

West Lochaber Deer Management Group

WEST LOCHABER DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP AGM

Friday 1st December 2017

10.30 – 12.15hrs

Glenfinnan House Hotel, Glenfinnan

Minute

Attendees:

Alistair Gibson – (DMG Chairman) (ADMG rep),
Glenfinnan
Bruce Taylor – (DMG Secretary & Treasurer), Fassfern
Robert Spence - Scamadale
John MacDonald – Scamadale
James Coulston - Arisaig
Ian Leith and Jane Mitchell – Glenfinnan
Mr James de Ferranti, Meoble
Raymond Fraser – Meoble
Alan Currie – Fassfern/Achdaliu
Michael Rhoden - Fassfern/Achdaliu
Steve Morris – WTS Loch Arkaig
Paolo Berardelli - Glen Mamie
Niall Rowantree – Ardnish
Kate Tuer – Scottish Woodlands
Paul Dorrian - Glenfinnan
Graeme Taylor - SNH
Graham Nairn – Annat/Achanellan/Glen Fada
John Morrison - Achnacarry Sporting
Alex MacDonald - Achnacarry south
Simon Laird - Achnacarry Sporting
John Jackson - FES
PC Hugo Martin (Mallaig) Wildlife Crime Officer

Apologies:

Pete MacLaren – Ranachan
Peter Stewart-Sandiman - Ardnish
Iain Collier – Forestry Commission
Mark & Sandra de Ferranti - Meoble,
Lynda Campbell, ADMG
John Tulloch - Fassfern/Achdaliu
Colin MacClean – DMP Consultant

No.	Summary	Action
1	<p>Apologies and Introductions</p> <p>As recorded above.</p>	
2	<p>Election of Chairman and Office Bearers, and any co-options</p> <p>There being no nominations from the floor, the committee remains as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Alistair Gibson : Chairman Bruce Taylor : Secretary/Treasurer</p>	

3 Wildlife Crime, Poaching, Road Traffic Accidents

PC Hugo Martin reported 12 incidents and much additional intelligence on poaching in Kilchoan-Glen Loy area. Vehicle registrations required to follow up and store on intelligence database. Call 101/999 or Crimestoppers, Stop & Search carried out. Illegal fox snares found at Banavie and a poisoned fox located. Illegal bird killing in gardens and one poisoned sea eagle found at Morar.

The case of James Kennedy is currently being prosecuted. He has pled guilty to the firearms offences x 2 but not poaching which the Procurator Fiscal has accepted. The poaching charge was dropped as part of plea bargaining in public interest, esp savings on police and court time. A custodial sentence is likely with decision being made on 5th December in Fort William court.

A licensed game dealer has been investigated for having out of season deer on premises. Further checks on game **dealers'** premises planned so importance of keeping good up to date records emphasised.

Deer/venison also found for sale in Fort William via unauthorised dealers.eg half a deer for £60.

Pete MacLaren continues to organise poaching patrols for which volunteers always requested. Police happy to link in with their shifts.

RTAs - no reported accidents between deer and vehicles reported.

4 Minutes of the last AGM and any Matters Arising

Minutes proposed for acceptance by Raymond Fraser, seconded by Ian Leith

No matters arising from the Minutes

5 Membership and Subscriptions, Email contact details

A form was circulated around the attendance to update membership details.

6 Members Reports.

- i) 2017 Culls**
- ii) Condition Report**
- iii) Proposed Hind for 2018 (Stag Cull to be reviewed after count)**

Estate	Stags			Hinds Target Cull	Comments
	No.	Av Wt(kg)	Av Age		
Glenfinnan	26	91	9	50	Stags in good condition
Forest Enterprise	12			15	Good condition 3 Roebuck 2 roe does
WTS Loch Arkaig	0				No culling planned until perimeter deer fence secure.
Ranachan	5	83.9	9	15	
Meoble	42	92.9	9	40	
Achdaliu	32	90	9	60	Good condition.

Fassfern Forest	54	74			incl 17 Out of Season Stags Stags in good condition but hinds now look surprisingly poor for time of year. Mortality expected
Achnacarry South Hill	46	88.9	11	60-65	Stags in good condition
Glen Loy (Nairn)	16	93.1	9.6	35	Stags in good condition but hinds poorer, as above
Glen Mamie	18			15-20	
Ardnish	10	88.9	6.5	14	
Scamadale	6			12	
Arisaig	13			30-35	

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Count organisation for 2017

Last helicopter count was in 2001/2002 so now overdue. The Count forms an essential part of the **Group's** Deer Management Plan.

The SNH helicopter count is planned to take place within period 05/01/18 - 31/3/18 as part of the deer count over eight DMG areas. No cost to DMG but two local count coordinators/observers required to assist. Coordinators can check count process, identify estate boundaries on ground and assist. SNH team will count small deer numbers and record locations via helicopter GPS but will photograph larger groups to count more accurately later in office. SNH always pleased to have assistance with the office work reviewing photos.

A show of hands of interested coordinators = Alan Currie, Mike Rhoden, Alex MacDonald, Raymond Fraser, Alistair Gibson, James Coulston.

Count is obviously weather dependent so make take place at very short notice. One **week's** notice will be aimed for but could be 24 hrs.

SNH will use SGRPID maps for boundary information and will issues these for checking in advance. Any new fences (eg woodland schemes) can be added to maps.

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Venison Markets

All members encouraged to join SQA Wild Venison Scheme. Pre-assessment is free and venison achieves 10p/Kg more. More details available in letter available from Chairman.

Niall Rowantree reported a good market in live hind sales to deer farms in south of England. Mature hinds achieve £250-£300 and younger animals £100 - £150. This is seen as an expanding market opportunity which is not subsidy dependent and is legal. The trade is one way so no risk of disease transmission back into the Scottish wild population.

All estates now either selling via Simpson Game or Fyne Game.

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ADMG - Report and Discussion

Provided by Alistair Gibson as ADMG rep. Attended ADMG regional meetings at Kingussie, Glenfinnan and Inverness as well as being available on the stand at the Scottish Game Fair, Scone.

Chair of ADMG, Richard Cook, advised that DMGs have 18 months to demonstrate engagement with the public in advance of 2019 re-assessment by SNH of progress against DMP targets. Scottish Government Cabinet Secretaries, Roseanna Cunningham and Fergus Ewing, will be liaising with ADMG and SNH on progress.

A Code of Deer Management is due to be published in 2019, including greater assessment of

	<p>DMGs. Best Practice Guides now over 10 years old and are being reviewed and republished; available Spring 2018. Existing guidance useful until new ones are available.eg Grassland monitoring, Habitat Assessment etc.</p> <p>ADMG contributing £1000/yr over 3 years for deer welfare project - access and deer impact</p> <p>Scottish Deer Health Survey 2017-2019 by the Moredun Foundation & Edinburgh University ref prevalence of E.Coli 157, cryptosporidium and chronic wasting disease in wild deer populations. Sampling packs available via Alistair Gibson for hind cull sampling which are to be returned free post to the research university for analysis.</p> <p>Note that ADMG AGM is in Aviemore on 28th February 2018</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>SNH - Report on enhanced role of SNH in deer management and future expected level of collaboration with West Lochaber DMG. Other SNH matters related to Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee. Assessment of current performance against both the ADMG Benchmark and delivery of public objectives.</p> <p>All DMGs have been informed of the increased role of SNH in deer management and legal authority to intervene to ensure that DMGs are conducting deer management in a planned way.</p> <p>Graphs of DMG performance which had been appended to the SNH letter were distributed at the meeting showing WLDMG to currently be ranking mid-table (position 10 out of 46) so no room for complacency.</p> <p>SNH will make more active use of our regulatory powers as well as continuing to work collaboratively with deer managers to take forward a programme of work that delivers sustainable deer management. SNH will intervene via regulatory powers as follows:</p> <p>Section 6 :SNH identifies a problem and advises the DMG on a Deer Management Plan that is required to be concluded within 6 months of notice.</p> <p>Section 7 : Control Agreements where habitat damage is occurring to designated sites SNH will agree a DMP which will be delivered over 5 years with SNH support. They will be focussed on areas in Scotland where upland DMGs are underperforming as assessed in the 2016 review and need further support.</p> <p>Section 8 : Compulsory Scheme of intervention where there is no evidence of voluntary management in relation to the deer impact to designated sites as per Section 7. SNH have the authority to impose a £40,000 fine and recover costs from the responsible parties. This is very much a power of last resort that has not been used to date.</p> <p>WLDMG is doing okay in regard to public engagement and no designated sites are in unfavourable condition. The main message is on the delivery of the DMP and the public interest targets detailed on pages 6-8 of the plan. The 2018/19 re-audit will focus on this delivery.</p> <p>A scoring martrix will be published before the review (incl deer code). Socio-economic interest will be referenced fully in the Code but deer stalking and wildlife tourism are recognised as being important to business/local economies so SNH need to take this into account.</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Deer Management Plan - review and update on progress in achieving Public Interest Targets & Action Points.</p> <p>The DMP can be found on the WLDMG website and all members are encouraged to be aware of type details on delivery of targets and actions required to fully implement the plan.</p>	

	<p>Public engagement: DMG Chairman, Alistair Gibson, summarised a comprehensive list of public engagement over the past year including attendance at British Deer Society AGM, RSFS and ADMG meetings, Community Council meeting attendance, assisting with a St Andrews University Dept of Geography & Sustainable Development field trip, speaking to tourists about deer on the cruise ship Lord of the Glens (x 6 visits to Fort William) and visitors within Glenfinnan, talks to Lundavra Primary School children (p5,6,7) Students from the SRUC and UHI separately undertook investigations to report on the spread and impact of wild boar in the area. They were supported in there studies by various keepers, especially at Achnacarry and Fassfern.</p> <p>Habitat Monitoring: A woodland habitat survey has been undertaken by Taylor Wildlife on behalf of the DMG. Sampling plots were randomly selected over the entire Group area's native woodland except on Ardnish Estate where a detailed woodland survey was already being undertaken for woodland regeneration proposals. The survey report will be uploaded onto the WLDMG website hosted by ADMG. Dwarf Shrub Heath and Blanket Bog open ground surveys will be carried out over the next two years to obtain baseline information on each habitat type. Thereafter the habitat monitoring can be bi-annual to ensure that the open ground habitats are assessed sufficiently, and native woodlands are seen to be protected. If woodland management has not changed over the period since 2017 survey then further survey may not be required. The issue of wildfire was considered to be inadequately taken into account in habitat impact assessments that focused mainly on herbivore pressure, especially red deer. Wildfires are known to occur in the area every 5-7 years, arising from railway, camp fires or similar. Scamadale Estate owners are keen to do their own survey work, having the competence already and within a manageable area. Other members did not express and great interest in carrying out their own habitat monitoring work and there was general agreement that the initial surveys of each habitat should be undertaken comprehensively and consistently by a consultant to achieve baseline information. However, habitat impact training was agreed as useful for all to understand the process, what to look for and the importance of certain details. Prices will be obtained from outside contractors for the open ground survey works over the next two years. SNH is offering a grant of £1,800 to assist member training or provide professional contract assistance to assess habitat impacts from deer populations.</p> <p>Meetings: The WLDMG meets annually for its AGM and in the late Spring after the Count, if one takes place. Agreed that it would be better to have 2-3 meetings a year to ensure that the public interest targets are being adequately achieved. The next meeting is planned for Friday 13th April to review the results of the Count. Usual time and venue = Glenfinnan Hotel at 10am for 10.30am start. Possible that Habitat Monitoring training can take place in the afternoon of the same day if this can be organised. In regard to timings of meetings, most members and associates agreed that it was better to meet in the daytime rather than evening</p> <p>SNH will plan to meet with the Group Chairman and Secretary in March to review progress against the DMP targets.</p>	
12	<p>Administrative matters: Constitution, bank account, membership & subscriptions, Email/contact details</p> <p>The Treasurer reported that there was income of £9295 via member subscriptions, grants and refunds as against expected expenditure of £8,460 over the year leaving a balance carried forward of £875 after taking a small balance of £39 from 2016. The financial statement for the year will be posted on the website when concluded. Subscriptions are based on the member estate areas and cull numbers with additional sums for maintaining the DMP, habitat monitoring and administrative costs. Each member also</p>	

	<p>contributes proportionately to the ADMG subscription charged to the Group. The individual member subscriptions can therefore be expected to change annually and possibly reduce if there is less activity.</p> <p>Members in attendance at the AGM provided current email and mobile details.</p> <p>No changes to the constitution have been made over the year.</p>	
<p>13</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Sporting rates: There will be widespread appeals against the Assessor's Rateable Values but the exemptions proposed by SNH regarding exemption for delivery of the public interest are unlikely to be applied. The process is unlikely to be concluded in the next 2-3 years, especially with land type assessments being very generalised in current valuation.</p> <p>ADMG quarterly meetings: Dates will be circulated.</p> <p>Wild Boar: Forestry Commission trial of boar trapping. Fassfern noted fewer boar in current season, possibly arising from closer control & management of the population at Achnacarry. Exotic species spread to be closely monitored as evidence suggests spread of wild boar south of Fort William to Coruanan.</p>	
<p>14</p>	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Friday 13th April 2018, 10am for 10.30am. Glenfinnan Hotel AGM will be held on Friday 7th December 2018</p>	