

Questions and discussion following talks by Hugh Fullerton Smith (Alladale), Philip Ashmole & Hugh Chalmers (Carrifran), and Alan Watson Featherstone & Liz Balharry (Glen Affric and wild boar grazing experiment)

Q = Question A = Answer S = Statement

Q. to Hugh Fullerton Smith: Ramblers Scotland recognise the benefits of the Alladale project but have concerns at the perimeter fence. If you could do the Alladale project without the fence would you?

A. It would not be possible without a fence. I can understand people's reservations about access. We need to underpin the restoration work at Alladale with the needs of a scientific experiment.

Q. What animals could be reinstated at Carrifran?

A. The focus is on habitat restoration – that is the priority, especially given the need to conform to grant criteria. In looking at potential animals:

First option is pig – such as a boar experiment.

Lynx would help deer control

Wildcat is a possibility

We also need to think more about the influence of other predators at Carrifran: eg. Fox, pine marten, polecat

Q. What were the conditions attached to business donations to Carrifran?

A. Carrifran's work and objectives has not been compromised in any way by donations from any sector. Lloyds TSB made a generous donation following an inadvertent and incorrect claim that it had already paid for planting many trees at Carrifran! Carrifran has also benefited from a large private donation that has covered the cost of propagating all the trees planted at Carrifran.

S. Scottish Natural Heritage has had some reservations about planting certain parts of the valley at Carrifran, but overall it has been flexible about the ecological change being orchestrated at Carrifran, in spite of the fact that the whole area is included in an SSSI.

Q. Is there any natural regeneration at Carrifran? If not why not?

A. In and around Carrifran there are only small and isolated patches of native woodland surviving in very steep and craggy terrain, so there is a very limited source of local seed. Furthermore, few trees will regenerate in a closed sward. We have avoided planting in some small parts of the area where there is potential for natural regeneration. Regeneration at Carrifran includes scatterings of Rowan and a few Ash and Birch.

S. For an example of natural regeneration in the Borders, the Craigdilly project is of note, involving 35 years of native woodland developing in an enclosure without and planting, at heights up to 550m. It consists largely of Rowan.

Q. Can projects like Carrifran help persuade the public that heavy grazing across large parts of the landscape is socially unacceptable?

A. We need to recognise that attitudes are long-lasting and will endure through current generations. Farmers are still hooked on their subsidies which are a strong influence on their actions.

S. How often do we need to prove the worth of regeneration and different grazing regimes?

Q. How and why did the wild boar at Glen Affric target pine tree roots?

A. Maybe there was restricted choice in the tight enclosure? All ages of boar went for the pine tree roots, and this activity wasn't noticeably seasonal. (Statement from Alldalae project: Alladale finds more attention from the boars on pine tree roots in the Spring.).