

**Meeting of Knoydart Deer Management Group  
Held at the Alexandria Hotel, Fort William  
on Monday June 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 at 10.30am**

**Present**

Sir Patrick Grant  
Lynda Campbell  
John Cameron  
Alex MacDonald  
Simon Laird  
John Jackson  
Robert Johnson  
Iain Biggart  
Rupert Soames  
Robert Cooper  
Robert Grant  
Graeme Taylor  
Linzi Seivwright

**Estates/Agency**

Chair/Glen Dessary  
Kingie (Treasurer)  
Kingie  
Achnacarry Sporting  
Achnacarry Sporting  
Forest Enterprise Scotland  
Forest Enterprise Scotland  
Kilchoan  
Camusrory  
Camusrory  
Nevis/Morar Lodge  
SNH  
Secretary

**1. Welcome and Apologies.**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The following apologies were received:

Elisabeth Brouwer van Basten Batenburg	Barisdale
Dirk Brouwer	Barisdale
Donald Cameron	Achnacarry
Paul Bekier	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Andrew Aitchison	Nevis Estate
Eric Delwart	Kilhoan
John Gordon	Lochournhead
John Crosthwaite Eyre	Camusrory
Lea Macnally	Glengarry Community Council
Alex Mackay	North Morar Estate

**2. Draft Minutes of Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> November and Matters Arising (Paper 1a&b).**

The Minutes were approved by SL and seconded by LC.

The following matters arising were discussed.

AP	Action	Who	Update
1	<i>Chair and LS to go through Working Plan in detail and agree priorities for action.</i>	<b>PG &amp; LS</b>	This had been actioned and the Working Plan updated.
2	<i>Chair, LS and LC to discuss current financial position and agree an action regarding ADMG subscriptions.</i>	<b>PG, LS &amp; LC</b>	It was agreed that all members would pay subscription for 2017/18.
3	<i>Group members to coordinate foot and helicopter counts where possible in spring 2018.</i>	<b>Group members</b>	It was agreed moving forward that a coordinated approach to counting would be beneficial.
4	<i>Chair to approach Angus Davidson to discuss options for a DMG Habitat Impact Assessment report.</i>	<b>PG, AD</b>	This had been actioned and LS had produced an HIA summary for the Group.
5	<i>SNH to explore opportunities for an Information Sharing day on Feral Pigs</i>	<b>SNH</b>	Action ongoing.

**3. Estate Reports**

The Group members provided the following updates:

Property	Stag Cull 2017	Hind Cull 2017/18	Calf Cull 2017/18	General Comments
Kingie	14 +1 OOS	54	7	<p>Although winter was bad, not as bad as 13/14 or 14/15 for mortality. stags plus 1 out of season. 54 hinds shot (7 st 11.5) average age 9 years. 7 calves shot (3 M, 4 F). 46% of hinds in calf. Hinds were in good condition until Christmas then went downhill. 9 hinds and 2 calves left on hill due to poor condition. These had been specifically targeted as unlikely to survive. Mortality : 9 stags and 9 hinds. Recruitment count done on 18<sup>th</sup> May– think that half of calves died over winter. Lots of hinds that didn't have calves. Calves have suffered this winter – even big calves.</p> <p>Count: initially day 1 was ok but scrapped day 2 because of poor conditions. Commenced 4/5/6 April – felt it was an accurate count. 640 deer counted (9.3 deer km<sup>2</sup>). Totals: 117 stags, 457 hinds and 66 calves.</p>
Nevis/ Morar Lodge	4 & 4 OOS	9	4	<p>Nevis- 9 hinds (average 9st and age 6 years) and 4 calves (2M &amp; 2F). 4 stags shot out of season due to problems in peoples gardens. 8 to 10 stags in area but this is now fenced to close off completely, so shouldn't be more.</p> <p>Count: 6<sup>th</sup> April 58 stags, 115 hinds and 44 calves – total 217. Recruitment: 38% calving rate.</p> <p>Morar Lodge – 8 sika hinds and 5 calves plus 6 sika stags. No mortality over winter.</p>
Camusrory	16	28	22	<p>16 stags, 28 hinds and 22 calves shot. Only 2 not pregnant. Size of calves has increased. Mortality: 6 stags, 7 hinds and 11 calves found. Proposed cull: 15 stags and 30 hinds and calves. Feeding has resulted in hinds being in better condition. 1<sup>st</sup> calf seen 10 days ago.</p> <p>Count: 88 stags, 173 hinds and 75 calves. Total = 336.</p>
Kilchoan	33	190	92	<p>Cull: 190 hinds and 92 calves. 2 pigs and 3 sika. By Jan/Feb hinds had dropped weight – 10 beasts were condemned. Have set a population target of 550 hinds to be achieved over next 3-5 years. Will shoot 32 stags and 130 hinds plus calves.</p> <p>Count: end Feb including W Knoydart and</p>

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				<p>Barrisdale. 381 stags, 627 hinds and 249 calves. Total = 1257 (down 203). Mortality 4 stags and 3 calves – will be completed by end of June. Recruitment 39.7%.</p>
National Forest Estate (FES)	198	87	58	<p>198 stags in total, plus 87 hinds and 58 calves. It was reported that numbers were decreasing with a downward trend in the cull over the area. Everything shot within the fence. Achnacarry continues to shoot in area out with fence. Objective to try and reduce numbers overall within fence, particularly with regards to new native woodland planting. Loch Arkaig fence should be tight. Council will be clearing up grids as there has been some movement.</p>
North Achnacarry	56	98	46	<p>52 stags, 98 hinds and 46 calves shot on N Achnacarry – av weight 43 kg. Hinds in good condition but by early to mid January – weight dropped off. 12 carcasses condemned (4 in one day). Mortality: 11 stags, 10 hinds and 21 calves. By the end of Feb/March conditions better – cold and dry. Although there was mortality 2015 much worse.</p> <p>Count took place on 21<sup>st</sup> March – not best conditions. Big drifts and snow but good light. Between Glen Dessary to Loch B – 800 deer counted. The following day most deer at fence level and couldn't count. 5<sup>th</sup> April finished -8 people with snow overnight – counted ok. Counted 662 stags, 702 hinds (down 100) and 238 calves (similar to 2014).</p>
Barisdale	15	20?		<p>New personnel starts on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Count: 250 stags, 360 hinds and 153 calves. Total =763</p>
Glen Dessary	32	70	16	<p>Worst winter since 1999/2000. By the end of the winter, saw a lot of mortality (20 counted) however carcasses were found high up (2,000 ft) whereas normally expect to see at the bottom of the glen. 32 stags, 70 hinds, 16 calves, 3 sika and 4 boar culled. Also experienced mortality within the Highland Cattle herd. Count on 21<sup>st</sup> April 124 stags, 290 hinds and 95 calves. Estate were seeing more feeder stags in the forestry - usually fewer stags as they tend to move to Morar to high ground.</p>

### 4. Deer Management Working Plan – Paper 2/2018

#### 4.1 Group Operation

##### 4.1.1 Boundaries & Membership.

It was agreed moving forwards that Camusrory, Barisdale, Kilhoan and Lochhourhead would become part of the West Knoydart DMG. The Group agreed that good communication between the two Groups would be maintained. The Group discussed that there was a small area of private forestry that would be useful to have information from. LC agreed to contact the owners and LS to update the DMG maps. **Action 1: LC & LS**

##### 4.1.2 Constitution -Paper 3/2018

The Group discussed the draft Constitution and suggested several amendments/additions to it. LS to the removal of the paragraph relating to the auditing of accounts, as well the addition of two statements that individual landowners to agree/decide culls and an obligation to abide by the law (as informed by Best Practice Guidance). It was also suggested that a paragraph be added regarding the need for a quorum (representing %age of major landowners) required to be present and that a minimum subscription of £50 is set. RS to send LS an example of wording from West Knoydart Constitution.

**Action 2: LS & NS**

##### 4.1.3 DMG Counts

The Group agreed that in order to help inform the population modelling moving forward, it would be useful to have a good, coordinated foot count in Spring 2019.

**Action 3: Members**

##### 4.1.4 Recruitment and Mortality Counts

The Group discussed the recruitment and mortality counts as set out in the table in the Working Plan. Of note was the reduction in recruitment rate from 51% to 24.5%. Kingie informed the group that they would be looking to reduce their hinds to 400.

##### 4.1.5 Population Model

LS had run the population models using known count and cull information since 2014. The following points were noted/discussed:

Population 1: Nevis. Making the assumption that if this is a largely isolated population, from this population model, the population would seem to be reasonably stable at current cull levels.

Population 2: North Morar, Glen Dessary, Kingie and Achnacarry. Running the population model, the population is predicted to have risen (and will continue to rise) using current cull figures over time. The predicted population figure was also compared with the recent count figures. It was noted that hinds counted on foot (with an estimate from Morar) closely match the population model. However, there would appear to be less stags on the ground than the model would predict but this could be down to stags being in woodlands. Also population models assume a 50:50 calf ratio but this may be skewed to hinds at higher densities of deer. It was noted that a key issue for consideration is that plan has an action that the hind population won't be allowed to increase in the middle section of the Group. Currently Group far away from a 1:1.2 sex ratio – closer to 1:1.6. It would therefore be useful if the Group could agree a population target.

**Action 4: Members**

Population 3: Forest Enterprise (National Forest Estate) and Garry Gualach. Using the figures provided, the population model predicts a decreasing population over time.

### 4.2 Woodland

- 4.2.1 The Group discussed native woodland condition and it was noted that having done the calculations, the Group has exceeded the target that has been set for DMGs of 60% of impacts in Low/Med category (80.9%)
- 4.2.2 The Group members were asked to provide an update of any proposed woodland schemes. Forest Enterprise indicated that they had planted a total of 400 ha which was already fenced so there was no need for a compensatory cull. Achnacarry indicated that they also would be considering increasing a block to reshape it and introduce a larger area of native woodland (map provided in working plan). The fencing of this block is now completed and they plan to commence the site preparation shortly with a view to planting later in the year. Glen Dessary said they had no further plans at this stage.
- 4.2.3 The Group discussed the issue of available shelter within the group area. There is a block of about 1500 acres which is open to deer on Glen Dessary.

### 4.3 Peatlands

- 4.3.1 The Group discussed the issue of Muirburn and the fire risks associated. The Group were also reminded that muirburn on blanket bog was considered to be a negative activity and should be discouraged.
- 4.3.2 The Group discussed Peatland Restoration Grants and members were asked if anyone had considered undertaking restoration work. Kingie reported that they had looked into a scheme but weren't taking it further. Achnacarry reported that they had been looking into this with Angus Davidson.

### 4.4 Habitat Monitoring Results -Paper 4/2018

- 4.4.1 The Group discussed the summary report that LS had prepared from the data collected by Angus Davidson. It was noted that:
- Dwarf Shrub Heath Browsing 82% in LOW (SNH recommend 90%)
  - Blanket Bog Browsing 83% and trampling 60% (SNH recommend 90%)

The Group agreed to look at the impacts on their own ground and to give consideration as to what action (if any) they might wish to take.

### 4.5 Training

- 4.5.1 The Group had provided an update on DSC Levels 1 & 2, Trained Hunter status. Currently 77% of those managing deer had DSC Level 1/Trained Hunter status and 46% had DSC Level 2. All members were urged to ensure that all those managing deer have DSC Level 1 and be working towards Level 2 in light of Food Safety issues and venison. It was suggested that the DMG could possibly run a carcass inspection refresher course at DMG level. In future possible interest in courses for DMG would be discussed to identify opportunity for joint training such as First Aid, Carcass Inspection & Larder Hygiene etc.

### 4.6 Venison

- 4.6.1. The Group were asked to provide an update on SQWV membership. It was identified that Achnacarry, Kingie and Forest Enterprise were all members. Glen Dessary indicated that they would look into it.

### 4.7 Public Health

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4.7.1 The Group discussed the need to continue to raise awareness of issues such as Lyme Disease and Chronic Wasting Disease. Achnacarry indicated that they provided leaflets at their reception and Kingie indicated that they provide information in all their holiday houses. LS to ensure that website has up to date information and that any available leaflets are circulated.

### 4.7.2 **Deer Vehicle Collisions**

There were no issues relating to DVCs.

### 4.8 **Economic Benefits/Costs – Paper 5/2018**

4.8.1 The Group discussed the paper and in particular the need for accurate and up to date information on the economics of the group in terms of the investment in deer management and the numbers of jobs supported etc. The Group discussed the paper circulated and were asked for feedback. It was agreed that a template would be circulated to the Group in order to collect information for the next meeting. It was mentioned that the information had likely already been gathered by those who had provided information for Sporting Rates. **Action 5: Members**

### 4.9 **Communications**

4.9.1 Website. It was agreed that LS would ensure that the website be kept up to date with minutes, agendas etc. **Action 6: LS**

## 5. **Financial Update -Paper 6/2018 (Tabled)**

It was agreed that all Group members would contribute towards the ADMG Subs for 2017/18 but that only those remaining in the Group would contribute to the costs of running the Group for 2018/19.

## 6. **ADMG Update**

LC provided an update to the Group on the workshops that had been held by ADMG (one in Birnam and the other in Inverness). These had encouraged Chairs and Secretaries of DMGs to get up to speed with all the key areas that SNH would be looking at for the DMG Assessment which would take place in Spring 2019. SNH would be focussing on the delivery elements of plans so it was important that all DMGs focussed on being able to demonstrate significant progress.

As a result of the FSS interest in the venison production process, it was important that larders were seen to be in order. ADMG were therefore encouraging as many people to become members of SQWV.

The Scottish Venison Partnership had recently applied for Protected Geographical Status for Scottish Venison.

The next meeting of ADMG would be held at Balloch on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

## 7. **SNH Update**

SNH would be carrying out repeat assessments of all DMGs in April/May next year. The key areas of focus would be on how DMGs operate, Habitat Impact Assessments, woodlands, peatlands and welfare. SNH were currently working to produce guidance on what standard of delivery was expected from Groups in order that they could score green in the assessment. SNH also updated the Group on a new member of staff Andrew McMaster who had recently been appointed. As an ex Forest Enterprise Wildlife Ranger he would be taking on some of Graeme Taylor's work load.



**8. AGM -Election of Committee**

Sir Patrick Grant said it had been an honour and a privilege to work with the Group through the development and delivery of 3 deer management plans and that he had been grateful for the support from the Group through the years and had enjoyed the role. He indicated that he therefore felt it was time to stand down in the role of Chair. Nominations for the role of Chair were asked for and Simon Laird indicated that he would be willing to accept the role of Chair. The Group unanimously agreed and SL was appointed.

**9. Any Other Business**

Rupert Soames proposed a vote of thanks on behalf of Camusrory and the Group to Sir Patrick Grant for all his hard work and support over the years.

The issue of Wild Boar/Feral Pigs was raised and it was noted that more animals were being seen particularly on the open hill. Glen Dessary indicated that they were working on a programme to deploy more equipment and more feeders in order to step up culling. Forest Enterprise reported that they weren't seeing a lot and not culling many. They had been investigating a corral trap that was used in the Forest of Dean and were also looking at trialling drop-nets although this was slightly problematic as the pigs could only then be released under licence. FE were meeting that week to discuss. SNH/FE would be continuing to work on trapping methods to help inform future methodology. Kilhoan indicated that they had adopted a shoot on sight policy and so far had culled 3 individuals.

Camusrory reported that the Estate had recently repaired an important footbridge on the main path from Glen Dessary to Barrisdale,

**10. Date and Time of Next meeting.** The date of the meeting was proposed as 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018 but note this has subsequently changed to **Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November**.

**Matters Arising/ Summary of Actions**

AP	Action	Who
1	<i>LC to approach private forestry owner and LS to go through Working Plan and update maps</i>	LC & LS
2	<i>LS to amend Constitution. NS to provide example wording.</i>	LS & NS
3	<i>Group members to coordinate foot count in spring 2019</i>	Group members
4	<i>Members to agree a future population target for Sub Population 2</i>	Members
5	<i>Members to complete Economic Survey information</i>	Members
6	<i>LS to ensure website up to date</i>	LS