



Newsletter

September 2023

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This newsletter provides some updates about activity over a busy summer period and outlines plans for 2024.

2 BCG Meeting

- 2.1 A meeting of the BCG Sector Representatives will be held on Teams, 10:00-13:00 on Tuesday 31st October.
- 2.2 The meeting will review the current bracken control issues and the draft asulam emergency authorisation application for 2024 will be discussed.

3 Recent Events & Activities

19 th June	Announcement that asulam will be authorised for use in England
21 st June	Asulam refusal announced in Scotland and Wales
6 th July	SAC Thrill of the Hill Podcast “Don't Go Bracken My Heart ¹ ” (great title - selected by SAC!).
12 th July	Asulam refusal announced in Northern Ireland
18 th July	SAC Farm Advisory Service TV at Effgill, Langholm https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVbREpHQI8c
1 st August	Scottish Minister's site visit, St Fillans, Loch Earn
29 th August	Scottish Government Stakeholder Roundtable meeting. More detail in section 8.
30 th August	NFU Cymru site visit for Welsh Government Officials
13 th September	Scottish Rural Affairs and Islands Committee – extract ² from the meeting that included questions to the Minister about bracken.
20 th September	NSA & Moredun Institute Webinar “Tick Control and Louping Ill”. Seminar recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXs42Ek3828

¹ <https://www.fas.scot/publication/thrill-of-the-hill-dont-go-bracken-my-heart/>

² https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/rural-affairs-and-islands-committee-september-13-2023?clip_start=11:26:05&clip_end=12:06:13

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4 Work in Progress

- 4.1 A final phase of the Drift Trials has been completed and the results are being written up. This will provide evidence that will allow a review to take place of the width of the aerial buffer zone against surface water bodies.
- 4.2 Some initial discussions have taken place with SAC about the carbon impact of bracken, and the effects of any control.
- 4.3 A review of knowledge gaps is in progress that builds on the list included in the James Hutton Institute's report to the Scottish Government.
- 4.4 Discussion is taking place with Serco about the feasibility of mapping bracken and areas of control using satellite imagery.

5 BCG Administration

- 5.1 The BCG now has a presence on social media:
 - 5.1.1 Twitter / X: [@GroupBracken](#)
 - 5.1.2 Instagram: [@groupbracken](#)
- 5.2 Bracken Briefing No.25 – "[Bracken as a Tick Habitat](#)"
 - 5.2.1 This briefing addresses the benefits that bracken habitat provides for tick populations.
 - 5.2.2 It was drafted as part of developing the presentation for the NSA / Moredun Seminar on 20th September.

6 2023 Bracken Control Season

- 6.1 The late decisions about asulam did not help anyone.
- 6.2 The approval for the use of asulam in England was welcomed, but the refusal in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was disappointing.
- 6.3 An aerial spraying programme was carried out in England and helped by the uplift in funding available through Countryside Stewardship.
- 6.4 In England, anyone holding unopened containers of Asulox has until 27th October to return them to their distributor for a refund. It will be illegal to retain any stocks of Asulox after this date.
- 6.5 Records of all use of Asulam in 2023 are required to support the application for the 2024 season. The record forms are available from the website in various formats in the hope that one of the formats will suit everyone.
<https://www.brackencontrol.co.uk/asulam/records>

7 Emergency Authorisation 2024

- 7.1 Despite efforts to find an alternative way forward, if asulam is to be available anywhere in the UK for the 2024 bracken control season, the only way to achieve this is through another emergency authorisation.
- 7.2 Feedback from practitioners / case studies are being considered as a way to present views about bracken and its control to support the application. A questionnaire could be used to capture the information.
- 7.3 Several letters of support were included with the application for the 2023 season. Similar letters will be welcome to support the 2024 application, and these will provide an opportunity to make points about the use of asulam on behalf of different sectors.

8 Scottish Government Stakeholder Roundtable meeting

- 8.1 This meeting was held in response to the public exchanges³ that occurred about the delayed decision on the asulam application and then the refusal.
- 8.2 The Minutes from the Roundtable meeting are available on the Meetings page of the website⁴ with the feedback provided on behalf of the BCG.
- 8.3 The key outcomes were:
 - 8.3.1 Establishment of a small working group to continue engagement and lead on next steps including further evidence gathering.
 - 8.3.2 Agreement that new and improved practitioner guidance should be developed.
 - 8.3.3 The delay in issuing a decision to the asulam application in 2023 (and 2022?) was recognised and efforts would be made with HSE to avoid a repeat.
 - 8.3.4 The conservation agencies would work together to develop a UK Bracken Strategic Framework.
- 8.4 In subsequent discussions with Natural England, on behalf of the BCG, support has been offered for the working group and the development of the practitioner guidance. A meeting with Scottish Government and NatureScot is due shortly.
- 8.5 The reinstatement of funding for new bracken control programmes through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme was flagged as a priority issue.

9 Feedback

- 9.1 Suggestions for issues⁵ to be covered as part of the emergency authorisation application will be welcome.
- 9.2 Any comments⁵ on the contents of this newsletter will also be welcome.

³ See the press releases <https://www.brackencontrol.co.uk/asulam/press-releases>

⁴ <https://www.brackencontrol.co.uk/information/meetings>

⁵ <https://www.brackencontrol.co.uk/home/contact-us>