restaurants, rather it being sold wholesale to game dealers thus reducing food miles.

Conservation Grazing

Sensitive grazing of the Trust’s land is vitally important to preserve many of its designated features, habitats and species, and to help improve its biodiversity. For example, the wetlands, fens, salt marsh, juniper and grassland all need to be grazed at the right level to maintain and increase their value to wildlife. Too little grazing and the land can become dominated by rushes and rough grasses, and eventually closed canopy forest. Conversely over-grazing will result in a mono-culture of grasses.

Livestock mix is an important consideration. The estate has been largely grazed by sheep in the recent past with a flock of about 600 breeding ewes. Sheep are more selective than cattle in picking out the most nutritious plants and as a result tend to eat the flowering plants in preference to grasses, reducing biodiversity. In other areas a mix of sheep and cattle may be desirable to produce the right habitats. It is possible to control the grazing of cattle but not sheep through the use of GPS “No-fence” collars, and much

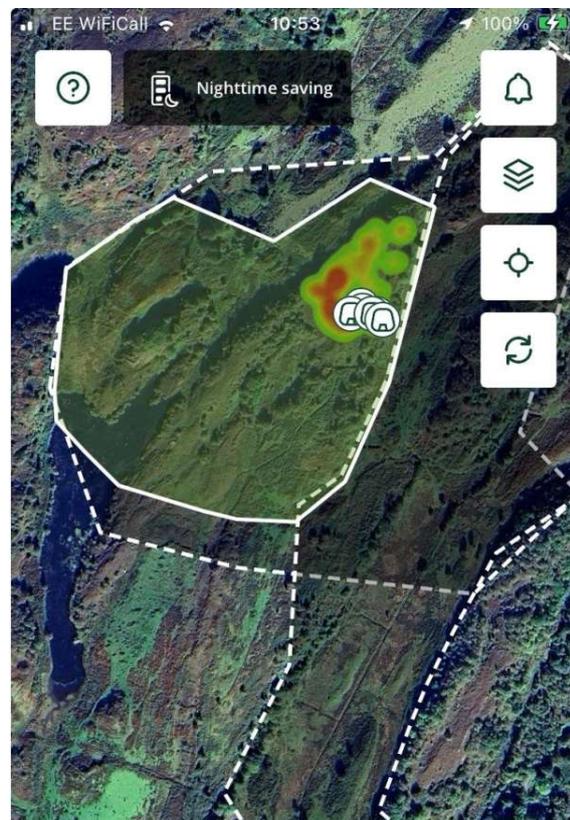


Figure 4: No-fence app showing the location of the cattle, their virtual boundary, and a heatmap of their grazing

easier to contain them within electric fencing. This allows them to graze near areas of tree planting without having to erect more permanent livestock fencing.

Finally grazing at the right time of year for the right length of time is another important factor. “Mob-grazing” - grazing intensely in an area for a short period, often has positive biodiversity effects relative to low level grazing over a long period. Some areas of the estate are sensitive to grazing at different times of year – eg to encourage marsh fritillary butterfly its food-plant, devil’s bit scabious, must be allowed to flower and set seed. Boggy areas might become trampled and poached in the winter with over grazing but benefit from being grazed by cattle in the summer.

To address all these constraints and complexities, and to ensure that the farming on the Estate remains a viable enterprise, Highlands Rewilding have developed a detailed grazing management plan. This involves a reduction in the sheep flock to around 200, and an increase in the cattle herd. The cattle will be controlled by either the GPS collars or electric fencing to keep them within defined areas.



Figure 5: Erik Riddell, the Estate's farm manager, presenting the grazing plan to local farmers, August 2025

The plan divides the Estate into ten zones, and defines the time period, the livestock and the intensity of grazing in each one (see Figure 6). The plan is still under consultation but should be phased in over the next two years.

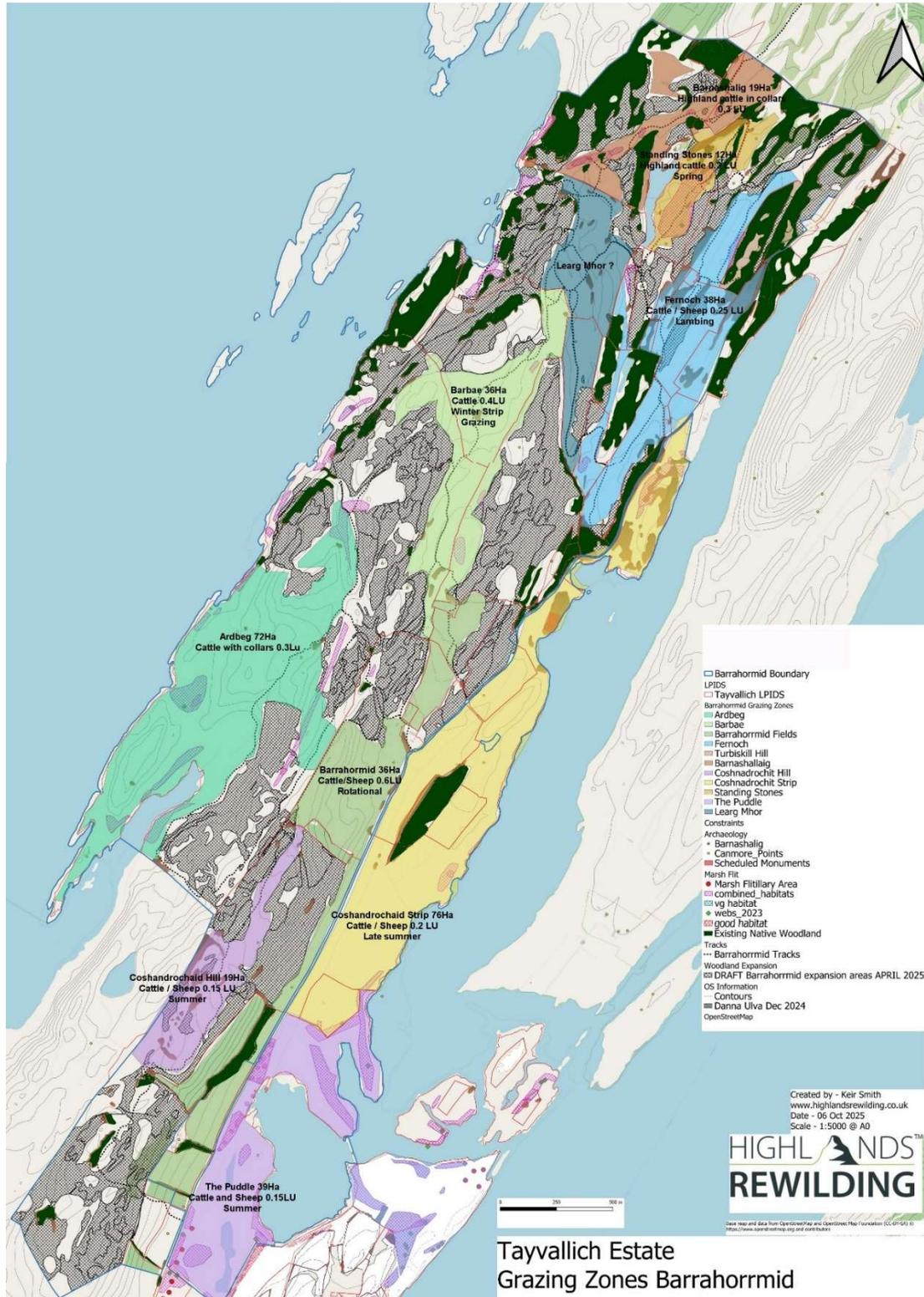


Figure 6: Summary of Grazing Management Plan

Abandoned properties restoration

Alongside the Trust's objective to restore the natural environment on the Estate is its objective to support community development through repopulation of some of the abandoned settlements on its land.

There are at least eight of these old settlements on the Barraformid Estate which were occupied until well into the twentieth century. Only one of these, Barraformid Farmhouse, is still occupied currently by the farmer manager working on the land. The remaining properties consist of solid stone walls, many still with corrugated metal roofs.

The Trust plans to sell these empty buildings as affordable plots to buyers who will renovate them themselves with the hope that buyers will establish a rural enterprise on the surrounding land and buildings, and thus recreate a thriving local community.



Figure 7: Buildings at Lower Fernoch

The Trust developed initial plans for the renovation of eight properties in four settlements at Drimnagall, Barbae, Lower Fernoch, and Upper Fernoch in 2024 and sought pre-application advice from Argyll and Bute Council and NatureScot. The feedback was largely positive, and so with a few suggested amendments the plans were submitted for Planning Permission in Principle in spring 2025.

Unfortunately, despite the Trust having submitted detailed proposals for retaining existing bat roosts and building new bat roosts in each of these buildings, the Council would not consider these until the Trust had carried out three sets of summer emergence surveys. This has delayed the application and at the date of writing this report, the Trust is still waiting for the feedback from the bat surveys and the Council's approval of the planning application.

Community Engagement

Community engagement throughout the process of baselining and management is a core part of Highlands Rewilding's approach. Direct engagement on the results and plans presented here has occurred with a range of stakeholders, and with members of the local community during a public meeting on the 31st of January 2025.



Figure 8: Jeremy Leggett of Highlands Rewilding presenting the plans to the local community

This meeting included a drop-in event during the afternoon and presentations and Q&A during the evening, with several members of HRL staff and many community members in attendance. Targeted

engagement with NatureScot, FLS, neighbouring landowners and other interested parties has continued in the months since, with outcomes shaping management and monitoring plans.

The Trust, with the help of Highlands Rewilding, has also run various other engagements with local groups including a talk on the grazing management plan in August (see photograph above) and a talk on bats, their conservation and how to survey them, followed by a practical demonstration of bat surveying using hand-held detectors. Both were very well attended.



Figure 9: Community bat surveying demonstration

Financial review

Review of the year

The Charity was delighted to receive a further large donation from the Fraser family as a permanent endowment that, together with the cash remaining in the endowment from the previous year, allowed it to acquire the additional land. The endowment is now 100% invested in the estate at Barrahornmid.

Other donations received in the year allowed the charity to build up its unrestricted reserves to be used to cover the administrative costs of the charity. This took the surplus in unrestricted funds to £37,055 which puts the charity in a strong financial position

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

It is the charity's policy to always retain at least six months' operating expenses as unrestricted reserves. This allows the charity to raise additional funds if it encounters unexpected costs, or to reduce its expenditure in a controlled way if necessary.

Future plans

Over the coming year the trustees hope that it will make further progress on the initiatives described above – in particular that the woodland planting plans, the grazing management plans, the deer larder and the planning permission in principle for the abandoned properties will be approved by the relevant bodies. All of these plans are complicated and require approval from numerous bodies, and so this is expected to take some time.

Following this, the Trust, with the support of Highlands Rewilding, can proceed to implementation.



Figure 10: View looking North along the West Coast of the Barraholm Estate