

Paper 4/2018 Minutes & MA



Meeting of Affric and Kintail Deer Management Group at Dundreggan Estate on Monday 6th August at 10.30am

Present

Willie Fraser
Angus Hughes
Chris Macleod
John Hay
Ian Reynard
Russell Cooper
Sinclair Coghill
Doug Gilbert
Alan Common
Calum Fraser
Alan McDonnell
Linzi Seivwright
Malcolm Morrison

Estates/Agency

Chair/NTS
East Benula South
North Affric
Mullardoch
Wester Guisachan
FES
SNH
Trees for Life
Trees for Life
Trees for Life
Trees for Life
Secretary
Jarrah Forestry

1 Welcome & Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Doug Gilbert who provided a warm welcome to everyone to Dundreggan and that it was good to see collaboration between Deer Groups.

There were apologies from:

David Matthews	North Affric
Mark Macleod	North Affric
Paul Stirling	Community Representative
Peter Urquhart	East Benula South
Willie Lamont	Forest Enterprise
Lynda Campbell	Corrielaire

2 Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 4th June 2018

Paper: 2017/2a

These were approved by WF and seconded by CM.

3 Matters Arising from Meeting held on 4th June 2018

Paper: 2017/2b

AP	Action	Who
1	WF send an email to TFL to reflect the range of view points and capture some of the concerns from individual group members. WF had had a discussion with TFL	WF
2	AH and WF to attend next South Ross Liaison Meeting. AH had attended.	WF/AH
3	Opportunity for further discussion with TFL explored at Dundreggan Site Visit. Actioned.	DMG Members
4	LS agreed to check correspondence from Cannich Primary and respond on behalf of the Group. Actioned.	LS
5	LS to circulate maps of FCS Culls. LS circulated initial maps of cull data. LS to check with RC if there are shapefiles for exclosures. LS to map exclosures and culls by species. (AP 1). The Group agreed to provide coordinates for all deer shot. LS to produce proforma data sheet & RC to send copy of one used by FE. It was discussed that some Game Dealers would likely be implementing stricter procedures to cutting out contamination from carcasses and that a possible reduction in venison returns to producers would likely reflect the need for a stricter approach. The Group agreed to keep records of larder weights for all carcasses. (AP2)	LS

	<p>Some DMG members had attended an open day at Ardgay Game and had found the day extremely useful particularly in understanding the pressures of venison processing. The Game Dealer had provided good feedback regarding emaciated and contaminated carcasses where the decision ultimately lies with the vets. There had been reports of carcasses being condemned for warble fly.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the use of technology to capture data and RC indicated that Forest Enterprise were looking into the use of an app to record information.</p>	
6	<p>LS to circulate dates of DMG Health Check to the Group. Item discussed under Agenda Item 4.2. <i>This would be held on 25th at 10am at Balnain House, Inverness. All were welcome to join.</i></p>	LS
7	<p>SC to circulate contact details for Access Officer. JH had established the contact information for the Access Officer and reported that the issues were still the same regarding access to Loch Mullardoch: namely the risk of fires from people camping and access to the Loch by boats with engines. There was also a significant risk posed by those accessing the loch with boats/kayaks/canoes that were unsuitable for conditions, particularly when the wind was in the west. The Group discussed the possible use of signage to help educate access takers. <i>JH to discuss the issue with SSE (AP 3)</i></p>	SNH
8	<p>WF to circulate details of First Aid Course to the Group. The Group indicated that there was interest in 3 people from North Affric and LS expressed an interest also. WF indicated that it would likely be a two day course during the week.</p>	WF

There followed a brief discussion on a film of Glen Affric by Forestry Commission/Trees for Life that had recently been circulated on social media. Some members of the Group had expressed concern that the way in which the film was scripted and that it had come across as being negative and disrespectful of traditional and historical land management practices. Alan McDonnell explained that it had originally been designed for a specific audience and he appreciated and understood the concerns that had been raised. He apologized for the unintended reaction caused by the film and hoped that everyone could move forward in a constructive way.

4. Working Plan

4.1 Updated Population Model & Proposed Culls & South Ross Count

LS updated the Group on the latest version of the population model which indicated that the Group had likely met the population target of 7.5 deer per km² as originally set in the DMP. LS also indicated that future culls from this point on should be carefully planned and considered as they could have a significant impact on the population moving forward.

The group were asked to provide their proposed stag culls to the Group. These were:

North Affric - 25
 Wester Guisachan – 20
 East Benula South – 15
 West Affric - 25 +15
 Kintail – 65
 Mullardoch - 12

RC reported that FE had already shot 35 stags in South Affric. There followed a discussion regarding the decision by FE to start the stag cull early given that the issues in South Affric were thought to be caused by overwintering stags and RC was asked for more information on the decision making process behind the setting of culls.

Following discussion about the perceived lack of stags on the ground and given that a helicopter count would not be possible in Spring 2019 as originally planned, the group agreed that the best way to address concerns about lack of stags would be to conduct a stag count in August and carry out as full a foot count in Spring 2019 as possible. WF to talk to Inverinate and Corriclair about Spring Count.

At this stage the DMGs in South Ross were hoping that a helicopter count will be rescheduled for 2020.

4.2 2019 Assessment

LS explained that SNH are due to carry out a repeat DMG assessment in 2019. Although this would cover the full 101 criteria in the 2016 & 2014 Reviews, SNH would be focusing in on the delivery element of actions and in particular actions relating to Designated Sites, woodlands, peatlands and wider habitat monitoring. Other key areas of focus would be on welfare, competence and socio-economics.

In order to help DMGs prepare for this, ADMG were offering each Group up to 2 days of consultants time to carry out a DMG Health Check to help groups prepare for the assessment and identify areas that required attention/action in the next 6 months or so.

LS and the Chair were proposing to carry out the DMG health check on 25th October at 10am at NTS Balnain House. All DMG members would be welcome to attend. The working plan had been updated to show current progress with actions.

5. Woodland Review Project Update

Malcolm Morrison reported to the Group that he had submitted an application to the Forestry Commission Collaboration Fund in order to carry out a strategic review of woodland/forestry within the DMG area which would look at current condition as well as identifying opportunities for future woodland expansion. It was emphasised that there will be no obligation for members to progress these opportunities but should they wish to do so, assistance would be provided with applications for Grants. Early indications had been that given the priority of woodland in Scottish Government targets, FCS would be keen to support these types of applications.

MM was hoping to hear back in the next month and if successful would be proposing to start in September/October. (Note as of beginning of October, the application has been accepted in principle subject to minor requests for additional supporting information).

It was reported that North Affric and Trees for Life were currently exploring opportunities for schemes and there was ongoing discussion on Kintail with Crofters about potential schemes.

The woodland review would also hopefully cover the potential for fence removal within the Group and the impact of any potential new fencing.

FCS were proposing some fence upgrading in Glen na Ciche as fencing posts were coming to the end of their life. This would be refenced as the woodland growth was not currently considered to be sufficient. FCs will consider taking in an extra 60 ha on the North and South side in this refencing exercise to tie in with an area at the waterfall.

6. Peatland Restoration Update

An application had been submitted for a feasibility survey of the remaining areas that had not been included in a previous study conducted by NTS/FCS. The Group had received a holding email but not indication if the application had been successful.

7. DMG Habitat Monitoring Update

Group members were asked to report on progress with conducting HIA fieldwork following the training provided by Dr Cathy Mayne in the Spring. Wester Guisachan reported that they had already completed this work.

LS indicated that she would request data/information in time to provide a summary report at the November meeting.

AP5: LS and DMG Members

8. SQWV and Venison Production

The Group indicated that they would be interested in taking up the offer from SQWV of a free larder inspection. LS to contact SQWV to organise.

AP6: LS

9. Cultural and Historic Features

Group members had nothing to report in terms of deer impacts on cultural or historical features.

10. Invasive Species Update

WF reported that feral goats had been causing an issue in Kintail with reports of DVCs and goats in peoples gardens.

AH reported that on a recent Moth Trapping exercise he had spotted signs of Feral Pigs at the top of Glen Urquhart.

The Group reported no invasive plant issues. The Group had a discussion on beavers following a recent trip to Poland by AH where he had seen extensive damage caused by them. It was reported that SG has decided that the current populations of beavers in Scotland are here to stay and although there were no current plans for future releases, the current populations would be allowed to expand. SG was currently working up Licensing Arrangements. SC to send information on beavers to Group on the current research available.

AP7: SC

11. Community Engagement

FE were asked to report on progress with the tendering process for deer control contracts within the DMG area. RC reported that a national Framework would be set up this autumn. Some work was currently being tendered under the existing framework but only those who were part of the framework could apply. Any potential Community Group wishing to tender for future work would have to get onto the National Framework first.

12. Deer Welfare

Deer welfare would be monitored in future using the proposed data sheets which would be circulated to the group.

13. Access Issues

The Group had no issues regarding access for discussion.

14. Training Update

First Aid training had been discussed under matters arising. LS also agreed to circulate details of a Meat Hygiene Course being run by North Highland College.

AP8: LS

15. Out of Season Authorisations

NTS had an OOS authorisation in June to deal with DVC issues but didn't shoot much (4/5 stags) which would be unlikely to effect the group.

FE reported that they have an Authorisation for Strathglass but this wasn't currently being used.

Mullardoch reported that they apply annually for an Authorisation but rarely have to use it and is for emergency purposes only.

16. Treasurer's Report

WF indicated that he had been unable to get an update on financial position but that a full set of accounts would be produced for the AGM in November.

17. SNH Update

SNH reported that the Chair of the ECCLR Committee had been appointed as a Minister and that a new Chair would be appointed in due course. The Deer Working Group is due to report to the Minister by the end of April.

18. ADMG Update

There would be a Regional Meeting of ADMG to be held at the National Park offices in Balloch on 13th August with a site visit to Flanders Moss afterwards.

19. Other DMG Update

There would be a meeting of Glenmoriston DMG on 14th August. LS to share larder recording sheet with this group also.

20. Any Other Business

There was no other business raised. WF closed the meeting by thanking Trees for Life for hosting the meeting and for providing the lunch and site visit after the meeting.

21. Dates of Next Meetings

25th October 2018- DMG Health Check (10am to 12.00) followed by meeting of DMG (12.30 to 3pm)

5th November 2018- Autumn Meeting & AGM (venue and times TBA)

2b. Matters Arising/ Summary of Actions

AP	Action	Who
1	LS to check with RC if there are shapefiles for exclosures in S Affric. LS to map exclosures and culls by species.	LS/RC
2	The Group agreed to provide coordinates for all deer shot. LS to produce proforma data sheet – RC to send a copy of one used by Forest Enterprise. The Group also agreed to keep records of larder weights for all carcasses.	LS, RC & DMG Members
3	Issue of access to Loch Mullardoch to be discussed with SSE.	JH
4	Members to carry out foot count of stags asap and before end of August. WF to discuss spring count with Inverinate and Corriclair.	WF & DMG Members
5	Members to provide HIA data to LS for a report for November meeting.	LS & DMG Members
6	LS to contact SQWV to arrange a possible free inspection for members.	LS
7	SC to circulate information on Beavers to the Group.	SC
8	LS to circulate details of a Meat Hygiene Course.	LS