

**Draft Minutes of the Affric and Kintail Deer Management Group Meeting
Held at Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness
on Monday 31st October at 11am**

Present

Willie Fraser
Angus Hughes
John Hay
Chris Macleod
Derick Macaskill
Alan Barrow
Sinclair Coghill
Linzi Seivwright

Estates/Agency

Chair/NTS
East Benula South
Mullardoch
North Affric
FES
NTS
SNH
Secretary

1. Apologies.

Willie Lamont	FES
Donald Fraser	East Benula North
Peter Urquhart	East Benula South
David Matthews	North Affric

2. Draft Minutes of Meeting held on 3rd May 2016.

These were approved (subject to a change of 15 stags for East Benula South) by Chris Macleod and John Hay.

The subject of publication of Minutes on the DMG website was discussed and it was agreed that this would be actioned. **AP1:LS**

It was also agreed that in future meeting Agendas should be circulated more widely to include: Lynda Campbell (Corriclair), Chairs of neighbouring DMGs, Paul Stirling (the Community Council representative, John MacLennan, Donald Fraser and Andrew Slaughter (Inverinate)?

WF introduced Alan Barrow from NTS (Estate Surveyor) who had taken over in the interim for Alexander Bennet who had retired. He would be attending meetings for the foreseeable future.

3. Matters Arising.

Training: WF discussed that possible First Aid training being organised by NTS might be available to the wider Group if there was interest. WF to provide details in due course. **AP2: WF**

Out of Season Culling: The subject of Out of Season Authorisations was going to be discussed later in the meeting.

4. Chairman's Report.

WF reported that most had gotten close to their stag targets but that FE had fallen short. It was indicated that given the current political interest in deer, there were likely to be interesting times ahead.

WF indicated that correspondence from RPID in August had indicated that the ECAF application made in January 2016 had been successful. The Group however had not as yet been issued a contract. WF indicated that it was important to start delivering on the Plan and to plan how the Group was going to move forward.

5. Deer Management Plan.

Update and Sign-Off. It was agreed that LS would circulate an email asking for official sign off of the main part of the plan (Parts 1 and 2). It was emphasised that the Working Plan would remain a live document which would be informed by ongoing deer management and amended annually. **AP3:LS**

Change of Plan Name. The Group discussed that the current title of “Deer Management Plan” perhaps gave the wrong impression .In reality, the plan covered wider land management issues by the time the range of Private and Public Interests were taken into account. If this Plan is going to be more widely circulated, then the Public would perhaps be more receptive to a more inclusive plan with a name which better reflected and promoted what the Group were doing. It was suggested and agreed that the name be changed to a **Collaborative Land Management Plan** to give a better impression of what the Group is actually delivering. LS agreed to circulate an email to confirm.

AP4:LS

6. Treasurer’s Report.

WF indicated that as per the ECAF Application, the Group would need to find the 50% match funding over the next 5 years of the plan. The previous Secretary had kindly offered to help WF with the Subscriptions in November for the next 12 month period. It was recognised that the Group would need to conduct its business in a more professional way moving forward.

7. Stag Report and Hind Cull Targets for 2016/17.

All individual properties provided an update on culls achieved. The point was made that cull targets should be realistic and achievable.

Property	Cull Target 2016	Stag Cull 2016	Comments
East Benula South	15	12	AH reported that there had been a lack of mature stags on the ground. In the past Coire Lochan had held around 250 stags but this year the figure was around 25.
North Affric	2550	54	It was reported that the deer had been well out because of good weather and there had been a lack of mature stags.
Mullardoch	12	10	There had been a lack of deer on the eastern part of the Estate with more in the west.
NTS Kintail	100	101	NTS had achieved the cull target on both properties with assistance from North Affric Estate on West Affric. Kintail stags had been shot across the age range to achieve cull. Cull had started on 1 st June given the larger than normal cull. NTS to look where they are for next year – may have to repeat culls and the early start. WF thanked everyone present for assistance.
NTS West Affric	50	54	As above.
NFE Strathglass	130	47	It was clarified that Strathglass culls would refer to those that had been taken within the enclosed area.
NFE Fasnakyle	30	20	It had been that there had been a lack of stags with deer sitting on the marches.
NFE Glen Na Ciche & NFE Affric Enclosures	0	0	It was clarified that this area plus small enclosures would come under “Affric Exclosures” for reporting purposes.
NFE South Affric	100	63	FE reported that because of the good weather and east winds, there had been deer there, they had just been difficult to get. FE indicated at this stage that they <u>may</u> apply for an out of season authorisation in order to meet the agreed stag cull of 100 (which was a the cull based on the Count and the Strath Caulaidh report which agreed with the Group at a previous meeting). So far they had managed to cull 63 stags and it was clarified that an Application would be for the remaining 37 stags to be taken to meet the cull only.

Total	467	331	
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The subject of Out of Season Authorisations was discussed. NTS acknowledged that they had had an OOS to shoot stags in June which NTS had considered to be less emotive than shooting stags over winter which the Group had been made aware of.

Members of the Group expressed concern at the prospect of any Out of Season Application being made by FE and FE responded that at the time of setting the cull target, they had taken the view that this should be done in season it had been their best intention to do this. However, the issue in South Affric is that numbers build up during the winter/spring. FE reiterated that at the time of the meeting no application had been made, but that if one was to be applied for, they would notify the Group. The point was made that in the interests of collaboration, it was important to take account of the feelings of the whole Group and to get agreement between people. FE wished to acknowledge that all had had been attempted to be done during the season to meet the cull. It was emphasised that there was a need for the Group to find common ground and to respect traditional/cultural perceptions. It was pointed out that in the recent Review of Authorisations (carried out by SNH), Out of Season Shooting and Night Shooting has been considered to be a working tool.

A further discussion later in the meeting revisited this subject and concerns were again raised about the likelihood of an application being made. FE was unable to provide a definitive answer as the decision had not as yet been made within the organisation. The Group asked that should an OOS Authorisation be applied for, FE would alert the Group and FE would consider trying to avoid, where possible, shooting good, mature stags. FE acknowledged they would give consideration to this request.

AP5:FE

8. Hind Cull Targets (this was missed off the Agenda in error)

SNH had indicated that they were broadly happy with the Hind Cull that had been set.

Property	Hind Cull Target 2016/2017
East Benula South	25
North Affric	25
Mullardoch	5
NTS Kintail	100
NTS West Affric	80
NFE Strathglass	(100)
NFE Fasnakyle	24
NFE Glen Na Ciche & NFE Affric Enclosures	0
NFE South Affric	80
Total	339

9. Strathglass Complex SAC Habitat Results

SNH were asked for an update on the Strathglass Complex SAC Habitat Impact Assessment that had been carried out in the summer of 2016 by Colin Wells. SNH acknowledged that the consultant should have made contact with individual Estates prior to going out on the ground and had been made aware that this had not happened due to a lack of communication in certain cases. SNH confirmed that a draft report was with the Agency and required to be Quality Assured before it could be circulated. SC circulated some maps showing a summary of impacts and trends, which indicated that the main impacts had been reduced overall, in comparing like for like plots. Overall, the Report highlighted that there was still a bit to go in reducing impacts, particularly on the areas of the SAC north of Loch Mullardoch. SNH to circulate HIA to Group as soon as it becomes available.

AP6:SNH

It was acknowledged that everyone in the Group had done their bit and the Chairman thanked the Group for all their efforts in reducing the impacts over Affric and Kintail. It was emphasised that because of deer

movements outwith the Group boundary, it was important to ensure that everyone's hard work wouldn't be undone by the actions of others. The Chairman indicated that as well as the Group aiming to achieve the hind cull of 339 as set, he would be engaging in discussion with immediate neighbours of the Group to encourage them to also do a targeted cull.

SNH indicated that they would be circulating the Report soon and that they would be meeting with individual Estates to look at actions moving forward. Group discussed possible implications of the effect of Climate Change and highlighted that there was lots of opportunities for further research.

10. ECAF Application and 12 Month Project Plan

LS talked the Group through the ECAF Application that had been made, in particular the Project Plan and yearly costs. Although the ECAF Contract had still to be confirmed, LS and WF agreed to produce a timetable for the following year, to include a timetable for the likes of Habitat Impact Assessments and target dates. **AP7:LS/WF**

11. Out of Season Authorisations

Mullardoch Estate indicated that they have held a 5.6 Out of Season Authorisation for the past 20 years and that they would likely be applying for one this year as an insurance policy against an incursion of deer into the unfenced native woodland regeneration, which was showing positive signs.

12. SNH Update.

SNH indicated that the Review of Deer Management requested by the Environment Minister had been sent that day. It was still unclear when the report would be published but it was likely the report would be discussed within the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, who would likely take evidence in the coming months from a range of stakeholders.

The DMG Re-Assessment process had been completed and whilst there was still work to do, overall DMGs have made progress. SNH also indicated that their budget was down 7% this year with further reductions likely.

11. Any Other Business.

There was none.

12. Date of next meeting.

Date and time of next meeting to be arranged.

Summary of Actions

AP	Action	Who
1	Publish Minutes and Agendas on the Web	LS
2	Details of Training Course to be circulated to Group	WF
3 & 4	Email confirming change of name and sign-off of plan circulated to Group	LS
5	Group to be told of any OOS Authorisation granted and consideration to be given to NOT shooting good, mature stags where possible.	FE
6	Strathglass Complex HIA to be circulated to the Group	SNH
7	Circulate amended Project Plan and Timetable	LS/WF