

West Lochaber Deer Management Group

WEST LOCHABER DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP AGM

Friday 4th December 2020

Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/92182410237?pwd=Nnd4UFlzTFIQMTdpd01EQ3U5RnNYdz09>

Meeting ID: 921 8241 0237

Passcode: 545833

10.00 – 12.00hrs

Minute

Attendees:

Alistair Gibson – (DMG Chairman) (ADMG rep),
Glenfinnan
Bruce Taylor – (DMG Secretary & Treasurer), Fassfern
James Colston - Arisaig
James de Ferranti, Meoble
Sandra de Ferranti, Meoble
Raymond Fraser – Meoble
Robert Spence - Scamadale
Alan Currie – Fassfern/Achdaliu
Henry Dobson – WTS Loch Arkaig
Simon Laird - Achnacarry Sporting
Ian Leith and Jane Mitchell – Glenfinnan
Peter Stewart-Sandiman - Ardnish
Andrew MacMaster, NatureScot
Cathy Mayne – Ecologist : Mountain Environment
Services

Apologies:

Pete MacLaren – Ranachan
Mark de Ferranti - Meoble,
John Tulloch - Fassfern/Achdaliu
Graham Nairn – Annat/Achanellan/Glen Fada
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
Kate Tuer – Scottish Woodlands
PC Hugo Martin (Mallaig) Wildlife Crime Officer
Ian Collier – Scottish Forestry

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

3 Wildlife Crime, Poaching, Road Traffic Accidents

PC Hugo Martin has given his apologies.

RTAs : Glenfinnan section = 2 deaths per month. Figures are recorded on the Community Council Minutes.
 Method of recording via mobiles (See <http://www.deercollisions.co.uk/pages/OhDeer.html>)
 Email PC Hugo Martin Hugo.Martin@scotland.pnn.police.uk or phone 101 for any other incidents.

4 Minutes of the last AGM and any Matters Arising

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

5. Members Reports

- i) 2020 Culls
- ii) Condition Report etc
- iii) Proposed Hind and Stag Cull for 2020/21

Estate	Stags			Hind Cull To date/Target	Recruitmt %	Comments
	No.	Av Wt(kg)	Av Age			
Glenfinnan	29	92	9.8	40		Lots of mature stags around. Rut steady. Calving looks above 30% Now many good hinds - 15 culled to date
FLS Loy and Mallie	0					No contractor in place in current year. Enclosed forestry.
WTS Loch Arkaig	6			30		Hind target will depend on effort and possibly more than 30
Glen Loy Forest	0					Achnacarry Sporting Lease
Ranachan	5	90.8	9.0	15		
Meoble	41	92.07	9.0	60	21-22%	Good condition. Target for hinds =60
Achdaliu	30	86	9.2	40	29%	Steady rut and good condition although lower weights despite this
Fassfern Forest	33	69				25 in season and 8 out of season; incl 2 Sika Stags. Enclosed forestry
Achnacarry South Hill	41	89.5	9.1		25%	Good condition. Max =123Kg Hind cull to start early Jan
Glen Loy (Nairn)	16			30		
Glen Mamie	18			24	27-30%	Early rut

Ardnish	6			12	28%	Hind target = 12
Scamadale	4	60		10		Reduced stags 4 hinds, 3 calves and 1 sika.to date; target 10
Arisaig	7			50	25%	No guests so not a great stag season. Large old stags taken so good effort. Hinds to date are poor and liver fluke noted in woodland animals

6 Count organisation for 2021

No count in 2020 except by individual estates eg Fassfern and Achnacarry; Fassfern noted a higher number of hinds than expected in Glen DubhLigh (+150) so will count again this year. Beneficial if Achnacarry west would count to check this figure. WTS will count the woodland area possibly with thermal imaging drone; avoiding tree collisions!

West side of group will count. Arisaig will count annually for next few years. Aim to cover 90% of the ground subject to weather and personnel. Meoble will support a foot count and may do a later helicopter count

- 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.
- February- March – avoid first weeks after hinds due to hols. Weather dependant.
- 5 day count.

CH/AG

7 Venison Markets

Venison price approx. halved compared to last year eg £1.00/kg

Simpson game will continue to trade and collect carcasses with a focus on one German buyer. Rumours about no collections beyond the end of 2020 are untrue. SQWV venison continues to achieve a small premium

NatureScot - Delivering the cull to support the population model is a priority. Population model shows clear difference between east and west of DMG which is concerning, especially in regard to designated sites, native woodlands and movement onto adjoining DMG areas. Looking for change in management regime in west.

Noted that Arisaig has doubled its cull and Meoble has also increased cull, working with NatureScot using an out-of-season licence to obtain an early hind cull.

NatureScot require not just an increment to be taken but views between the agency and members in area differ on the extent of the cull required to ensure that no radical increase in population occurs that would appear to be shown from model.

Counts are important to checking the model as past increased culls could have a lag in achieving the intended population reduction.

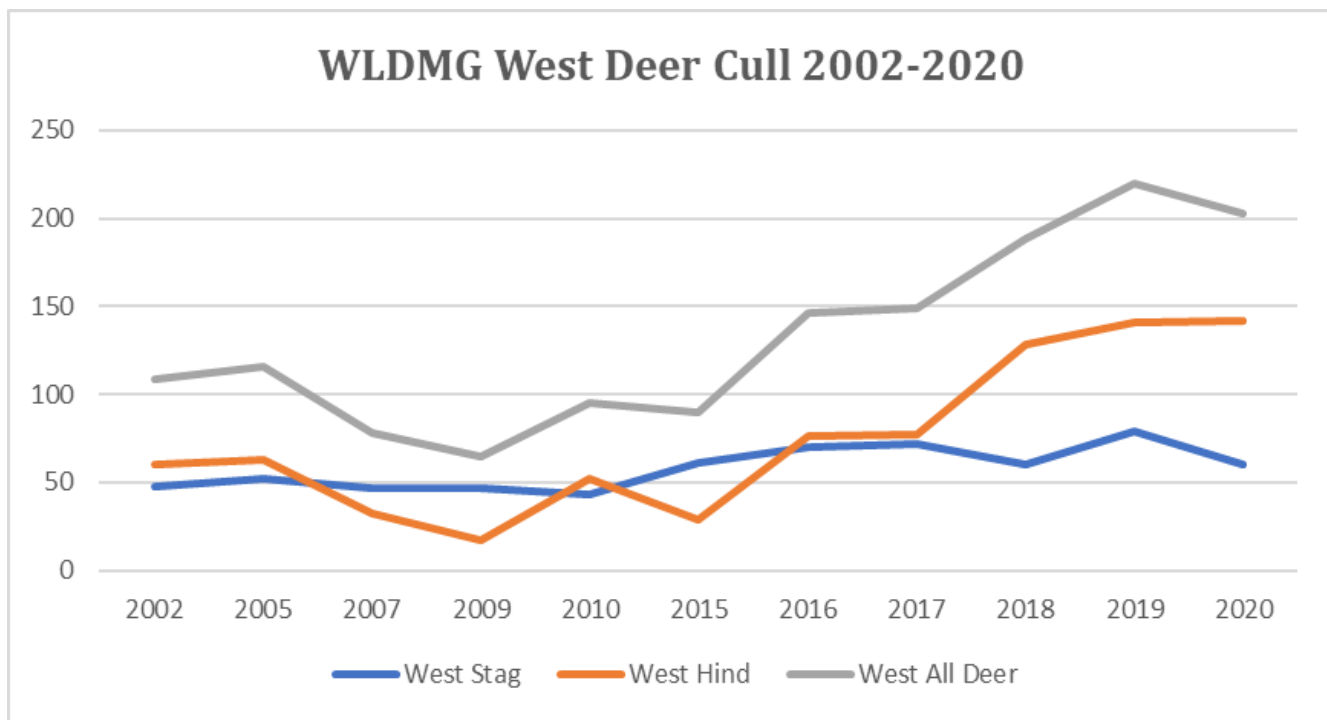
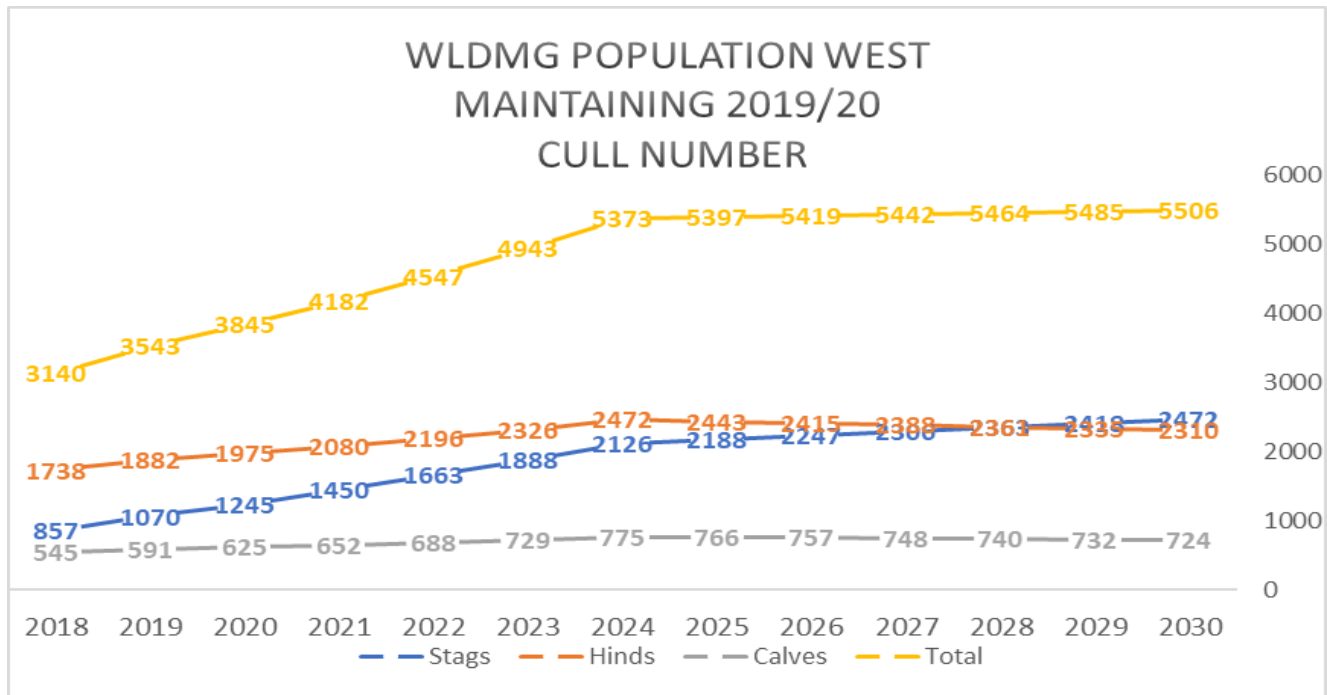
Graphs shown of past sheep and deer densities in the DMG areas which demonstrate reduced density of herbivores. Sheep may be less mobile

NatureScot emphasis is on Beasdale Woods where sheep have not been present in large numbers. Message is that there is an urgent need to turn around the deer population increase noted in the DMG model and NatureScot model.

Threat of s7 Agreement being imposed or reputational damage to DMG depends on a solution being forthcoming and population management. The regulatory options have been mentioned in correspondence over past year. This can be a positive and engaging

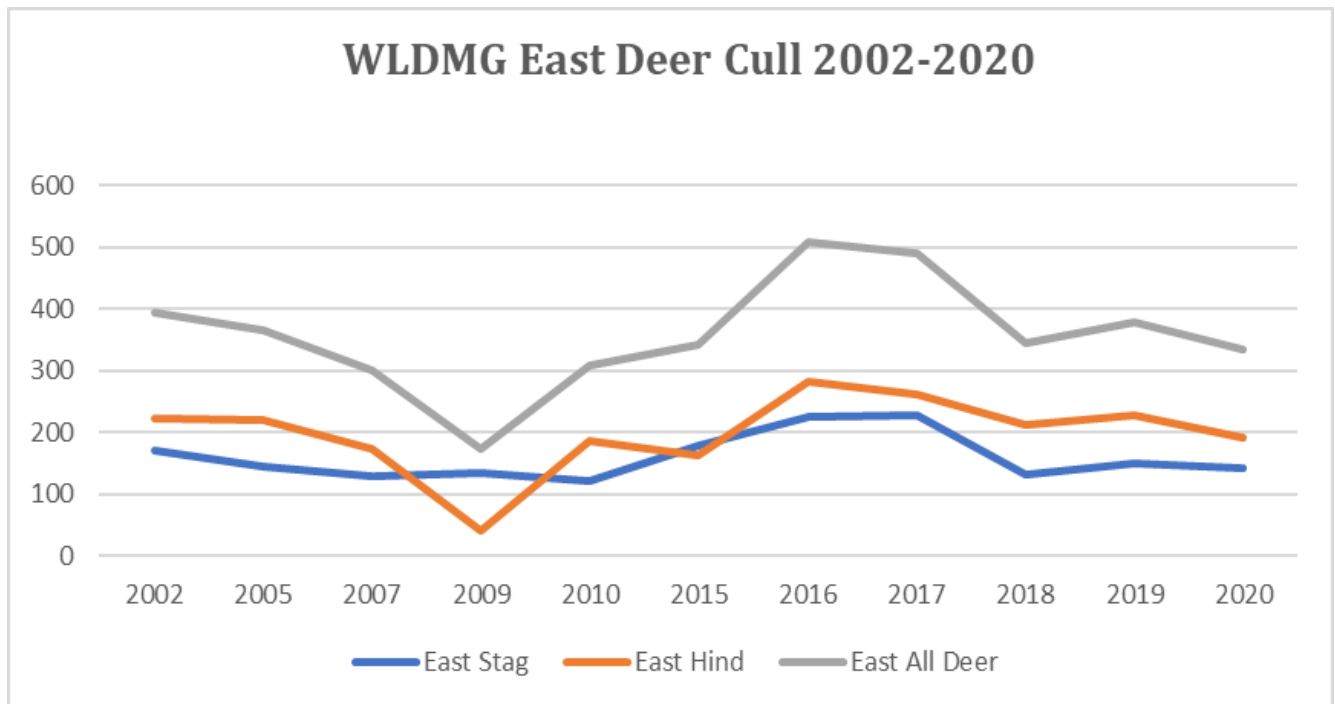
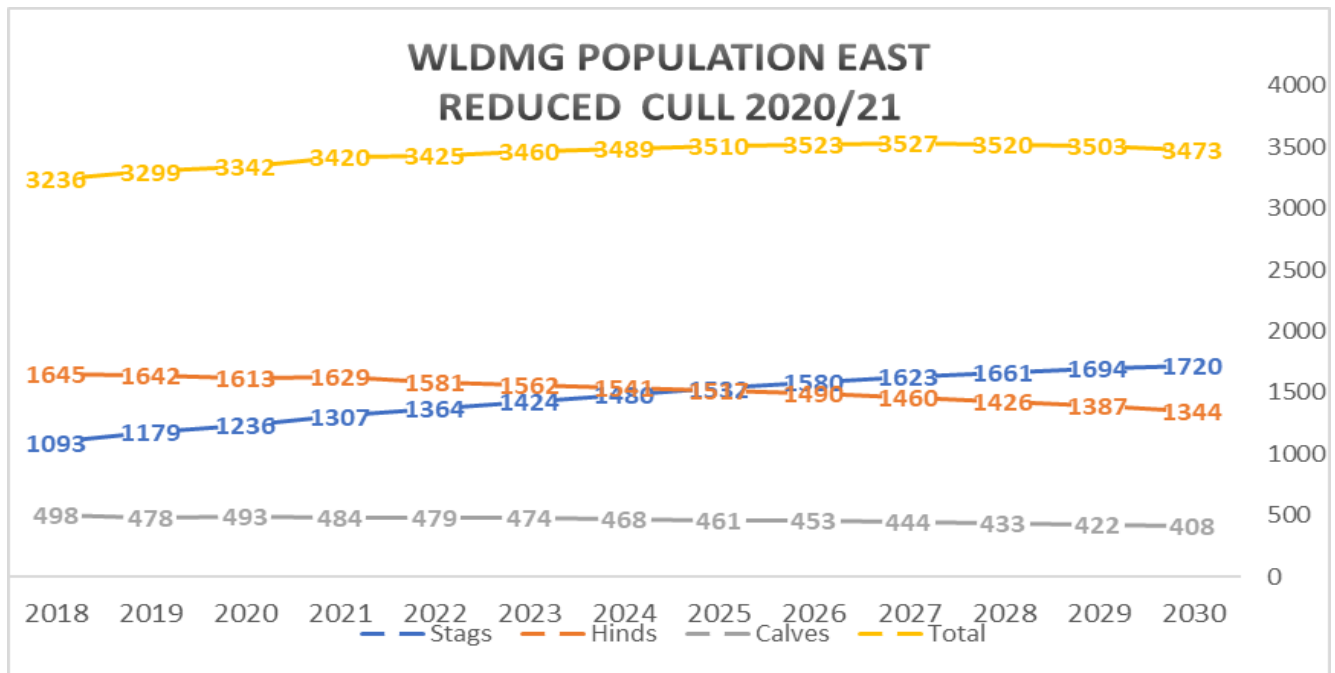
	<p>situation with support from NatureScot eg Fannich Hills has achieved a result using s7 and this Agreement is now coming to an end as objectives have been achieved.</p> <p>Three main tools of population management = Habitat Assessment, Counting and Culling which all work together and needs more than a year to demonstrate the outcomes. DMG believes that it is going in the right direction and is using the tools appropriately. Good data in = good data out.</p> <p>DSH survey next year using an even distribution across the area (rather than clustered) will give a good handle on the sustainability of the population. Interpretation of site notes and hot spots will also assist in reporting population impacts by this time next year. Cathy Mayne is being appointed to carry out the survey.</p> <p>At Arisaig after over 3 years of increased culling there is a noticeable reduction in deer density. Recognised that it is a slow process and should be measured in decades rather than just over 1-3 years.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>ADMG - Report and Discussion</p> <p>AG input as chairman: "What have I done for you" reported on the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 03/03/20 : Holyrood reception "Upland Deer Management; a Voluntary Approach" sponsored by Stewart Stevenson MSP. To inform MSPs and officials on the significant progress made in upland deer management by the DMGs over last few years. • Contributing as ADMG representative to ADMG AGM on 18/11/20 • Representing WLDMG to ADMG and executive • Collaboration with neighbouring DMGs eg East Sheil DMG and Moidart DMG on oakwoods protection and regeneration based around Prof Hugh Cheape's report of 2019 • Local WLDMG office bearers meetings on a regular basis • Due to Covid, no Community Council meetings, schools or cruise ship talks. <p>ADMG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADMG's publication "e-Scope" is available to all. continues to be good source of information with 34 publications over the year. Review of upland deer sector demonstrating collaborative management. Sign up on https://us12.listmanage.com/subscribe?u=d3fc8c5fa7488240ad43cd222&id=9b75d86623 • Scottish Environmental LINK Deer Manifesto – managing deer for climate, communities and conservation. A document with clear political intent which can be partially agreed with but recommendations such as statutory cull setting and a mass cull of over 50% of the red deer population are taken issue with. • Deer Working Group – Suggesting a heavy reduction in deer numbers which will have a devastating effect on an important rural industry in the remotest parts of Scotland. Denouncing deer and other herbivores giving a figure of two sheep to one deer in North Scotland. 	
<p>9</p>	<p>Delivery of Public Interest Objectives in DMP</p> <p><u>Population modelling</u></p> <p>Covered in previous discussion under item 7.</p>	

WEST MODEL

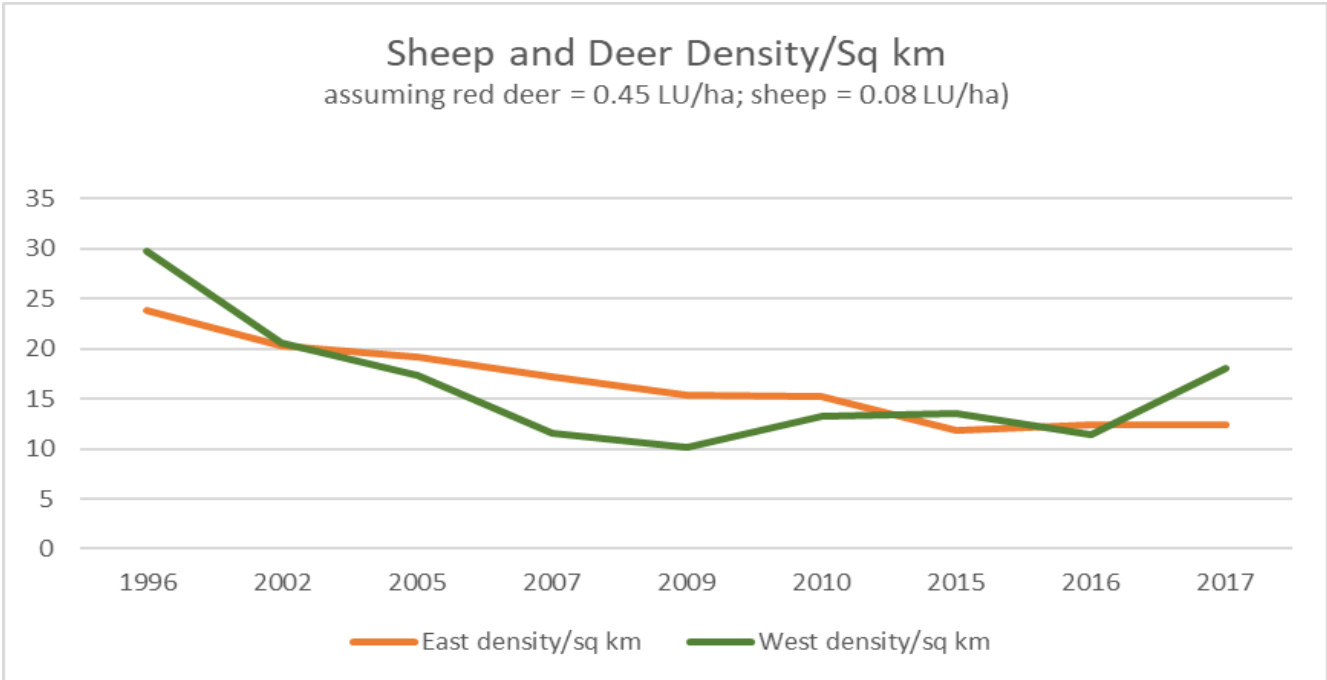
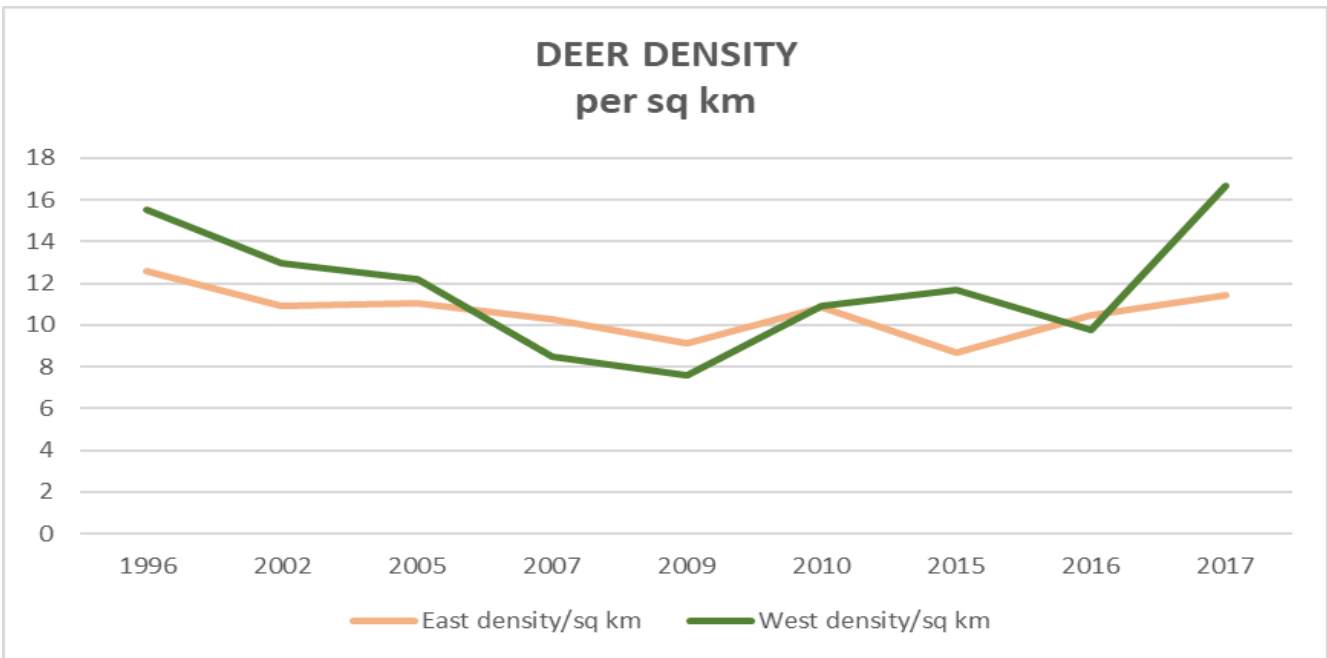


ALL

EAST MODEL



RS



Delivery of Designated Features into Favourable Condition

Glen Beasdale SSSI/SAC : Arisaig are proposing large scale regeneration and rhododendron control projects within the designated area. NatureScot has commented on the Arisaig LTFP but has no comfort from what has been received to date in protecting the native woodland interest although looks forward to seeing the new proposals. Noted that the designated area covers more than just Arisaig and better that all involved.

Management of Deer for Retention & Expansion of Native Woodland

Ongoing management and monitoring.

Woodland Expansion by new planting

- Glenfinnan – significant indigenous Atlantic Oakwood woodland protection and expansion mainly by regeneration of 6 enclosures of around 150ha.
- Fassfern – Annat wood (=100ha) enclosed and new planting including existing oakwood
- Scamadale – conversion of over 40ha of conifer to native woodlands over the next 5 years
- Meoble – natural regeneration already occurring on Morar lochside following increased cull. This will be monitored for success before any further decisions taken on enclosure ideas as the aim is to avoid making negative human impacts by use of deer fencing and planting which are a last resort.
- Ardnish – had plans but high risk of loss to fire has resulted in these being deferred as it is not possible to get insurance economically. Indemnity insurance from steam strain suggested to make viable.
- WTS – LTFP commits to removing the conifers over next 7 years and returning this area to native woodland; mainly by natural regeneration. An additional 90ha of regeneration will be enclosed. Collaboration in modelling of native woodland habitats suggested to allow assist predictions arising from changes in management.

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

First year of monitoring will focus on DSH and, in second year, blanket bog. In the third year, within these areas native woodlands that are accessible to deer will be recorded to quantify existing and future potential for native woodland regeneration. In total, a 5 year commitment to monitoring.

The native woodland survey carried out 3 years ago will be reviewed to inform future monitoring. Focus on that survey was areas identified by NWSS where impacts from herbivores were identified as high or very high so a broader assessment intended.

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 150ha approx. of peatlands currently under conifer forest.

Scamadale – areas of deep peat will not be replanted. Regeneration will be accepted if it occurs.

Management of Non-native Invasive Species

Glenfinnan – *Phytophthora* infection in rhododendron to be dealt with.

Arisiag – Rhododendron control plan previously noted.

Scamadale – Increasing Sika deer population. Munjac (x4) possibility recorded near Traigh earlier in year. Research being undertaken by Stan Whittiker so will update. Risk of introductions for sporting purposes. Kinloid Farm has been overrun with foxes this year with no apparent explanation. Only one feral pig recorded earlier and not seen

again.

Ardnish – feral pigs recorded this season.

WTS – camera traps set up to record feral pig density. Data can be shared.

Achnacarry – South Loch Arkaig still have a presence of feral pigs. NatureScot or FLS policy questioned as there is no policy evident. Wild pig project using drop nets and corral traps undertaken. NatureScot’s own policy has not changed over past two years but aims to remove from their own properties and limit spread elsewhere. No movement on eradication or acceptance.

Fassfern – last feral pig recorded in September 2018.

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

RTAs reported in police report.

Scamadale - Tick borne encephalitis samples taken to contribute to research project. No results yet but will be shared.

Damage to grazings by 50 deer at Glen Mamie crofts reported earlier in year. No further complaints from that location. Crofter’s uncontrolled muirburn noted to have caused habitat damage in previous years.

Muirshearlich crofting group having discussions with Achnacarry about re-instating deer fencing between Fassfern and Achnacarry after increased evidence of deer on in-bye land.

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

Fassfern – now set up as a venison dealer after downturn with expectation of selling around 200 carcasses a year to local wholesalers.

Glenfinnan and Achnacarry also have venison dealers licences while Niall Rowantree organises individual estate labelled venison sales and around 400kg of sales to hotels in Glasgow. Packaging is done locally.

Minimising the Economic Cost of Deer

Nothing to report

Effective Communication on Deer Management Issues

West Lochaber DMG website, hosted by ADMG, is up to date.

Safeguarding Deer Welfare

	<p>Railway fencing – Scamadale reports that the 1.4m fence erected from Arisaig is trapping deer and one hind found dead after being trapped by leg below top barb. Network Rail agreed to remove/not use barb if no stock adjacent but comments cannot be retrospective. Deer leaps being trialled on Far North Line.</p> <p>WLDMG communicates well with Network Rail so greater member attendance at next meeting in Spring 2021 suggested.</p> <p>Point of contact in Network Rail is ian.stone@networkrail.co.uk or gary.maxtone@networkrail.co.uk</p> <p>Chronic wasting disease – no update as minimal foreign visitors in 2020</p>	
10	<p>SNH - Report</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Damage to native woodland habitats – already discussed as above 2. Request that members look at their habitat assessments and link to population model to adjust management where necessary 3. All owners to achieve their hind cull 4. Habitat loss and climate change high on the Scottish Government agenda which links to habitat assessment. May link to habitat assessment and DMG targets. <p>The Biodiversity Challenge Fund Round 3 is about to open for large scale proposals in excess of around £100,000 for woodland expansion or natural regeneration by deer fencing and deer reduction. 100% funding from Central funds is available to charities and private owners who meet the criteria of the grant scheme.</p> <p>With recorded ongoing reductions in annual deer density on South Achnacarry and no habitat impacts evident then deer population can be managed over a longer period than a year. Proposed that the hind cull may be reduced this season but will catch up again in future years. NatureScot would view management at Achnacarry to be proactive, dealing with invasive non-native species, has no designated sites, communicates with local crofters and community and has a history of good management but not all owners in the Group are in the same position.</p>	ALL
11	<p>Deer Management Plan - review</p> <p>DMP due for review in 2021. To date most estates are achieving cull targets and intend to continue to do so.</p> <p>NatureScot request that an updated population model is provided as soon as possible after the meeting and data collected on hind cull targets. The planned count for the Spring is relevant to this data as are the proposed plans for woodland regeneration where some compensatory cull of deer hefted to these areas is to be expected.</p> <p>Alistair Gibson has had reduced public interaction due to Covid as intimated.</p>	
12	<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>	

	The DMG bank balance is healthy positive balance which can be directed towards habitat monitoring over the next 5 years. Scamadale has carried out habitat monitoring this year (30 plots DSH) which will be compiled and shared.	RS
13	Any other business Cathy will be in touch with individual estates about access and request that Meoble and Achnacarry assist with boat access There being no other business the meeting was closed at mid-day. .	CM
14	Date of next meeting AGM will be held on Friday 3 rd December 2021	