

Meeting of Knoydart Deer Management Group Held at the Alexandria Hotel, Fort William on Monday 20th November 2017 at 10.30am

Present

Sir Patrick Grant
Lady Helen Grant
Lynda Campbell
John Cameron
Lea Macnally
David McDonnell
Alex MacDonald
Simon Laird
Alex Macnay
John Jackson
John Crosthwaite Eyre
Iain Biggart
Robert Grant
Graeme Taylor
Linzi Seivwright

Estates/Agency

Chair/Glen Dessary
Glen Dessary
Kingie (Treasurer)
Kingie
Glengarry Community Council
Barisdale
Achnacarry Sporting
Achnacarry Sporting
North Morar Estate
Forest Enterprise Scotland
Camusrory
Kilchoan
Nevis/Morar Lodge
SNH
Secretary

1. Apologies.

Elisabeth Brouwer van Basten Batenburg	Barisdale
Dirk Brouwer	Barisdale
Donald Cameron	Achnacarry
Paul Bekier	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Rupert Soames	Camusrory
Robert Cooper	Camusrory
Andrew Aitchison	Nevis Estate
Eric Delwart	Kilhoan
John Gordon	Lochournhead

2. Draft Minutes of Meeting held on 12th June 2017 and Matters Arising (Paper 4a&b).

The Minutes were approved by the meeting.

The following matters arising were discussed.

AP	Action	Who
1	Dates for helicopter counts to be circulated to group to enable a coordinated count to take place across other properties. Covered under Item3	SPG & DMG Members
2	Knoydart DMG to approach W Knoydart DMG to discuss sharing of data. W Knoydart had indicated that they were happy to share data and information relating to meetings etc. LS to circulate minutes.	SPG/LS
3	SNH to facilitate an information sharing day on trapping of Feral pigs Update provided under Item 6.	SNH

3. Estate Reports

The Group members provided the following updates:

Property	Stag Cull 2017	Proposed Hind Cull 2017/18	Proposed Calf Cull 2017/18	General Comments
Kingie	14 +1 OOS			14 stags plus 1 out of season. Average weight of stags was 14 st 11 and average age 9 years. Season started well but encountered a bad patch where seeing only young stags. Had intended to shoot 20 stags. 11 blank days. 13 th September first roar and 1 st day stags seen with hinds. Had so far shot 15 yeld hinds from target of 50. Weather had been bad so not seeing what is on the ground. Some poor hinds seen for November. Average weight of hinds so far 10 stone.
Nevis/ Morar Lodge	4			Nevis- 4 stags shot (all in fence). Stags huge (20s 5 and 19s 3) – average was 16.5 s. Average age 7.5. 20 th September first roar. Rut steady. Stags held hinds until the last week. 12 red hinds inside the fence. Deer in the village an issue. 1 red hind (11s) and calf (5 s) so far. Morar Lodge – 4 sika stags and 8 sika hinds and calves target with 1 sika hind and calf so far. Fence has been erected above Mallaig in order to regenerate ground. Copses of trees appearing. On the Morar side regeneration of scots pine.
Camusrory	16	30		Good season. 16 stags (target 15) but could have shot more. Av age 9, av weight 90 kg. Stags of all ages on the ground. Stags in good condition bar one injured. Rut started on 20 th September. All stags shot between 20 th September to 11 th October. Habitat Impact Assessment had flagged up some areas of higher impacts so estate proposing to cull 30 hinds this year plus calves. 14 hinds, 10 followers and 10 calves shot so far. Most calves 26/27 kgs and in good condition. Will put down

				hay and concentrates for stags and continue feeding overwinter.
Kilchoan	33	170		Good season overall. Was aiming for 30 stags and shot 33. Plenty of mature stags and holding a lot of hinds. Av weight 15s 3 (14s 6 last year). Av age 9.6 – up from last year. 18s 12 best weight. Target is 170 hinds plus calves to compensate for good calving. 42 hinds so far. Weather was extremely wet. Some hinds in poor condition but some big yeld hinds (15s 3). Habitat Monitoring has been done and will do this coming year. 2 wild boar seen coming in from narrows to forestry block. Shoot on sight policy. 1 st sika stag shot (15 years since last one).
National Forest Estate (FES)	126			126 stags in total, plus 50 hinds and 39 calves so far. 6 roe bucks, 5 roe does and 3 kids. 3 sika stags, 1 sika hind and 1 sika calf. No boar but active in Glen Garry. Deer in good condition.
North Morar	25	40		25 stags – Av weight 1s 1, average age 9.3. Heaviest was 17s 8. Good number of stags including young. Weather wet – stags remained lower so were seeing more. Stags in good condition – by 20 th September were running with hinds. 40 hinds plus calves target.
North Achnacarry	50			Stag season ran from 8 th August to 19 th October. Generally good season but worst for weather. Out of 50 days on the hill – there was only 7 good days. 50 stags shot on N Achnacarry – av weight 15s 3, and average age 10.3. 8 stags were clean on 1st day of the season. 13 th September 1 st roar. Weights came down throughout the season. Heaviest stags 19s 2 and 18s 12. There were 9 first stags for clients. Possible medal head out of the woodland.
Glen Gualach	14	90 -100 plus calves.		14 stags had been shot in the fenced area. 4 had been shot in South Glen Gualach on the march with North Achnacarry. 15 hinds and 9 calves had been shot – all in good condition. 15 boar had been shot – weight 24s 4. A shoot on sight policy was being implemented.
Barisdale	8 + 1 dead	12		8 stags shot (all mature) and 1 found dead. Not sure about hinds yet – not seeing a lot. Have a target of 12.
Glen Dessary	32	79 - 90		32stags (target was 35). Average weight 15s 9, average age 9 -10. Worst season for weather. Numbers looking healthier. Hind target 70 to 90 – 51 hinds so far plus 2/3 sika. Mostly yeld hinds. 3 boar.
Lochournhead	2			2 stags. 1 from Kingie.

4. Deer Management Working Plan

It was explained that SNH would be carrying out a re- assessment of the Group in 2019. The Working Plan was a working document which demonstrated how the Group was delivering the Deer Management Plan. It was agreed that LS and the Chair would go through the Working Plan to identify areas where further action might be needed by the Group.

Action Point 1: LS/PG

5. Financial Update and Subscriptions

The issue of Group finances was discussed and it was recognised that although technically subs were due to be collected, the Group had only just paid an amount. Subscriptions were due to be paid to ADMG, but LC explained that there could be enough currently in the bank without having to ask Members for a further payment until 2018. The Chair was going to discuss with LC and LS to confirm and LS to circulate a copy of accounts.

Action Point 2: PG/LS/LC

6. ADMG Update

LC provided an update on ADMG. It was explained that ADMG were encouraging all groups to carry out Habitat Impact Assessment across the Group area to help inform future management. In sharing information, it was an opportunity for Groups to demonstrate what they are doing on the ground. The issue of Sporting Rates was ongoing. ADMG are also supporting and promoting a Deer Health Survey which is looking to take samples from culled deer across Scotland in order to test for the prevalence of Chronic Wasting Disease, Cryptosporidium and E. Coli. Members agreed to provide samples to the survey.

Deer Management Working Group

It was explained that a Working Group had been set up by the Scottish Government to look at Deer Management more generally, and that this Group would report its finding directly to the Cabinet Secretary in Spring 2019. The Group is made up of Dr Simon Pepper, Robin Callander, Andrew Barbour and Dr Jane Glass. Richard Cooke Chair of ADMG had been appointed as an external advisor to this Group.

7. SNH Update

SNH Enhanced Approach and DMG Performance

SNH explained that a letter had been sent to all groups in August, outlining their enhanced approach to Deer Management. That letter had shown a league table of Deer Management Groups showing how they scored in the 2016 assessment which had looked at how well groups were delivering on the 101 criteria relating to the ADMG Benchmark and the Public Interest. SNH explained that their attention was being focused on two Groups which had scored just less than Knoydart in the table, with Groups scoring the lowest being prioritised for action by SNH. These Groups were considered to be falling short in terms of public interest actions, lack of population models, no Habitat Impact Assessment in place and Designated Site features in Unfavourable condition.

Working Plan

SNH emphasised the need for the Group to demonstrate that they were delivering on agreed actions in the plan. SNH also emphasised that in terms of priorities for the 2019 Assessment, DMGs should be ensuring that Working Plans are covering the basics of good deer management – that they should address the following priorities:

- Counts
- Population modelling and setting and delivering of culls
- The organisation of the Group
- Habitat Impact Assessment
- Designated Sites

Designated Sites

SNH indicated that there are three designated features relating to deer in the DMG and all three are within Barisdale and all are considered to be in Unfavourable Recovering Condition Due to Management.

Deer Counts

The Group discussed the issue of deer counts. SNH explained that the expectation was a full count should be conducted at least every 5 years with 2-3 years being ideal. Glen Dessary explained that they intended to count every three years and would be using a helicopter to conduct a count in spring 2018. Kilhoan explained that they counted at the same time as West Knoydart on an annual basis, along with Camusrory and Barisdale. Achnacarry indicated that they were intending to carry out a foot count at the end of February/March. This would likely take 3 days to complete and would require additional personnel. It was suggested that counts could be coordinated at least at sub area level. **Action Point 3: Group Members**

Habitat Impact Assessment

SNH explained that a contribution of £1800 was available to the Group to assist the Group with either training or collation of results, analysis and report writing. The Group just had to let SNH know they were interested and provide an outline of the work to be completed by the Group. The Group then discussed what HIA had been carried out already. It was recognised that most members had either carried this out themselves or had employed a consultant to start the work.

The Group agreed that the Chair should approach Angus Davidson who had carried out most of the HIA work across the Group to discuss what could be done and the cost of producing a DMG report.

Action Point 4: PG/AD

Feral Pigs

The issue of Feral Pigs was discussed and it was reported that thermal imaging was flagging up increasing numbers. The issue is trying to control them in big areas of dense conifers. Glen Dessary had been trialling the use feeders but barrels needed daily tending and it was labour intensive.

SNH were still intending to hold an information sharing day and were looking at opportunities with West Knoydart and Achnacarry. There was also work being carried out with Forest Enterprise to look at the use of drop-netting.

Action Point 5: SNH

The issue of the proactive culling of Feral Pigs was raised and Forest Enterprise indicated that in many cases the woods were too thick to allow them to be driven. In blocks along the loch side, it was proving difficult to either draw boar out to shoot. However, they knew they were in the block as there were contractors in shooting deer. There had also been recent reports of boar at Invergarry on arable ground. They were looking at the logistics of using thermal scopes and trapping. Cameras were being used at barrael feeders to get an idea of when they might be coming out – but again this was proving very labour intensive. Despite using thermal imaging equipment- they just weren't seeing them. Boar were also getting wary at feed sites and not coming out every night.

There was a brief discussion about venison prices and Achnacarry reported that venison process had remained steady with little change.

8. Any Other Business

The Group were informed that there would be an ADMG Regional meeting to be held at Kingsmills Hotel, Inverness on 23rd November. All were welcome to attend.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group will be on **Monday 11th June** at the Alexandria Hotel, Fort William at 10.30am.

Matters Arising/ Summary of Actions

AP	Action	Who
1	<i>Chair and LS to go through Working Plan in detail and agree priorities for action.</i>	PG & LS
2	Chair, LS and LC to discuss current financial position and agree an action regarding ADMG subscriptions.	PG, LS & LC
3	Group members to coordinate foot and helicopter counts where possible in spring 2018.	Group members
4	Chair to approach Angus Davidson to discuss options for a DMG Habitat Impact Assessment report.	PG, AD
5	SNH to explore opportunities for an Information Sharing day on Feral Pigs	SNH