

**Meeting of Knoydart Deer Management Group
Held at the Alexandria Hotel, Fort William
on Monday 12th June 2017 at 10.30am**

Present

Sir Patrick Grant
Lady Grant
Elisabeth Brouwer van Basten Batenburg
Dirk Brouwer
Madrid Brouwer
Graham Waugh
Alex MacDonald
Simon Laird
Donald Cameron
Alex Macnay
John Jackson
Paul Bekier
Iain Biggart
John Crosthwaite Eyre
Rupert Soames
Robert Cooper
Robert Grant
Lynda Campbell
John Cameron
Graeme Taylor
Linzi Seivwright

Estates/Agency

Chair/Glen Dessary
Glen Dessary
Barisdale
Barisdale
Barisdale
Barisdale
Achnacarry Sporting
Achnacarry Sporting
Achnacarry
North Morar Estate
Forest Enterprise Scotland
Forest Enterprise Scotland
Kilchoan
Camusrory
Camusrory
Camusrory
Nevis/Morar Lodge
Kingie
Kingie
SNH
Secretary

1. Apologies.

John Gordon Lochournhead
Lea Macnally Glengarry Community Council

2. Draft Minutes of Meeting held on 12th June 2016 and Matters Arising (Paper 1).

These were approved by the meeting. There were no matters arising from the meeting.

3. Estate Reports

At the previous meeting, the Group had agreed to meet in June to agree final cull targets. The following proposed culls were indicated:

Property	Stag Cull 2016	Hind Cull 2016/17	Calf Cull 2016/17	General Comments
Kingie	13	21	8	At the beginning of August the estate had counted 234 stags (30 down from previous count). Average weight of stags was 14 st 12.5 and average age 10.5 years. 13 th September first roar, by 12 th October had stopped shooting. Generally dry season with lack of mature stags. 12 blanks days with no mature stags to shoot. Sometimes seeing groups of 23/30 stags with nothing shootable – rut stags holding hinds that wouldn't normally. During the Hinds the estate needs boat access to more than half of the ground. From November to first half of January the estate had been unable to take access by boat as the loch was too low. It had been a particularly mild winter. As a result the hind cull had been half of what had been intended. There had been lots of big calves with few mature hinds without a calf. Average hind weight 7.5 st, average age 8.2 years. 38% of hinds in calf. Average calf weight 3 st 5.75, sex ratio 1:1. Recruitment count was 53% (205 hinds and 109 calves) plus 40 stags counted with groups. Count planned for late August and 15-20 stags planned for 2017.
Nevis/ Morar Lodge	5	6	1	Average stag weight was 11 ¼ st with the heaviest at 14.5 st and average age of 7. There had been 6 hinds and 1 calf inside the fence. Average hind weight 8 ¼ st. Recruitment count carried out on 30 th April showed 42.65%. There had been 17 sika shot at Morar Lodge: 5stags, 8 hinds and 4 calves.
Camusrory	15	6 plus 1 ill.	5	There had only been a couple of weeks at the stags as there were not many hinds around. Proposed cull for next year likely to be 15 stags, 15-20 hinds plus calves. The first calf had been spotted on the 9 th June. Spring Count has shown 286 in total (58 stags, 151 hinds and 77 calves) bringing the density to under 9 deer per km ² . Although 58 stags had been counted they had cleared off the ground now. Supplementary feeding had been used over winter.
Kilchoan	25	90	54	Stag season had gone well and there had been Average stag weight 14 ½ st. and average age 8.8. Heaviest stag had been 17 ½ st. Average hind weight had been 8 ½ st, average age 5.9 and average calf weight 4 ½ st. Had been the worst season for blank days - pre-rut there had been several. Last 2-3 years similar situation. 1 wild boar had been shot with evidence of others. Estate proposing to shoot 30 stags and 170 – 190 hinds plus calves. Count results conducted in Feb/March had shown 338 stags, 723 hinds and 399 calves (recruitment rate of 55%). Vegetation monitoring will be done by end of June.

2017 Paper 4 Knoydart Deer Management Group



				<p>Still feeding up to 45 stags in winter (4-6 tonnes) with 30 regularly attending throughout.</p> <p>Forestry blocks are now open on Knoydart Foundation ground – holding mature stags which move out during the rut.</p>
National Forest Estate (FES)	147	170	96	<p>Red all shot inside the fence. Roe: 22 bucks, 18 does, 7 kids. 2 sika stags, 1 feral pig.</p> <p>There is a new 400 ha planting inside the fenced area and a contractor had recently found damage levels to be acceptable. A contract was also being issued for inspection and repairs to the fence which should ensure that it lasts for 20+ years.</p>
North Morar	29	31	10	<p>Not bad season – fair amount of deer about but weather open and deer far out on ridges. Lots of younger stags about. Average stag weight 14st 11 with heaviest at 17 st 6. Average age 9.4. Average weight of hinds 8st 2 and calves 4 st. Count mid-March identified 187 stags, 337 hinds and 131 calves. Hind numbers were up from the helicopter count but looking well. Mortality: 2 dead stags found (both old), 1 hind and 1 calf. Will look to take 25-30 stags this year. Likely to take more hinds depending on how season is looking.</p> <p>Morar side – more deer than on Nevis side. Mainly on South Side. 130 hinds on Nevis side – outer ends and east end of ground – not same number of deer. Big mortality previously in these glens so will take time to build up. Deer more in the west end of the estate.</p>
North Achnacarry	56	90	36	<p>Good season and stags plentiful. Average weight 14 st 8.5. Average age 9.3 years. Stags in good condition with heaviest 17st 8. 1st roar 19th September. 1st stags shot with hinds on 21st September. Quick rut. Weather good so deer high up even in October. 90 stags fed on lochside – potatoes, deer rolls and sugar beet.</p> <p>Open weather during hinds. Average hind weight 43.9 kg and average age 7.8 years. Average calf weight 22.4 kg and split 27 stag calves and 9 hind calves. On two separate stalks deer left because of poor condition.</p> <p>Similar stag and hind culls planned for 2017/18.</p> <p>Recruitment in mid may 49%. No mortality seen. Grass came early with a lot of growth. No muirburn this year.</p> <p>19 feral pigs shot but took a lot of time and effort. In the process of designing portable traps. Heaviest pig was 14st 9.</p>
Glen Gualach	12	23	12	<p>12 sporting stags - Average stag weight 14st 11 and average age 8.9 years. Heaviest 16 st 4.</p> <p>Another 11 stags shot from August (4 out of season). 20 hinds shot in season .</p>
Barisdale	13	4	0	<p>In 2014 estate counted 122 stags –in 2017 this was 79. Average stag weight 14st 8 (heaviest 18st). Are getting more stags in but a greater proportion are young stags. Estate has been feeding (blocks ad lib) that last 3 years but ones feeding are reducing in no and being replaced with</p>



				<p>young stags. Last year low mortality –recruitment is at 50%. In good weather hinds on marches. As a result of fencing hind ground – hinds dispersed but numbers don't seem to be going up. The number of hinds shot last year included the bottom end of the estate (Lochournehead). After calving, hinds go to the shore to feed on seaweed. Two years ago there were 120 , this year not that many. The cull this year will take 4-5 stags off the bottom end but estate can't currently withstand a big cull – may have to shoot younger stags. Currently no pressure on deer fences.</p>
Glen Dessary	30	49	8	<p>Estate had wanted to shoot 35 stags- 30 shot. Average weight was 14st 8 - heaviest stag shot at 18st. All mature stags. Had one blank day because of easterly winds. Estate to carry out a helicopter count next year. Have costed for Glen Dessary but may be an opportunity to coordinate a count with Camusrory and Kingie. Supplementary feeding had been carried out last year with 1 tonne of silage bales. Feral pigs had been shot in last 6 months however, given the population present, the estate were aware they should be shooting nearer 20 to 30.</p>

The Group discussed the issue of coordinated deer counts. SNH explained that it was unlikely that a repeat helicopter would be conducted in the next two years by SNH and that it would be up to the Group to fund/coordinate a count in the meantime. It was suggested that if Glen Dessary (and others) were considering carrying out a helicopter counting Spring 2018, that all estates try to count on the same day. Kingie agreed to try to facilitate this for their sub-population group.

Action Point 1: DMG Members

4. Deer Management Working Plan (Paper 2 & Appendix 1)

4.1 Population Models

LS thanked members for filling out the recent survey and introduced the Working Plan that had been developed from the Deer Management Plan (DMP). The Working Plan was simply a way of updating essential information collected annually by the group. LS explained that it was likely that the Group would undergo a repeat DMG Assessment in two years' time where they would be expected to demonstrate progress in delivering the DMP. The actions identified in the DMP had therefore been collated into the Working Plan and an assessment of progress to date in the delivering the actions made using a traffic light system.

LS indicated that the main area of work identified in the Working Plan was in identifying the appropriate scale at which to model the population. There is an expectation on all DMGs is to have a working population model to enable culls to be set and adjusted annually in order to achieve a target density. This cull target should take into account private objectives as well as the public interest objectives identified in the deer management plan. Regular counts as well and information such as habitat monitoring should be used to inform management moving forward, and culls adjusted accordingly.

The recent recruitment counts from the group members had indicated a recruitment rate of 53%. This would have a significant effect on the population. A working population model would enable the Group to

predict the impact of such a high recruitment on future populations and take this into account in determining future culls.

LS explained that she had carried out a bit of work looking using the count figures from the helicopter count carried out in 2014 modelled with known culls since then. The Group provided feedback on the sub-populations proposed in the Working Plan. It was agreed that:

- **Sub-population 1** (Loch Nevis Estate) – The population model showed an increasing population but this was agreed to reflect the extent of deer movement on the ground.
- **Sub-Population 2** (North Morar, Glen Dessary, Kingie and Achnacarry). It was agreed that this probably best reflected the extent of deer movements on the ground although there was likely to be some (limited) movement with Barisdale and Camusrory. On that basis, the population model indicated that the population was likely increasing quite significantly. A coordinated count in 2018 would therefore provide a useful baseline moving forward.
- **Sub-population 3** (National Forest Estate & Garry Gualach). It was confirmed that this section of the DMG area was fenced off from the main group and that the fences were considered to be fairly intact.
- **West Knoydart** (West Knoydart DMG, Kilchoan, Camusrory & Barisdale). It was discussed that it the most movement of deer for DMG members in the west ie Camusrory, Barisdale and Kilchoan was with West Knoydart DMG. It was noted that Ali McCaskill had taken up the post for JMT on Knoydart and had already been in contact with some members of the Group. LS to date had been unable to model the population using the DMG data alone. It was discussed that West Knoydart had their own population model. The Group agreed that there would be benefit in sharing data between the two DMGs and that The Chair and LS would approach West Knoydart to discuss the sharing of data.

Action Point 2: SPG/LS

4.2 Habitat Monitoring

The Group discussed the importance of carrying out Habitat Monitoring to assess herbivore impacts. In addition to the information contained in the working plan Kilchoan were planning to undertake monitoring work this year. LS highlighted the benefits in sharing these data across the group.

4.3 Feral pigs. There followed a discussion on Feral pigs. Glen Dessary reported that they had been trialling the use of traps with automatic feeders however, badgers had been coming in and eating maize. Achnacarry Sporting explained that they had been using feed stations and cameras to get a better understanding of what animals were coming in. However, it was recognised that this was taking a lot of time, money and effort and that for it to work, you had to keep the feed going.

Forest Enterprise were asked about their strategy for dealing with Feral pigs. They explained that Scottish Government were still to make a decision whether to carry out a programme of eradication or leave it to land-owners to control. They had been looking at methods of capture and control and were aware that group dynamics can change with the wrong selection of cull animals for example taking out an old female can lead to a population increase as young females begin to breed. They also explained that there was awareness of different genetics with some like Wild boar and others showing traits of Feral pigs. FE also acknowledged the difficulties with control being labour intensive.

2017 Paper 4 Knoydart Deer Management Group



SNH suggested that given the amount of shared expertise and experience within group members, that there could be benefit in holding an information sharing event.

Action Point 3: SNH

5. Financial Update and Subscriptions (Paper 3)

LS explained that this year, individual DMG subscriptions had been calculated on the number of deer shot to form the basis of the ADMG annual subscription as well as an additional cost to cover the cost of administration of the Group. The Group agreed that this seemed the most appropriate way to dividing the subscriptions moving forwards.

6. ADMG Update

SPG reported on the ADMG regional meeting that had taken place the previous week. The emphasis at the meeting had been on the importance of DMGs delivering plans and implementing Habitat Impact Assessments across groups. ADMG will have a presence at Scone and Moy fairs this year as normal and a further Regional meeting had been planned for Glenfinnan on 15th August.

7. SNH Update

SNH updated the Group on work being undertaken to update the Best Practice Guidance series - to revise existing guides and create new ones.

The Group were updated on the recent Deer Management review undertaken by SNH and the Scottish Government. As a result of the Review SNH had been criticised for not taking action and using their powers in dealing with deer management issues and it was likely therefore that resources would be directed to this in future.

It was reported that SNH were looking to allocate a fund of £70k (as a result of the failed ECAF scheme) to support deer management. Some of this funding could possibly be directed at providing support to DMGs, in particular, in supporting training for Habitat Monitoring.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group will be held on Monday 20th November 2017 at the Alexandria Hotel, Fort William at 10.30am.

4b. Matters Arising/ Summary of Actions

AP	Action	Who
1	<i>Dates for helicopter counts to be circulated to group to enable a coordinated count to take place across other properties.</i>	SPG & DMG Members
2	<i>Knoydart DMG to approach W Knoydart DMG to discuss sharing of data.</i>	SPG/LS
3	<i>SNH to facilitate an information sharing day on trapping of Feral pigs</i>	SNH