Highlands Rewilding Update

Financial Year April 2025 – April 2026

HIGHLANDS™ REWILDING

Founders Introduction

I need to introduce our report on the 2025-26 financial year (1st April to 31st March) with a little history. It begins on the last day of the 2022-23 FY, when Highlands Rewilding achieved something momentous. That day, we became the first ever nature investment of the UK's development bank, then called the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB: now the National Wealth Fund). UKIB loaned us £12 million from the public purse. The purpose was to acquire the Tayvallich estate, a veritable wonderland in terms of readiness for nature recovery and community joint venturing.

It was a risky thing for us to take on. Very. We did so only after deep consultation with our shareholders. That resulted in a clear "fortune favours the brave" mandate from the most experienced of our founding funders. So we took the plunge. Our primary goal was to create space for major private financial institutions to invest further, with equity. It was, and is, a major objective of both the Scottish Government and our embryonic industry to raise such investment.

Without it, nobody will be able to take nature recovery to the national scale needed if we are to reverse biodiversity collapse. Highlands Rewilding tried to lead the way. We hoped, in particular, to attract a pension fund or two to invest. There is no point in having a pension if the future you are retiring into is unlivable.

By the end of the 2024-25 financial year, it had become clear that we were "too early", or so our financial institution targets told us. Entering the 2025-26 financial year, it was clear we would have to change tack, fast. And so we began a major pivot under fire: a switch to an "asset light" model where we would lease land for nature recovery from landowners other than ourselves. We had to find buyers for our land assets who would hopefully be happy to enter into such partnerships with us. We also had to try and sell all the buildings on the land we owned to local community interests, not to out-of- country second home owners. This quest dominated the past year.

In brief, it ended in success. We sold 83% of the land we bought with the UKIB loan and previous equity we raised to three buyers who we are now happily partnered with, doing what we would have done had we continued owning the land. We sold all 19 homes on this land either to local buyers, or tenants buying their homes, or to "returners" wanting to live in the region they came from, or to rewilding supporters undertaking their own nature-recovery projects. In terms of benefits for nature and local communities, we achieved a far better outcome than the one that would have unfolded under other buyers, had we not acquired Tayvallich.

We finished paying back the loan on 22nd September 2025. It would not be fair to pretend that a successful outcome was plain sailing. It came about with two important caveats. The first involved luck. We could pretend it was easy finding nature-loving landowner partners. It wasn't. Luck figured large. The second was the stress that our high-wire act inevitably caused in the households of the team members and local community individuals sweating on a good outcome.

Recognising this, the first thing I need to do is express gratitude in the extreme to those who soaked up that stress, alongside me. We achieved a very worthwhile outcome in the end, and I do so desperately hope that all involved

agree with me that the reward has been worth the risk and the stress that accompanied it.

The second thing I need to do is to apologise to those investors who advised me to begin selling all the assets the moment we acquired them. Only a minority advised this, but they were right. I and my team reasoned that if we kept the built assets, in particular, we would be able to help change collective corporate thinking on nature recovery by dint of life-changing residential retreat experiences. That didn't work.

Alongside our debt repayment in 2025-26 we have sought to raise equity from investors other than major financial institutions. This we did, bringing in over £1,800,000 against a target of £1,500,000. This sum will enable us to make good progress with delivering the land management plans we have mapped out for our land-management partners, to develop a sales pipeline for premium carbon (carbon-plus-biodiversity-plus-community-benefit), and to continue vital land and water science data gathering and analysis. You will read about that progress in the pages to come.

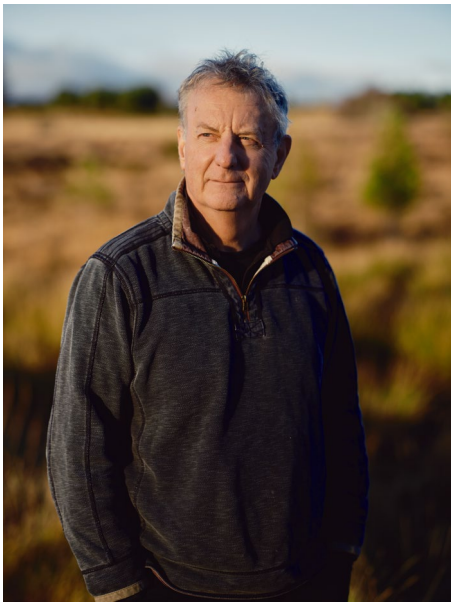
We will continue to fundraise until cash flows from natural-capital monetisation kick in on the scale needed to make us self-supporting. How we intend to do that in 2026-27 and beyond involves an innovative new strategy that you will be hearing a lot about in the weeks and months ahead.

But first, let us remember what the Highlands Rewilding team achieved in the field in 2025-26.

With gratitude, as ever.

Jeremy Leggett

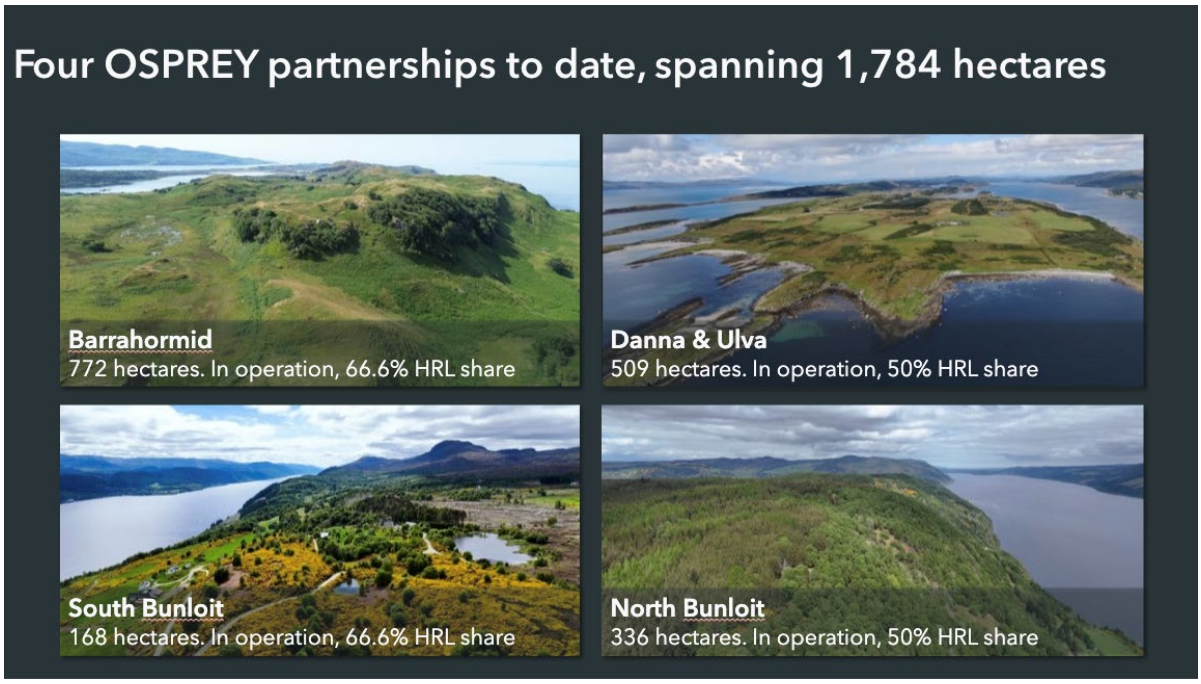
Founder, Highlands Rewilding.



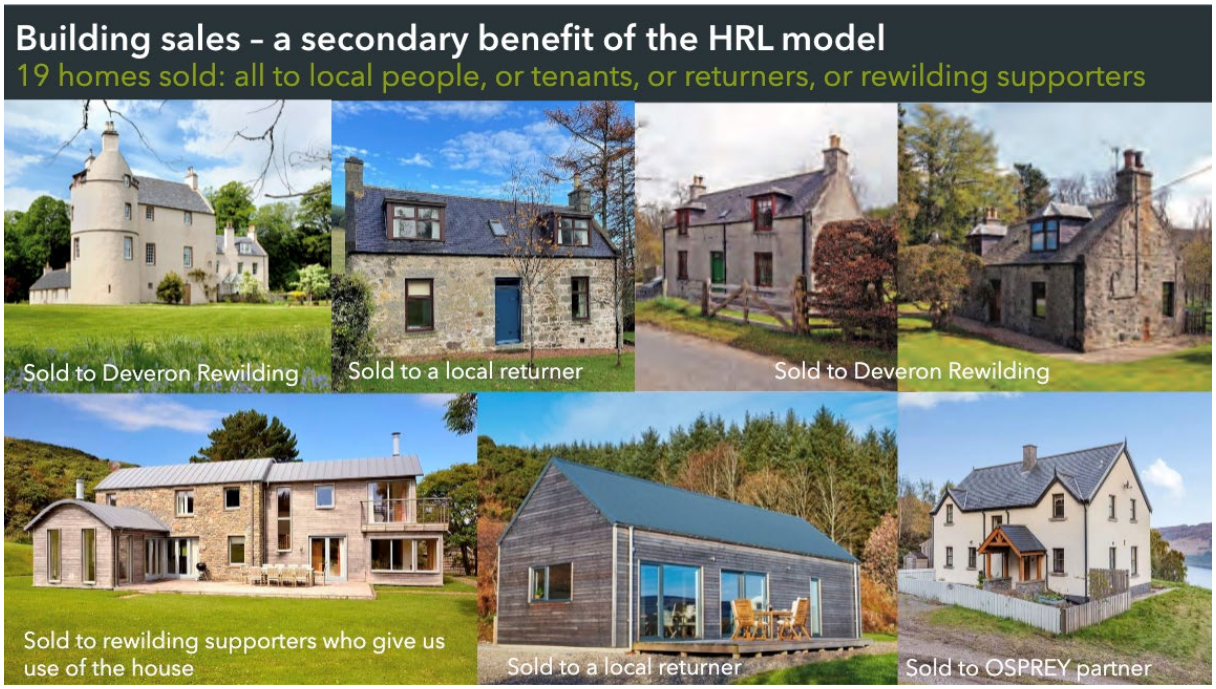
Land sales & OPSREY partner update

The Beldorney estate was sold to Deveron Rewilding.

The 2 areas we manage are now split into 4 separate estates: North Bunloit and South Bunloit above Drumnadrochit, beside Loch Ness; and Barrahormid and Danna & Ulva in Tayvallich, Argyll



The buildings were split out of the estates, some were given rural housing burdens, and we sold them to rewilding supporters, locals or returners.



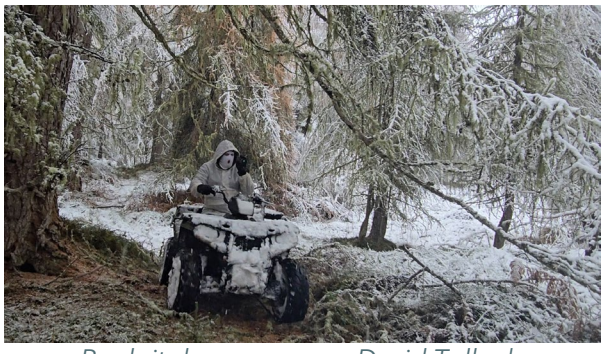
Operations, monitoring and research

In addition to ongoing estate maintenance activities and general land management tasks, the following major operations, monitoring and research activities have been carried out over the last year:

BUNLOIT

Deer management

Despite increased deer management across the Bunloit estate, the third annual thermal drone survey, carried out in January, showed the deer population is still above the level needed to allow existing woodlands to regenerate and newly planted young trees to survive and grow. We also carried out the annual Woodland Herbivore Impact Assessments in late winter across several woodland areas to monitor the effect of the deer on vegetation, and these confirmed high browsing pressure. As a result, deer management is targeting key areas and effort is increasing where possible.



Bunloit deer manager, David Tulloch

In both Bunloit and Tayvallich, the deer population is now dominated by the non-native Sika deer, which appear to be out-competing the native Red and Roe deer. Our research into Sika deer was published in the British Ecological Society's Ecological Solutions and Evidence journal as part of our contribution to the understanding of the impact of this species on Scottish habitats.

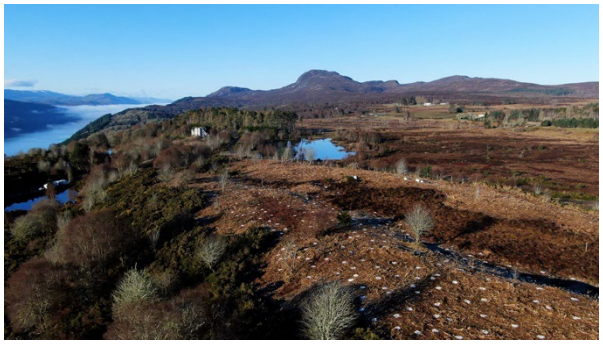
South Bunloit New Wood

Following a thorough review of baseline data across Bunloit Estate, an area of 18.25 hectares in South Bunloit was identified as suitable for native woodland expansion. This area is currently dominated by dense Gorse scrub, which presents a significant wildfire risk. Gorse thrives on the freely draining, acidic Brown Earth and Podzol soils present on site, and its nitrogen-fixing properties will have left the ground in an improved state for tree establishment once cleared. The Gorse also provides good habitat for invertebrates, birds and other species, and so our plans sought to balance these benefits with control of the wildfire risk.

The planting design features a diverse native species mix including Oak, Birch, Scots Pine, Hazel, Rowan, Alder, Willow and Hawthorn, selected to match local soil and climatic conditions and to strengthen habitat connectivity with neighbouring woodlands. A 2,915-metre deer-proof perimeter fence is being erected to protect young trees from browsing pressure and this will form a 30.2-hectare enclosed site, which will be comprised of a mosaic of the new woodland, remaining scrub patches and areas of pasture.

Ground preparation is primarily Gorse clearance with a light and manoeuvrable remote controlled mulching machine (the Flailbot Excel Stage V / T4 Final), which will not harm the existing native

trees already growing on the site. After planting, a biodegradable wool mulch mat is placed at the base of each tree to suppress regrowth of Gorse and aid tree establishment, with further strimming planned in years two and four to reduce the Gorse height and to allow the trees to grow.



Mulch mats at Bunloit protect some of the 33,000 native trees we're planting

A Forestry Grant Scheme application has been approved to help fund the fencing, mulching and planting costs and the project has been registered for the Woodland Carbon Code scheme to enable revenue to be generated from the carbon credit sales.

Felling at Bill's Plantation – peatland restoration & thinning

Harvesting operations at Bill's Plantation were carried out in early 2025. A 7.5 hectare clearfell was completed in an area of deep peat, with the trees felled and all brash removed from the site to allow subsequent peatland restoration (forest-to-bog). The remaining 20 hectares of plantation received a first thinning at an intensity of 20% canopy removal, carried out using a harvester on rack spacing set as wide as the terrain allowed, with healthy and structurally stable trees retained throughout. Quadrat locations have been identified within this area, to monitor the vegetation changes throughout the restoration process.

Bill's Plantation at Bunloit being returned to peatland

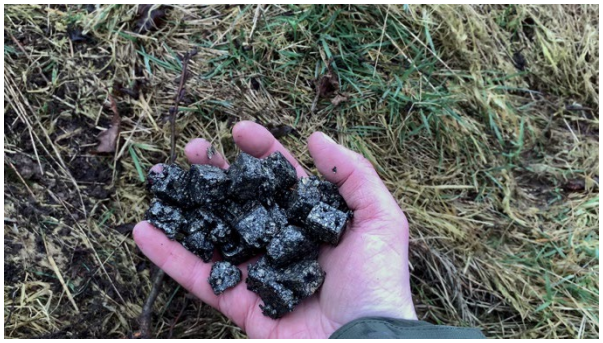
Upper Clunebeg – Windblow clearance following Storm Amy

A 23 hectare thinning operation was also carried out at Upper Clunebeg, North Bunloit. This was a second thinning to an area of Scots Pine, which had been previously thinned 10 years ago. Unfortunately, this area was badly damaged by Storm Amy in October 2025, with many of the remaining trees snapped and blown over. An amendment to the Forest Plan was subsequently submitted to Scottish Forestry to clear the windblown trees and clearance operations are currently underway. All lying windblow is being removed and remaining standing trees assessed for stability and either felled or retained as future seed trees. In the adjacent compartment (4.49 ha), containing a mix of Scots Pine and Sitka Spruce, all the non-native Sitka is being removed and the Scots Pine will be subject to a light selective thin.

Windblown trees at Bunloit

Clunebeg experiments

The mycorrhizal fungi experiment is continuing in the Clunebeg area of new native trees. As a reminder, half of this area has been divided into 30 plots, ten of which contain broadleaf trees planted with Rhizocore ectomycorrhizal pellets, a further ten of which contain the same tree species planted without pellets, and a final ten plots that have been left unplanted. In collaboration with the University of Oxford's Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, we are investigating whether the ectomycorrhizal pellets increase tree survival and growth. A Masters student from Oxford University visited Bunloit in September to measure all the trees and we are currently analysing the results.



Rhizocore ectomycorrhizal pellets

In the other half of Clunebeg, we are running a small deer deterrent trial. In some areas, young trees have been sprayed with Trico, a deer deterrent based on sheep fat, while in others sheep's wool has been tied to the trees. Additional areas have been left untreated as controls. Our results show that trees treated with either Trico or sheep's wool experienced less browsing than untreated trees, suggesting that both methods can help deter deer. However, in areas with particularly high deer densities, all trees were browsed regardless of treatment, indicating that these deterrents are only effective up to a certain level of deer pressure.

Moving the Great Glen Way

Work has begun to improve a 3km section of the Great Glen Way through Bunloit Estate, moving the route off-road and into woodland, peatland and rewilding habitats to create a safer and more immersive experience for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. This work is being led by the Highland Council, with funding from a joint project fund with Forestry and Land Scotland and Scottish Canals.

The Great Glen Way arrives in Bunloit

The upgraded path, constructed by Hitrak Ltd, specialists in upland path building, will guide visitors through young native woodland, established pine forest, upland blanket bog and regenerating habitats rich in wildlife such as Curlew, Crossbills and Red Squirrels, offering views towards the

local hill Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. We are delighted that this project is providing more opportunities for access to nature for both locals and long-distance path users.

Peatland restoration

Our peatland restoration plans are progressing again, following an unsuccessful application to Peatland Action for funding last year. The relatively small size of the restoration footprint is now working in our favour, as we are working with Peatland Action to enable Bunloit Estate to be used as a training location for contractors interested in undertaking peatland restoration works. This will allow the restoration to start this autumn and will provide a great opportunity to trial a few different restoration techniques on the Lon Mhor bog to the west of the Bunloit Road, and the forest-to-bog areas on the previously felled plantation at Tynaherrick and the felled area within Bill's Plantation. We will be monitoring the restoration with vegetation surveys and, to help with this, we received training on Sphagnum moss identification from Oliver Moore of Plantlife in March. This training day was offered externally and attendees from other local conservation organisations as well as HRL staff braved the worst weather that March can offer to learn all about these fascinating mosses, the ecosystem engineers of peatlands.

Managing the Wild Boar population

We are continuing our surveys of the Wild Boar population and the impact these animals are having on vegetation and ground disturbance. The thermal drone survey in January provided an estimate of the minimum population, with a total of 39 individuals counted. This count, combined with the regular camera trap surveys, showed a substantial increase in numbers and activity, resulting in particularly heavy disturbance on the pastures. As a result, we have undertaken a cull of a small number of boar for the first time this year and will continue to monitor their numbers and behaviour, as well as carry out the transect and quadrat surveys to assess impacts on vegetation.

Wild boar on Bunloit

Wood ant reintroduction

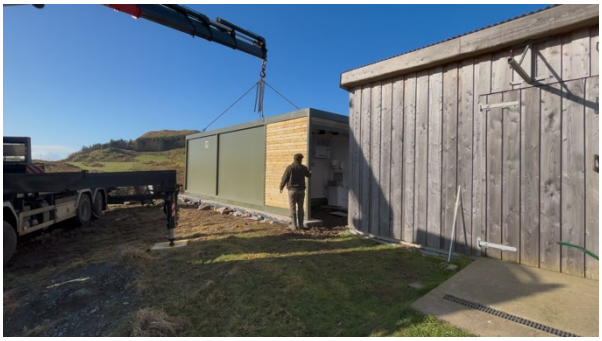
In April 2024, Hairy Wood Ant nests were successfully translocated into the Upper Lenie woodland in North Bunloit. Regular surveys have confirmed good levels of activity in two nests, both of which have now survived two winters. We have continued to carry out invertebrate surveys in the surrounding woodland, to assess how these reintroduced ecosystem engineers are impacting the resident invertebrate populations. Permission has been received to translocate two more Hairy Wood Ant nests from FLS land in April 2026 to further supplement the population and ensure sufficient genetic diversity.

Wood ants back in Bunloit

TAYVALLICH

Deer management

As at Bunloit, the annual thermal drone survey at Tayvallich has confirmed that deer populations remain too high to allow woodland creation and habitat restoration. To combat this, a new venison processing facility is being constructed at Barrahormid on Tayvallich Estate, funded by Scottish Forestry under the Forestry Grant Scheme Harvesting and Processing option. The facility is equipped for full butchery and packaging, with the existing larder being used to stored up to 30 deer carcasses. This represents a significant step-change in processing capacity, directly enabling Highlands Rewilding to scale up deer management activity across the estate. The facility will also deliver tangible community benefit, as venison will be processed to full food safety standards and supplied locally, with the Tayvallich Inn and Tayvallich Shop & Café already confirmed as partners. There is scope to develop a wider range of products including mince, steaks, sausages, and charcuterie.



New deer larder arrives at Tayvallich

Rainforest expansion planning

Extensive work has been carried out to review all the data collected in our baseline surveys of Tayvallich and map out the areas best suited for expansion of the temperate rainforest. In April 2025, we had positive site visits from both NatureScot and Scottish Forestry to discuss and further develop our plans. The next phase will be an extensive community consultation over the summer this year.

Felling of the non-native conifer plantations

There are several small, non-native conifer plantations that are ready for harvesting and need to be felled before they blow over. The timing of the felling

work is critical to avoid both the bird nesting season and minimise any disturbance to the Greenland White-fronted and Barnacle Geese that over-winter in Tayvallich. Following detailed correspondence with NatureScot, we have finalised a plan for the felling to take place in the late summer of 2026, after the bird breeding season but before the geese arrive back from Greenland. The road network in Tayvallich also provides a challenge for the timber removal and solutions to minimise disruption to the local community include utilising smaller vehicles and a timber storage area beyond the village. Permissions to fell the trees have been issued by Scottish Forestry.

Grazing

The grazing on Tayvallich will not change significantly until the plans for the woodland expansion are finalised and new fencing is in place. However, gradual improvements are being made and the small herd of Highland cows are now being managed using No Fence GPS collars. These collars enable the cows to be moved between grazing areas more frequently and in a more controlled manner.

The marine environment

Native Oysters

Highlands Rewilding's marine team has made progress in tackling the illegal hand gathering of Native Oysters (*Ostrea edulis*). Under Scots common law, the public right to gather shellfish does not extend to Native Oysters or Mussels. Native Oysters are regarded as private property, belonging either to the Crown or to individuals holding specific rights and their unauthorised collection constitutes theft. Within the Loch Sween Marine Protected Area, where Native Oysters are a designated protected feature, all forms of harvesting by hand, dredge or trawl are banned.

Protecting the Native Oyster (Ostrea edulis)

At Loch Sween, HRL surveys recorded fewer than 50 Native Oysters across a 6 km intertidal stretch, with no juveniles and only a few isolated individuals. A healthy population in an area of this size would be expected to support more than 100,000 oysters. These results indicate a biologically non-functional population. The absence of empty shells suggests that the decline is more likely to have been caused by illegal harvesting than by disease.

Following a presentation of the HRL findings and a series of discussions with the appropriate NatureScot habitat managers, the marine team is pleased to confirm that signage has been installed at intertidal access points around Loch Sween to inform visitors of the legal protections governing the collection of Native Oysters in Scotland. The installation of these signs was supported by the Friends of the Sound of Jura and members of the Tayvallich community.

It is hoped that the conservation measures being undertaken at Loch Sween by NatureScot, Highlands

Rewilding, the Friends of the Sound of Jura and the local community will help bring illegal oyster harvesting to an end and support the long-term recovery of this protected marine environment.

Native Oyster population dynamics surveys

In March 2026, the marine team started population dynamics surveys of the intertidal native oyster populations within the boundaries of the Tayvallich estate. Substrate data, along with oyster numbers and size, are being recorded using a timed plot search methodology, this allows for accurate site-specific population numbers. Once the surveys have been completed the data will be analysed using a Gunderson fisheries model to produce accurate estimates of the current in-situ population, and the potential size of a restored future population based on substrate coverage.

Initial findings at Ceann an t-Sailein suggest that a small, fragmented population persists on the Loch Sween side of Ulva. The greatest numbers were recorded in survey plots furthest from the main access point on Danna, suggesting an impact from hand gathering. Surveys to complete the Ceann an t-Sailein catchment are scheduled to commence again in June.

Population dynamic surveying will continue annually for the next three years to establish if the erection of the Nature Scot signage is having an influence on illegal oyster gathering activity.

Marine team discovery made during oyster population survey

During the March oyster population surveys, the marine team made a significant discovery: a substantial subfossil oyster bed in the upper circalittoral zone of Ceann an t-Sailein. Several live oysters and clocks (conjoined assemblages) were recorded within the bed, with settlements of up to six individuals.

The marine team will carry out a more detailed investigation to determine the full extent of the subfossil bed, assess whether there is evidence of reef formation, and establish how many live oysters are settled in and among the relic oysters. This finding could be highly significant to the native oyster research community, as no comparable examples have been recorded to date.

Seagrass habitat expansion trials

The marine team are excited to be working with Seawilding as they expand their successful seagrass restoration efforts by trialling transplantation methods at new locations beyond Loch Craignish. Loch na Cille, a small catchment west of Loch Sween, was identified by the team after thorough habitat screening and a restoration suitability assessment. The proposed site currently has a small healthy seagrass meadow and therefore the potential for further seagrass habitat expansion. Though outside this current reporting period, the first two transplants were undertaken during the first week of May 2026 with donor seagrass plants taken from Loch Craignish and planted by the team using the Seawilding transplantation methodology.

Seagrass meadows

It is hoped that the second phase of planting will take place in June. Light sensors above and below the trial plots have been installed to monitor light intensity. Taxonomists specialising in seagrass species from Queen's University Belfast will assist the Highlands Rewilding team with species biodiversity monitoring. As species colonise the trial plots over the next two years and the meadow ecosystem expands, we expect more species typical of seagrass. New species will be recorded and catalogued through 2026 and 2027 to assess restoration progress and environmental impacts.

Saltmarsh at Tayvallich

The HRL marine team will also be working closely with Glasgow University in a more unique form of biodiversity monitoring where underwater Hydro Moth© devices will be used to record the soundscapes of the developing seagrass meadows. The Hydro Moths© are an affordable, open-source, battery-powered acoustic logger designed to record sound underwater. They have been developed for environmental monitoring of marine life and aquatic habitats and will record the biological sounds of fish and invertebrates as they begin to colonise the new seagrass habitats.

The seagrass transplanting methodology has proved extremely successful during previous Seawilding trials at Loch Craignish and demonstrated high survival rates for the new plants with significant overall gains in meadow coverage. This marks a major advancement for UK seagrass restoration, which was previously very labour intensive, relying heavily on the successful germination of seagrass seeds. The new trials aim to test transplant methods in varied environments and determine whether donor material from Loch Craignish can thrive elsewhere, ultimately supporting the re-introduction of seagrass to areas where it has been lost.

General research

Highlands Rewilding was part of the consortium that delivered the Trustable AI in Mapping (TAiM) project funded by Innovate UK. The project concluded in April 2025 after developing new standards to assess the reliability of environmental AI algorithms. Highlands Rewilding's science team, strengthened by three Research Associates, conducted field surveys across Tayvallich, Bunloit and Beldorney estates. These surveys included detailed recording of the extent and condition of woodlands, grasslands, peatlands and saltmarshes. By capturing ecological characteristics that are hard to detect from satellite imagery, we provided a benchmark to verify AI outputs. The surveys also allowed us to research the types and sources of ecological survey errors, work that is currently under

review for publication in a scientific journal. Read our blog for more information.

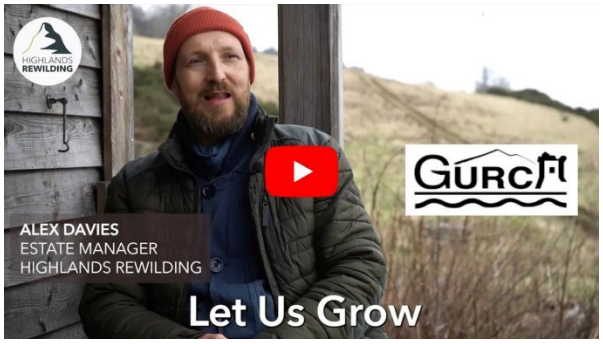
We've also hosted external projects on a range of environmental topics. In Tayvallich, researchers from Cambridge University have taken peat samples to analyse palaeoecological conditions; this will give us a rare insight into the environmental history of the area. Forest Research also included the estate in their project on the colonisation of planted woodlands by rainforest species – work that is complemented by two MSc projects we hosted last year on rainforest expansion and condition on Tayvallich, with more information on these in our blog here. Bunloit's Boar population is increasingly well-studied, with publication of a new paper on their effects on vegetation and soil carbon and ongoing work on local perceptions, both carried out by researchers from King's College London.

Community and engagement

Our work with local communities has continued apace with more people involved across the range of environments we manage. In many cases this is the result of long-term effort on both sides, and we look forward to further developments in the future.

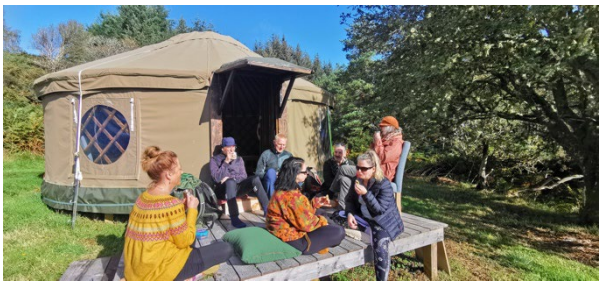
Community Joint Ventures and volunteering

The projects we set up with local people as Community Joint Ventures have been finding their feet over the past year. In Bunloit, the Let Us Grow project, in collaboration with the Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association, has been providing high quality, low-cost local food, along with opportunities for people to work together on regenerative horticulture. In the period March-December 2025, Let Us Grow recorded 127 participant attendances and nearly 320 volunteer hours. Its first harvest came in June 2025, and was distributed to the local 'Bite and Blether' events, the Care Centre, Community Food Larder and the Local Farmers' Market.



Estate Manager, Alex Davies introduces the Let Us Grow project. Click on image or here to play video.

The Mindfulness through Nature Connection project has also continued on Bunloit, led by the Highland Mindfulness Group and Nature 4 Health. A series of courses have been delivered, blending mindfulness with nature connection activities, and using our newly constructed Yurt to provide shelter and easy access to natural areas.

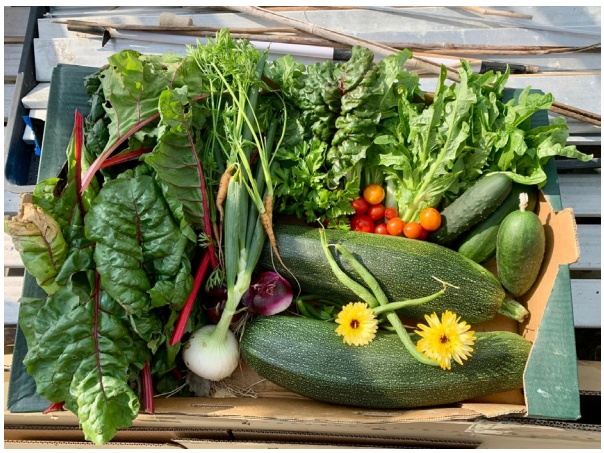


Mindfulness at Bunloit

Meanwhile, regular Bunloit Nature Days have allowed volunteers to get to know the estate and work on some of the restoration projects we have running.

Engagement programmes

Tayvallich Estate Local Management Board meetings have continued and always provide a valuable chance to discuss estate activities and their place in the community. We also had our inaugural South Bunloit Community Advisory Board meeting in March 2026. Ongoing informal engagement has also been added to with formal consultations on particular activities such as the new woodland planting on Bunloit and felling of plantations on Tayvallich.



Produce from the 'Let Us Grow' project in Drumnadrochit

Branching out into communities of Interest, we've had many visitors to Bunloit and Tayvallich over the year, including from other restoration organisations and regular university field trips, where students come to hear about our practical and scientific work.

Sharing the story of Loch Sween's Native Oysters with Tayvallich Primary School

The media and marine team had a fantastic afternoon recently at Tayvallich Primary School, where the marine lead had the pleasure of working with pupils and staff to explore the story of Native Oysters in Loch Sween—right on their doorstep.

It was inspiring to see such enthusiasm and curiosity from the students as they learned about the important role oysters play, not just in Loch Sween, but across marine environments more widely.

We're delighted that so many left feeling excited and motivated to help protect and restore what remains. With the passion and engagement of young people like those at Tayvallich, we're confident the HRL message of marine conservation will continue to grow.

Oysters and the Tayvallich Wildlife Club

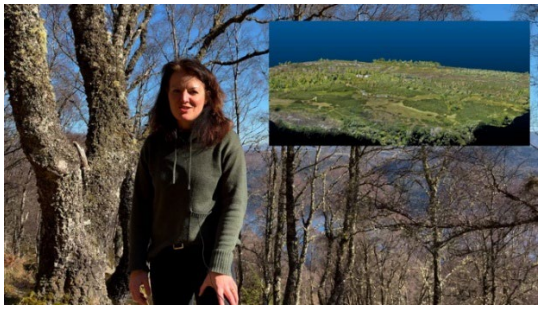
The new HRL, NatureScot and Friends of the Sound of Jura signs are now in place and the installation was made more meaningful by the enthusiastic involvement of children from the Tayvallich Wildlife Club. By inviting the children to take part, HRL helped turn the installation into a hands-on learning experience, giving them a direct role in protecting the marine environment on their doorstep. The message is simple but important: visitors to Loch Sween can now clearly see that these oysters are protected and must not be disturbed. Through their participation, the children not only helped put these protections in place but also gained first-hand insight into the importance of caring for local marine habitats. Protecting species such as Native Oysters depends not only on regulation, but also on awareness, understanding and a shared sense of responsibility.

Protecting Oysters on Tayvallich

Policy and development

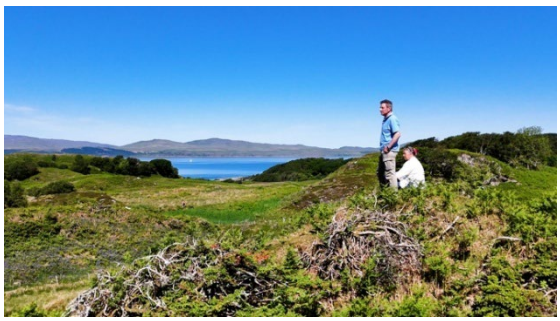
Throughout the year, HRL engaged in the Scottish Government's development of its Ecosystem Restoration Code through consultation responses and attending workshops, as well as with the development of the Biodiversity Credit Alliance's High-Level Principles, in association with the IAPB (International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity Credits) and World Economic Forum. Dr Hannah Rudman has continued as member of the Joint Nations Conservation Committee's Ecosystem Policy Co-ordination Group, and as Co-Chair of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital, hosting Scotland's Nature Finance into Action conference in March 2026.

- In August, HRL went on record opposing the Glen Earrach development.
- At COP 30 we were announced as TNFD Adopters having made initial disclosures, 1 of 2 Scottish firms (the other being Aberdeen Group).
- HRL's Sika paper was published on the day of the Invasive Non-Native Species summit, the conference report called for Scottish Government to fund INNS projects, and was officially accepted by Gillian Martin MSP in March 2026. We continued to support the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest's calls to MSPs for a rainforest restoration fund, giving evidence at sessions at Holyrood throughout the year. We heard the Fund was granted £1.76m in January 2026 at a Holyrood roundtable meeting with Green MSPs. It's a start!
- Hannah was invited to Bute House in March for an exclusive International Womens' Day reception hosted by First Minister John Swinney, and attended by several Cabinet Secretaries. Those conversations can be continued once the new Scottish Parliament is formed (early June '26).
- The Trustable AI in Mapping project, led by Dr Hannah Rudman, and funded by over £1m from Innovate UK in which HRL ground-truthed data, reached conclusion and publication, with a presentation at the Landscape Ecology UK conference in July.



Dr Hannah Rudman discussing the TAIM project. Watch our video introduction here, or click on the image above.

- HRL consolidated protocols, contracts and tested business model approaches for OSPREY partnerships with new land owners at Bunloit and Tayvallich, as well as developing the model for existing Scottish landowners who might want to work in partnerships.



OSPREY Partners, Barrahormid Trust, at Tayvallich

- We worked with social impact investment foundation The Robertson Trust to help them understand the socio-economic benefits of rewilding projects, and started discussions with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to seek their grant support for developing a quantification framework.

- HRL has developed relationships with Transmission Grid Infrastructure Developers and with AI data centre developers. All need to offset biodiversity damage of extending the UK's Grid and AI capacity.

- We strengthened our relationship with Scottish Land and Estates' Wildlife Estates Scotland programme, and Northwoods Rewilding Network, becoming the organisation they recommend to landowners wanting to explore nature credits.

- HRL had presence and pitches at London Climate Week, Blue Earth Summit, announced our partnership with DUAL part of Howden Group at Nature Finance UK, and also presented that at Nature Finance into Action, March 2026. HRL developed a Premium Carbon Credits brochure, and is developing relationships with Environmental Engineering firms and Sustainability Accounting specialists to promote it more widely than to just direct connections.

Storytelling and communications

Our communications this year have served to build understanding of, and confidence in, data-driven rewilding as a credible and investable pathway to high-integrity environmental and social outcomes. Across every channel and campaign, we have worked to engage key audiences, including: individuals who care about nature and want to invest in its recovery; communities whose local landscapes are directly shaped by our land management; corporates and institutions seeking credible nature-based solutions and credits; other practitioners who can benefit from our research; and policy makers whose decisions will determine the pace and scale of Scotland's nature recovery.

Multimedia communications

This year we have focused on distilling complex academic research, campaigning and project progress into engaging, audience-specific and impactful narratives across our digital and offline channels. Short film production has been central to this approach. Where research findings and project updates have traditionally been conveyed through blogs, emails, and press releases, supporting video content allows us to bring the same – often quite technical – material to life in a more personal and immediate way.

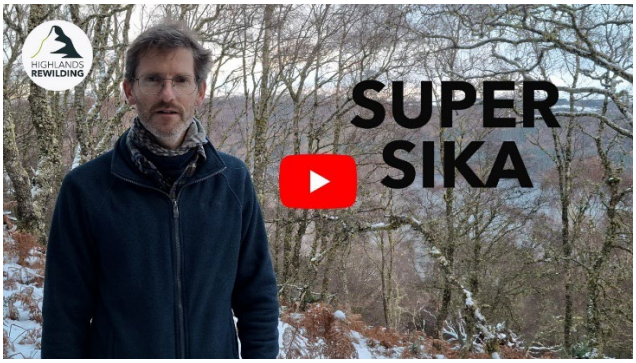
Short films

Our short films have significantly amplified our strong organic reach and engagement across our different communications platforms. It has been of great interest to us, and learning for us, which film topics have received the most engagement from our varied audiences, with eight of our films produced exceeding 30,000 views with one reaching 113,000 organic views.

Below is summary of four of our top films and campaigns this year:

'Super Sika': Two short films, paired with a press release and outreach campaign, designed to publicise Highlands Rewilding research. This research explored why Scotland's non-native Sika deer possess multiple natural advantages that make them harder to manage than Scotland's native deer and how some current management approaches in Scotland might inadvertently help Sika deer to outcompete our native deer species. The paper and its associated media content generated substantial press coverage, spanning both specialist and mainstream national media, including The Times, The Telegraph, The Scotsman, The Daily Mail and GB News.

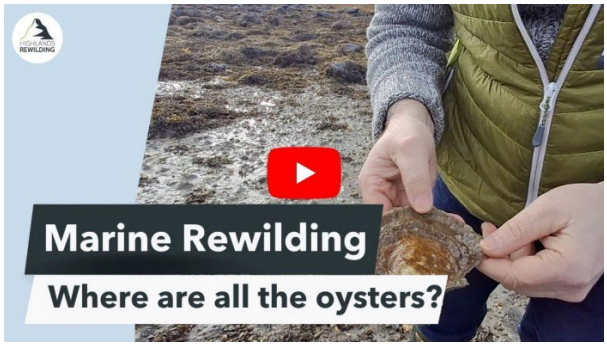
On LinkedIn, this film achieved over 10,000 views and over 100 likes. While on Facebook, the second film in this series generated over 700 likes and 100 comments.



Dr Calum Brown, Co-Chief Scientist, introduces our research, in Part One of our films. Watch on YouTube here, or click the image above.

'Where are all the oysters?': We created three short films to amplify the alarming research findings from our marine team. Namely, that Highlands Rewilding survey results suggested native oysters, once foundational to Scotland's west coast ecosystems, are now facing functional extinction in Loch Sween Marine Protected Area (MPA). In a survey are where 100,000 or more native oysters might have been expected, fewer than 50 were found. The video engagement, blog, email campaign and social media engagement helped amplify discussions of native oyster restoration at several conferences by Highlands Rewilding's Marine Rewilding Lead, who has extended this work through active participation in the Celtic and Irish Sea hub.

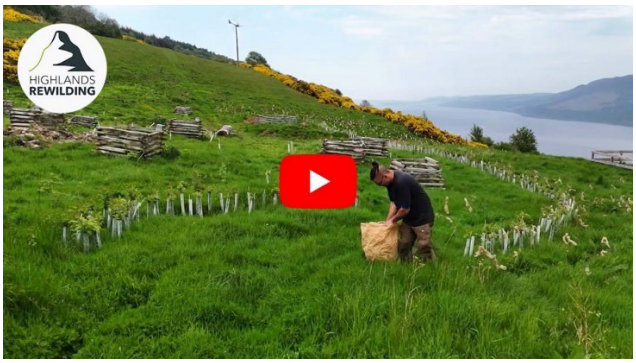
On TikTok, we had almost 10,000 views and over 400 likes for this film. The success of these films has led to a collaboration with NatureScot and the local community at Tayvallich on an awareness-raising and educational film on Native Oysters, due to be released in Summer 2027.



Dr David Smyth, Marine Rewilding Lead, shares his research in Part One of the series. Watch on YouTube here or click the image above.

'Can sheep help our trees grow?': This short film, shot in two parts, over one year apart, explores a small-scale experiment – wrapping saplings with sheep fleece to deter deer – set up by Bunloit Estate Ranger Daniel Holm. This was then then taken up and expanded into a fully-fledged scientific experiment by our science team. On a separate area of the estate, Highlands Rewilding set up fleece, lanolin (whose main active component is natural wax found in wool) and control plots to monitor the effects of these various deterrents to deer browsing.

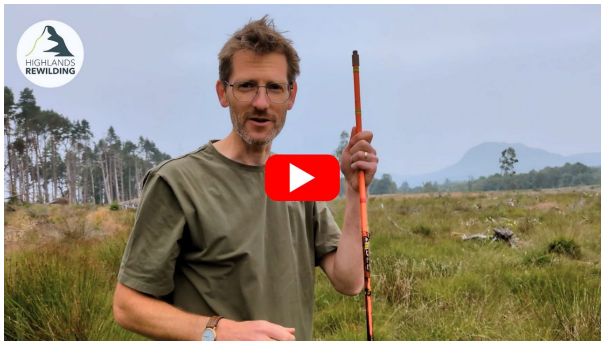
On Facebook, we have had over 113,000 views and over 2,400 likes for this film.



Daniel Holm, Senior Ranger at Bunloit, conducting the first stage of this experiment. Watch on YouTube here, or click on the image above.

'How we are helping ancient peatbogs to breathe again': Our short film explores how and why we are removing plantation forests on peatland and are beginning to rewet these ancient bogs, transforming them from high carbon emitters back into one of nature's most effective carbon storage systems.

On Facebook, we had over 40,000 views and over 700 likes for this film.



Dr Calum Brown introduces peatbog restoration plans. For more information see the Peatland Restoration section on page 8, watch the film here, or click the image above.

Highlands Rewilding in the news

Highlands Rewilding's research and projects have appeared in 32 prominent press articles during this period, across local, national and industry publications. Topics have included off-roading the Great Glen Way at Bunloit, Sika Deer research, AI environmental mapping, and coverage generated for an OSPREY partner on tackling the rural housing crisis at Tayvallich.