

Otter Reflectors

A Report by Pam Brown

26th November 2010

In June 2009 the Isle of Mull Bird club accessed money from the MICT Eagle Fund. A sum of £363 was used to purchase forty otter reflectors to be put up on the road verges between Salen village and Aros Castle after up to eight Otters had been killed around this stretch of road during the previous year. It was done in the hope of preventing the same happening again. The otter reflectors were put in place with the help of Argyll & Bute Council during the autumn of 2009.

In July 2010 it was brought to the committee's notice that 'at least 10 of the roadside otter warning reflectors/posts along Salen bay were smashed up by the road side grass cutter'. An email was sent to Kaz Bailey of Argyll & Bute Council who replied that 'the grass/bracken had grown around and was taller than the reflectors which made them difficult to see. Although the flail might have hit and damaged the first reflector accidentally, the operator would not then have continued and demolished the lot! A high number of vehicle drivers will often drive onto the verge rather than use the passing places; it is highly likely that they smashed up the reflectors'. Kaz offered, as a gesture of goodwill, to pay for the replacement of the damaged reflectors and installation of same.

The matter could not be discussed until we had a full committee meeting during September where it was agreed that we would need to walk the road to check how many reflectors have been damaged. In November 2010 Bird Club members Eileen Slorach and Tangye Johns walked the stretch of road where the otter reflectors had been placed and reported back that by this time there were only 7 reflectors left standing and 4 mangled reflectors. They concluded that during a twelve month period almost all the otter reflectors had gone.

The matter was again discussed at the November committee meeting and it was unanimously agreed that as almost all the reflectors had been damaged, if we tried to replace them, the same thing would almost certainly happen again. During the twelve months that the reflectors were in place no otters were reported killed on this stretch of road. This could be due to the fact that there were no otters there (as they had been killed the previous year) and wildlife tour operators agreed that otters were rarely seen in Salen Bay this summer. As the reflectors are so small and the growing grass and bracken covers them, it was decided that the efficiency of the reflectors was inconclusive.