West Lochaber
Deer Management Group

WEST LOCHABER DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP
Post-Count Meeting

Friday 27th April 2018
10.30 – 12.30hrs
Glenfinnan House Hotel, Glenfinnan

Minute

Attendees:	**Apologies:**
Alistair Gibson – (DMG Chairman) (ADMG rep), Glenfinnan Bruce Taylor – (DMG Secretary & Treasurer), Fassfern Ian Leith – Glenfinnan Raymond Fraser – Meoble Alan Currie – Fassfern/Achdalieu Michael Rhoden - Fassfern/Achdalieu Kate Tuer – Scottish Woodlands Graeme Taylor - SNH Alex MacDonald - Achnacarry south John Jackson – FES Stephen Grant – West Highland Hunting -Scamadale Peter Stewart-Sandiman - Ardnish Dr Oliver Moore - Habitat consultatnt	Pete MacLaren – Ranachan Mark & Sandra de Ferranti - Meoble, Mr James de Ferranti, Meoble Robert Spence - Scamadale James Coulston – Arisaig Steve Morris – WTS Loch Arkaig Paolo Berardelli - Glen Mamie Graham Nairn – Annat/Achanellan/Glen Fada

No.	Summary	Action
1	**Apologies and Introductions** As recorded above.	
2	**Members Reports.** **i) 2017/18 Hind Culls** **ii) Condition Report**	

Estate	Hinds No.	Av Wt(kg)	Av Age	Calves	Mortality	Comments
Glenfinnan	47	48	6	20	16	Thin near end of season.
Forest Enterprise	7			5	0	Condition fine until recently but poor in last 2-3 weeks. **5 roe, 8 roe buck, 6 kids, 55 Stags culled**

WTS Loch Arkaig	0			0		
Ranachan	11			4		
Meoble						
Achdalieu	60			39	25	Poor condition
Fassfern Forest	49			23		
Achnacarry South	68			32	25	Good condition until mid-Jan; then quickly becoming poor, although now improving.
Glen Loy (Nairn)	31			12		
Glen Mamie	20			4		Reasonable condition. Mortality notable in early April but not counted.
Ardnish	13			1	4	Mortality via RTA and train
Scamadale	6			3		
Arisaig	27			8		

3 Count Report

- Counted Monday12th March the initial figures are as follows. The final data will be presented by SNH after more detailed analysis of photos.

Property	Ha	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Density
ACHNACARRY - SOUTH	9435	574	697	184	1455	15
ARDNISH	1444	100	93	35	228	16
ARISAIG	3430	201	408	136	745	22
ARKAIG COMMUNITY FOREST	1080	3	14	6	23	2
BORRODALE FARM & ARD NAM BUTH POINT ETC	160	1	6	5	12	8
DRUIMINDARROCH HOUSE	67	0	8	2	10	15
FASSFERN	7798	195	441	148	784	10
FCS GLENLOY PINEWOOD & ADJ LAND	66	2	0	0	2	3
GLEN FIONNLIGHE	246	8	18	8	34	14
GLENANCROSS 3	140	7	1	0	8	6
GLENFINNAN	3398	100	235	63	398	12
GLENLOY	5532	144	157	65	366	7
GLENMAMIE ESTATE	1691	31	137	44	212	13
KINLOID	551	13	20	5	38	7
KINLOID FARM	663	12	4	2	18	3
LOCHEIL ESTATES	102	4	0	0	4	4
MEOBLE	8620	383	891	265	1539	18
MOY CROFTS	702	69	83	24	176	25
RANACHAN	1547	65	158	48	271	18
SCAMADALE	496	44	12	3	59	12
Total	**47168**	**1956**	**3383**	**1043**	**6382**	**14**

(Note: SNH count numbers remained unchanged after further analysis post-meeting except for 19 stags, 41 hinds and 8 calves being transferred from Achnacarry South to Glenloy)

- Apologies for severe lack of notice on same day following contact with James Coulston, Alistair Gibson and Alan Currie. Agreed to go ahead as conditions improving from west.

- Clear weather, went very well, no issues, four helicopters, South Achnacarry finished on Tuesday following.

- Figures indicate a higher hind population than required for sporting purposes. Difference between 2016 and 2018 = 1373 deer, but not Arisaig, Scamadale and Kinloid not counted in 2016.

Glenfinnan

- Due to short notice Raymond Fraser, Meoble stalker, was not able to join in with count. Broken snow cover on tops and west wind.
- Figures very similar to foot count, not surprising.
- Less hinds at Glenfinnan than expected but may have been elsewhere on the day. No impact on sporting/cull at Glenfinnan.

Fassfern/Achdalieu

- Numbers as expected. Valuable exercise.
- Deer where spread out widely, expected more hinds, long term average maintained.
- Jimmy/Chris (pilots) – very impressive skills

Meoble

- Stags numbers are increased.
- Hinds numbers require increased culls over next 5 years.
- Possibility of Sept & Oct hind cull would permit extraction of hinds by air.
- Owners would like to see density locations.
- Long term average maintained, felt no drastic action required

Ardnish

- Figures as expected,
- Calf survival promising.
- No changes to plans

FES Glen Loy

- Forestry excluded. No cull changes planned.

Achnacarry South

- Patchy snow meant that count was tricky but good result.
- Very impressive work by pilot (J Irvine). Helicopter very accurate.
- Hind cull to increase this year.
- 2016 count, 1300 more accurate number.

Scamadale

- Could GIS for deer count be provided?
- Very high numbers not seen since 1990's.
- 38% of count total.
- South Morar holding a large population, which is better news.
- Distribution of data will help future planning.

SNH comment

Last SNH helicopter count was 2001/2002. SNH has prioritised designated sites until 2016 when there was a change of policy and now expect greater input into DMGs, depending on budget.

The SNH count excludes dense 'forestry'. Woodland is counted where canopy cover is thin enough to allow visibility. Deer not counted imply that there are more deer in DMG than count will suggest.

SNH

Graeme to supply maps showing the helicopter route and deer density in each area counted.

DMG to create own population model as part of management e.g. cull targets etc. SNH can assist with this. Two examples were presented to the DMG for consideration which are appended to these Minutes.

As a comparison of the most recent foot counts, which exclude some properties, the following table was presented :

2016 Count Numbers	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total
Arisaig (N of A830)	133	325	110	568
Glenmamie Estate	31	137	44	204
Glenloy	165	198	73	436
Glenfinnan	100	235	63	398
Ranachan	65	158	48	271
Meoble	383	891	265	1564
Fassfern inc Glen Fion	203	459	156	818
Achnacarry (south) Inc Moy Crofts)	643	780	208	1454
2018 Totals	**1723**	**3183**	**967**	**5713**
DMG 2016	**1220**	**2400**	**720**	**4340**
Difference 2018 vs 2016	**503**	**783**	**247**	**1373**

4 Deer Management Plan – Update on progress

No change to plan, population model is next stage.

For the 2019 Audit there will be a review of the DMP targets, especially public interest matters. ADMG has offered to do a pre-2019 SNH audit and this will be considered. **Chair/Sec**

5 Habitat Assessment Plans and Training

£1,800 grant received from SNH, on application, for Habitat monitoring training, advice and assistance.

Native Woodland Survey 2017

Sampled 1% of woodland area using 12m radius plots to assess damage to young trees. 67% of trees noted as undamaged appears good but this is an artefact of the assessment method = seedlings & saplings combined.

Treeline/montane woods are very poor and many areas showed current moribund woodland cover with high numbers of seedlings but no new trees. Birch & rowan are not preferentially grazed so the level of damage indicates heavy browse at certain times of the year (eg winter pressure. Browse does not have to be continuous for there to be no succession).

If woodland regeneration is an objective then exclosures required or a radical reduction in deer numbers to a level that would allow regen without fencing eg 3-4/$Km^{2.}$ A cull would have an impact on sporting enterprise in the short to medium term.

Any cull should focus on hinds hefted within 2Km as hefted hinds are not often replaced by incomers in the timescale required for woodland recovery.

Any enclosures would need to include a wider area than the original wood and a compensatory cull carried out for that loss of ground to the deer population.

Noted that at Meoble, close to the Loch, birch and heather doing well but inland the less disturbed areas of woodland are heavily browsed. At Arisaig the exclosures are doing well, with

	Highland cattle assisting to break up ground for regeneration. Also at Glenfinnan, good use of exclosures and transition from solid woodland to open ground. Worst areas are the remote areas at higher elevation. Upper end of Glen Mamie the native woodland has almost disappeared after decades of grazing. Fassfern has a relatively low deer density but the pressure is on woodland remnants in the remaining deer wintering area, so some sacrifice necessary due to previous enclosures of native woods for regen.. In Glen Mallie, Achnacarry, birchwood getting away despite heavy wintering pressure, possibly because there is good alternative vegetation in sufficient quantity. Noted that moribund trees can throw out more seed than healthy woods. Small enclosures may be better than larger. Funding available through the Forestry Commission FGS scheme for woodland creation and regeneration. Oliver to provide further maps from report to show impact and sheep location visually.	**Oliver**
	<u>Open Habitat Surveys 2018</u> Scheduling of surveys will depend on cash flow and estates being prepared to pay for external surveyors to do the monitoring. Costs have risen and accommodation over summer is less available or at a premium. Expectation = a maximum of 30 per category; therefore 60 per Estate if both blanket bog and dwarf shrub heath habitats present. At 5-6 plots/day, this is approx. 10 days work per Estate required. SNH has provided the random plot locations as GPS reference points that need to be mapped. These are to be rationalised based on estate size and scale of habitat – SNH to agree with DMG secretary. Costs could be spread by splitting 30 plots over 3 years but it would achieve a better baseline result if all done in one year, <u>by habitat type.</u> Estates who can help with staff time are welcome to do so and the understand & engage in the process while receiving training. Expectation is for DMG & SNH to address at least <u>one habitat type</u> this year. May & June preferred time to allow last year's browse to be differentiated from current years activity. Quotes currently being obtained for Dwarf Shrub Heath and Blanket Bog surveys. SNH to agree the number of random plots required. Woodland plots of 12m radius = approx. 45 mins – 1hr per plot. Open ground habitat = 2 sq m @ 20 minutes a plot + access time = 5 – 8 plots per day. If accessible to ATV, argo would assist in reducing walking time between plots and speed up process. Method of marking for future reference: • Heath and bog plots : GPS locations and use of wooden pegs. • Woodland : GPS locations and map. Not pegged. Estates using own survey method or contractor should make the data available to the DMG to ensure that there is a compete record. Ardnish will have all its own surveys completed by April 2019. Scamadale also doing own	**SNH/Sec** **Sec**
6	**Correspondence & Public Engagement** SCOPE newsletter available	

7	**Any other business** Engaging with public Outward Bound Bothy visitors Venture Trust 2 published articles (US) & (NZ) General visitors Glenfinnan Community Council SNH staff changes : There may be change of liaison officer following departure of Cathy Mayne earlier in year. Graeme will liaise closely with any new person in transition.	
10	**Date of next meeting** AGM will be held on Friday 7th December 2018	

Additional information : Population Model Examples presented at Meeting:

Example population model 1

Density Remains the same 1:1 stag to hind ratio

WLDMG DMG Open Range	*Stags*	*Hinds*	*Calves*	*Total*
2018 Spring Population (Count)	1956	3383	1043	6382
2018 Summer Population	2478	3905	1249	7631
2018/19 Cull	200	475	152	827
2018 Mortality	99	117	125	341
2019 Spring Population	2178	3312	972	6463
2019 Summer Population	2665	3799	1216	7679
2019/20 Cull	200	475	152	827
2019 Mortality	107	114	122	342
2020 Spring Population	2358	3210	942	6510
2020 Summer Population	2829	3681	1178	7688
2020/21 Proposed Cull	200	475	190	865
2020 Mortality	113	110	118	341
2021 Spring Population	2516	3095	870	6481
2021 Summer Population	2951	3530	1130	7611
2021/22 Proposed Cull	200	475	152	827
2021 Mortality	118	106	113	337
2022 Spring Population	2633	2949	865	6447
2022 Summer Population	3065	3382	1082	7529
2022/23 Proposed Cull	200	475	152	827
2022 Mortality	123	101	108	332
2023 Spring Population	2743	2805	822	6370
Difference vs 2018	787	-578	-221	-12

Only open range count area included
Calving Rate is set at average 32%- Calf cull rate set at 32%
Assumes delivery of forecasted culls
Assumes no
imegration/emigration
Mortality set at 4% St, 3%H, 10% Clf

Example population model 2

Population -15% 1:1 stag to hind ratio

WLDMG DMG Open Range	*Stags*	*Hinds*	*Calves*	*Total*
2018 Spring Population (Count)	1956	3383	1043	6382
2018 Summer Population	2478	3905	1249	7631
2018/19 Cull	260	550	176	986
2018 Mortality	99	117	125	341
2019 Spring Population	2118	3237	948	6304
2019 Summer Population	2593	3712	1188	7492
2019/20 Cull	260	550	176	986
2019 Mortality	104	111	119	334
2020 Spring Population	2229	3050	893	6172
2020 Summer Population	2675	3497	1119	7291
2020/21 Proposed Cull	260	550	176	986
2020 Mortality	107	105	112	324
2021 Spring Population	2308	2842	831	5981
2021 Summer Population	2724	3257	1042	7024
2021/22 Proposed Cull	260	550	176	986
2021 Mortality	109	98	104	311
2022 Spring Population	2355	2610	762	5727
2022 Summer Population	2736	2991	957	6684
2022/23 Proposed Cull	260	550	176	986
2022 Mortality	109	90	96	295
2023 Spring Population	2367	2351	685	5403
Difference vs 2018	411	-1032	-358	-979