

West Lochaber Deer Management Group

WEST LOCHABER DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP AGM

Friday 6th December 2019

10.30 – 12.45hrs

Glenfinnan Lodge, Glenfinnan Estate

Minute

Attendees:

Alistair Gibson – (DMG Chairman) (ADMG rep),
Glenfinnan
Bruce Taylor – (DMG Secretary & Treasurer), Fassfern
James Colston - Arisaig
Mr James de Ferranti, Meoble
Mrs Sandra de Ferranti, Meoble
Raymond Fraser – Meoble
Robert Spence - Scamadale
Graham Nairn – Annat/Achanellan/Glen Fada
Gary Servant – Native Woods Coop & NW Coast AWR
project
Alan Currie – Fassfern/Achdaliu
Michael Rhoden - Fassfern/Achdaliu
Paolo Berardelli - Glen Mamie
Niall Rowantree – Ardnish
Craig Higgins - Glenfinnan
John Morrison - Achnacarry Sporting
Alex MacDonald - Achnacarry south
John Jackson – FLS
Sinclair Coghill – SNH
Kate Tuer – Scottish Woodlands
PC Hugo Martin (Mallaig) Wildlife Crime Officer

Apologies:

Andrew MacMaster, SNH
Pete MacLaren – Ranachan
Peter Stewart-Sandiman - Ardnish
Mark de Ferranti - Meoble,
John Tulloch - Fassfern/Achdaliu
Steve Morris – WTS Loch Arkaig
Simon Laird - Achnacarry Sporting
Ian Leith and Jane Mitchell – Glenfinnan
Anne MacNaughton – Morar

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 updated on current wildlife crime cases including illegal bait, Golden Eagle disturbance, seagull disturbance, disturbance to bats, poaching of deer in Ballachulish (ongoing) and north side of Loch Morar, Sea Eagles – attempts to disturb.

RTAs : changed method of recording via mobiles (See <http://www.deercollisions.co.uk/pages/OhDeer.html>).
None reported in last 12 months
Email PC Hugo Martin Hugo.Martin@scotland.pnn.police.uk or phone 101.

4 Minutes of the last AGM and any Matters Arising

Minutes proposed for acceptance by Sandra de Ferranti, seconded by Raymond Fraser.
No matters arising from the Minutes.

5. Members Reports

- i) 2019 Culls (Please bring returns or email figures in advance)
- ii) Condition Report etc
- iii) Proposed Hind and Stag Cull for 2019/20

Estate	Stags			Hind Cull To date/Target	Recruitmt %	Comments
	No.	Av Wt(kg)	Av Age			
Glenfinnan	25	88	8.5	40	30-33%	12 hinds culled to date
Forest Enterprise	9			3 to date		Lower numbers in forest than normal but good condition. 2 stags = Loy; 7 stags = Glen Mallie
WTS Loch Arkaig	2			2 to date		Focus currently on deer fence maintenance. Much disturbance due to road construction works Achnacarry Sporting Lease
Glen Loy Forest						Achnacarry Sporting Lease
Ranachan	6	90.8	9.0	15		
Meoble	40	93.3	9.0	21/70	21-22%	Good condition
Achdalieu	38	90.8	9.0	40-50	29%	Decent rut.
Fassfern Forest	48					+ 5 Sika Stags + 1 boar seen but now gone Corrected from 98 after Minutes Issued. 20 in season 28 out of season
Achnacarry South Hill	48	93.3	9.0		25% ?	Some large mature stags. Max =127Kg
Glen Loy (Naim)	17	79	10	18/35	25%-28%	Good rut and condition good. Hinds also looking good and population ok. Corrected after Minutes Issued- wrong way round
Glen Mamie	16 (+1				27-30%	Early rut

		woods)						
	Ardnish	10	93.3	6.0	8/10	28%	Large mature stags noted	
	Scamadale	7			12		Rut started 26/09 but tailed off rapidly after second week of Oct. Large nos of hinds and Sika increasing. No boar recorded.	
	Arisaig	17	89.5	9.0	13/50	25%	Early rut that tailed off rapidly	
6	Count organisation for 2020 No count in 2019; therefore a foot count will be carried out in 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinator - Craig Higgins & AlastairGibson • 12 men required from all Estates. 3 From Fassfern & 3 from Glenfinnan. • Those not able to supply can assist by paying for contract personnel and recommending names. Marines via Project Artimus used in neighbouring DMG estate ref Niall Rowantree – could be useful as fit and good at navigation. • February- March – avoid first weeks after hinds due to hols. Weather dependant. • 5 day count. 							CH/AG
7	Venison Markets Most sell to Simpson game; currently £2.20/kg + £0.10 for SQWV Fyne Game supplied by Fassfern and Arisaig. Highland Game = Achnacarry							
9	ADMG - Report and Discussion SNH Report to the Scottish Government "Assessing Progress in Deer Management" recently published based on most recent audit of DMGs. See https://www.nature.scot/assessing-progress-deer-management-snh-report-scottish-government ADMG has produced a response in a "Forward Look" paper that the 48 DMG's are doing a good job and demonstrating that collaborative management works. Upland deer sector is not part of the problem but part of the solution. Average deer density now <10/ha ² . ADMG members are leading by example in achieving climate change & public interest targets. Niall Rowantree highlighted the potential impact of the current DEFRA consultation on trophy hunting in Scotland (not a devolved issue). The worst case scenario is a complete ban on the export of antler, hide, teeth, bone & horn so items such as walking sticks and sporrans fall within the scope of trophy products. Consultation ends 25 th January 2020. Individual responses can be made via https://consult.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-management/trophy-hunting-consultation/ . Niall and Alex MacDonald to prepare a DMG response.							NR
9	Delivery of Public Interest Objectives in DMP Population modelling Our first population model was based on a recruitment figure of 35%, giving unrealistic results. We have 20 years of cull and count data which can be used to show population							ALL

trends at given cull levels although SNH advise that is is better to use the most recent & accurate helicopter count of 2018. The recruitment level was shown to be only 19%; this appearing low given the numbers given at this meeting.

Sinclair advises using reverse modelling = data between two helicopter counts to create a model. SNH use accepted averages of 2% mortality for adults, 4% for calves and 30% recruitment. The SNH expectation is for recruitment to run at 30% in this DMG if forage available. Accurate recruitment data needs to be obtained by all estates to be useful in the model. Start with a model with basic data, set a target number & tolerances based on DMG/estate objectives, and update annually with count and recruitment details to develop a more accurate working model over several years.

Relationship with Habitat Monitoring needs more work as many DMGs struggling with this and the SWARD model for handling habitat data being developed by SNH remains at a trial stage due to funding constraints. The WLDMG habitat monitoring showed low impacts over much of the range except for unprotected native woodland sites.

The last count showed a large number of hinds in the west part of the DMG; being in excess of 2:1 in many instances. This needs to be adjusted down to limit population growth and allow an increase in stags on these areas. Climate change will be leading to improved survival & productivity. Other factors, potentially related to climate change, such as increased fire hazard, also impacting on habitats.

Mortality figures ref roads and railway need to be included. RTA data is collected on by SNH and all members can submit numbers to the website or smart phone app (see <http://www.deercollisions.co.uk/pages/OhDeer.html>)

A Population Model aims to support the DMG & member estates in achieving their objectives but appreciate that there are many variables in terms of terrain and annual weather conditions to consider. DMG will continue under spotlight for not managing the resource opportunity.

Delivery of Designated Features into Favourable Condition

A Forestry Co-Operation application is being made for Ardnish, Glen Mamie, Arisaig and neighbouring crofters in relation to the SAC and adjoining Ancient Woodlands. This will fund a survey of woodland condition, rhododendron and impacts for which grants funding may be available to rectify.

Discussions ongoing regarding impact of fires and relationship with steam train activity.

Management of Deer for Retention & Expansion of Native Woodland

Ongoing management and monitoring.

Woodland Expansion by new planting

- Fassfern – Camus Darach wood (70ha) enclosed and new planting. Ancient Woodland at Uachan being considered for enclosure & regeneration.
- Meoble – considering ideas and opportunities for enclosing native woods for regeneration.
- Glen Mamie – collaboration on SAC.
- Ardnish – had plans but high risk of loss to fire has resulted in these being

ALL

ALL

deferred.

Monitoring & Managing Deer Impacts in the Wider Countryside:eg via Habitat monitoring

Habitat monitoring completed although reporting remains outstanding with contractor. Random plots may not usefully represent the habitat range but were provided by SNH from the best available large scale data set (LCS88 National Vegetation Survey). 3 yearly repetition planned for open hill habitats.

Carbon impacts via Peatland management schemes

While there is not a lot of blanket bog within the DMG area the larger parts are in crofting tenure where there is less opportunity for management.

WTS at Arkaig Forest are restoring peatlands currently under conifer forest.

Management of Non-native Invasive Species

Much less Feral pig activity. One seen at Fassfern and activity noted at Glen Loy. At Achnacarry 36 shot last year and 9 this year. A small population known to exist (eg 1 sow and 4 piglets) but hind staking taking precedence.

Protection of Historic and Cultural Features

No report

Delivering High Standards of Competence in Deer Management

100% of member estates have DSC2 qualified personnel.

Contributing to Public Health and Well Being

More Lyme Disease reported in the group including Achnacarry and Meoble this season Meoble looking at a vaccine produced in Germany.

Maximising the Economic Benefits of Deer Management Maximising the Economic Benefits of Deer Management

Niall Rowantree organises individual estate labelled venison sales and around 400kg of sales to hotels in Glasgow. Packaging is done locally. Glenfinnan House Hotel takes 500kg annually ex Glenfinnan. Demand is climbing all the time.

Minimising the Economic Cost of Deer

Nothing to report

Effective Communication on Deer Management Issues

ADMG's publication "e-Scope" is available to all. Sign up on <https://us12.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=d3fc8c5fa7488240ad43cd222&id=9b75d86623>

Safeguarding Deer Welfare

	<p>Ref Chronic Wasting Disease, clients have to clean kit if coming from Europe, Scandinavian and America. No reports in UK but 3-4 cases in north of Scandanavia.</p> <p>Railway fencing – 1.4m fence replacing stock fence. Network Rail agreed to remove/not use barb if no stock adjacent. Aim is mainly to keep people off the railway but is a definite welfare issue for deer that become trapped on the line and cannot escape over the fence from a downhill start point.</p> <p>DMG has bi-annual meetings with Network Rail but a letter regarding the impact on deer & other wildlife suggested plus a video prepared by Niall Rowantree.</p>	BT
<p>10</p>	<p>SNH - Report</p> <p>SNH Report on Progress in Deer Management in Scotland published last week. See https://www.nature.scot/assessing-progress-deer-management-snh-report-scottish-government Much more favourable than last time recording the “significant progress made by landowners and managers”. Regional trends also in reports.</p> <p>Main request by SNH on WLDMG is to get the count accurate, get the population model underway, measure the habitat.</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Deer Management Plan - review</p> <p>The Activity Schedule in the DMP as been updated after the SNH Audit in current year and can be found on our website. Only a few amber issues remain, mainly relating to the population model and link to habitat monitoring.</p> <p>Much good work done by Alistair Gibson in public information in schools, cruise ships, community councils and to local visitors to estate. Collaboration with East Sheil DMG and Moidart DMG on oakwoods protection and regeneration. Prof Hugh Cheape’s report circulated and to be put on website.</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>Administrative matters: Constitution, bank account, membership & subscriptions, Email/contact details</p> <p>eScope keeps all up to date. https://us12.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=d3fc8c5fa7488240ad43cd222&id=9b75d86623</p> <p>The DMG bank balance remains has a positive balance with an expectation of an invoice from our Habitat Survey contractor at some point. Contractor to be chased up once more for report and billing.</p>	

13	Any other business Thanks to Glenfinnan Estate for hosting the AGM and providing a much appreciated light lunch.	
14	Date of next meeting AGM will be held on Friday 4th December 2020	