

Subject: Glen Strathfarrar Deer Management Group
 Project: Autumn Meeting and AGM
 Date: 21 October 2016
 Location: Culligran Estate
 Present: Frank Spencer Nairn
 Douglas Spencer Nairn
 Hamish Fraser
 Donald Fraser
 Andrew Fraser
 Anthony Fuller
 Stephen Potter
 Kevin McNeil
 Richard Smith
 Clive Meikle
 Fiona Mackie
 Douglas Lippe
 George Fraser
 Greg Fraser
 Martin Mackay
 Sinclair Coghill
 Nicola Tallach
 Linzi Seivwright
 Distribution: All DMG members, SNH

Culligran (Chair)
 Culligran
 Culligran
 Glen Cannich and East Benula North (Vice Chair)
 Glen Cannich and East Benula North
 Glen Cannich and East Benula North
 East Monar
 East Monar
 Braulen
 Braulen (Treasurer)
 Braulen
 West Monar & Pait
 Erchless
 Struy
 Farley
 SNH
 SNH
 Caorann (DMP contractor)

MINUTES

ITEM	ACTION OWNER
1. Welcome and Apologies	
1.1 The Chairman welcomed all those at the meeting.	
1.2 Apologies were received from:	
Mr Colin Stroyan (West Monar and Pait)	
Mr Andrew Slaughter (Inverinate)	
Ewan Macpherson	
David Frusher (East Monar)	
Peter Sinclair-Knipe (Erchless)	
Michael Spencer Nairn (Struy)	
Paul Stirling (Strathglass Community Council)	
Charlie Thomson (Farley)	
Steven Fraser (Braulen)	

- 1.3 The Chairman opened with a remark regarding the potential refurbishment of the 132kV Beauly to Deanie powerline which runs through several member properties (Braulen, Culligran and Erchless). The Chairman noted that surveys were currently being undertaken with works likely to start next year. Noted this may have some impact on stalking activities.

2. Approval of Minutes of 21 March 2016

- 2.1 The Chairman conducted a review of the minutes. Donald Fraser proposed approval which was seconded by Richard Smith. The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1 Stalkers' meetings – 15 April and 13 June 2016

Following the helicopter count in spring 2016 two stalkers' meetings were held to discuss and agree cull targets for the forthcoming season, particularly in relation to hind numbers which had shown an increase on the last count beyond that predicted in the population model. It was acknowledged by those in attendance that an increased hind cull would be required across all properties with a cull target of 1,000 hinds. It was agreed that there would be a point of contact co-ordinating the cull at the west end of the group and another co-ordinating the cull at the east end with all members providing monthly updates on their progress to achieving their target.

- 3.2 DMG website – It was agreed that notice of forthcoming DMG meetings, agendas and approved minutes would continue to be posted on the website
- 3.3 South Ross DMG liaison meeting – The Chairman reported that he attended the SRDMG liaison meeting at Affric Lodge on 9 May 2016. Noted that it was a very productive meeting and that there remained a continued benefit in collaborative working to manage the shared deer resource across South Ross.
- 3.4 Strathconon DMP – Noted that the Strathconon DMP was currently open to consultation. Linzi Seivwright commented that if the populations of Strathfarrar and Strathconon were modelled together the population over these two areas balance out which could explain higher numbers on Strathfarrar than on Strathconon due to the immigration of hinds.

4. SNH habitat monitoring

- 4.1 Sinclair Coghill reported to the group that the delayed habitat monitoring on the Strathglass Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was undertaken in summer 2016. Noted that there were some communication issues between the contractor and member estates which Sinclair Coghill undertook to improve in the future. A draft report has been received by SNH and requires to be reviewed under SNH's quality assurance process but Sinclair Coghill was willing to discuss the draft contents with the group:

The report concluded that there had been significant reductions in grazing and trampling impacts but improvements in certain areas still require to be made. The results of the report were generally positive overall and good progress had been made. SNH will issue a final version to the group once it is available. This will allow Linzi Seivwright to incorporate the results into an appendix of the group's DMP.

- 4.2 Noted that several estates had carried out their own habitat monitoring which will continue to inform the DMP during its five-year life cycle.

5. Update on Scottish Government deer sector review

- 5.1 Noted that SNH was scheduled to report to the Scottish Government by 31 October 2016 regarding the sector's progress in meeting the benchmarking and public interest actions. Noted that the Glen Strathfarrar Group had demonstrated good progress and there was evidence of progress across DMGs in Scotland. Noted that the ADMG will be making representations to both the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Climate Change and Land Reform and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity

6. Environmental Collaboration Action Fund (ECAF)

- 6.1 Noted that the group were one of only two DMGs to be successful in this round of ECAF funding. There are three main areas of work associated with the funding:

1. Facilitation of DMG – Minutes, updating of the website, population modelling and plan update.
2. Habitat impact assessment – To be carried out in years two and five of the DMP.
3. Native woodland conditions – Consolidate and identify priority areas of native woodland areas and identify possible opportunities for grants and expansion of native woodland within the group area.

In response to the application, certain costs (members in-kind contributions) have been disallowed for grant purposes. The total eligible project cost over the five years for the ECAF are £41,166 of which 50% can be claimed back by the DMG (i.e. £20,583). It was agreed that the activities required under ECAF are necessary to deliver the objectives of the plan and so it would make sense to make use of the funding. This also includes a repeat helicopter count in 2019. Cautionary footnote: despite the notification of the successful application, no contract has been issued to date and we have been warned that no work should commence until a signed contract is received.

7. Chairman's annual report

- 7.1 The Chairman noted that 2016 has been a very important year for the DMG with the helicopter count undertaken in the spring of the year, habitat impact assessments carried out in the summer, the completion of the group's third Deer Management Plan and qualification for ECAF funding. The Chairman noted that this shows the group's commitment to the ongoing process of deer management and thanked members for their contributions. Sinclair Coghill thanked the Chairman for his instrumental role in the preparation of the Deer Management Plan and the ongoing facilitation of the Group.

8. Financial report (Treasurer)

8.1 The Treasurer presented the accounts for the period to 30 June 2016. These showed the group ending the year with an annual deficit of £3,187.87. The closing bank balance was £1,600 which represented funds set aside to meet the costs of unforeseen expenses associated with delivering the Deer Management Plan. The Treasurer noted that £2,875 would have to be available to meet the group's 50% cost share of ECAF activity to the end of 2016. The Treasurer recommended that circa £6,000 should be raised from members to cover ADMG subscriptions, secretarial costs and ECAF project costs to deliver the Deer Management Plan. This represents a 240% uplift on ADMG subscriptions. This was agreed by the meeting. It was also agreed that there should be a minimum subscription for all members of £200.

9. Elections of honorary officers

9.1 Chairman – The Chairman, Frank Spencer Nairn, stood aside for this part of the business. Anthony Fuller proposed Frank Spencer Nairn to be re-elected as Chair, seconded by Clive Meikle and approved unanimously.

9.2 Vice Chair – Anthony Fuller nominated Donald Fraser to be re-elected as Vice Chair, seconded by Clive Meikle and approved unanimously.

9.3 Treasurer – Frank Spencer Nairn proposed Clive Meikle as Treasurer, this was seconded by Donald Fraser and approved by the meeting.

10. Appointment of Secretary

10.1 The Chairman proposed that Bidwells be reappointed as Secretary. This was seconded by Martin Mackay and approved by the remainder of the members present.

11. Any other business

11.1 SNH Authorisations Panel Review

Linzi Seivwright advised that the Panel had met several times in response to demand for a review for out of season authorisations. The Panel had made several recommendations emphasising the need for openness and transparency, adequate training and competence of deer managers and the preservation of the natural heritage. Noted that SNH have accepted all recommendations.

11.2 Wild boar

ADMG has requested information from members on any wild boar sightings on member estates. Upon enquiry the group confirmed that there are no wild boar within the GSDMG area.

11.3 Constitution

In light of the new DMP the group's constitution requires to be more explicit in its principles of collaboration and delivering the public interest. Secretary to issue a notice of proposed revised draft constitution for approval at the spring meeting.

11.4 ADMG Regional Meeting

Will be held on November 24th at Inverness, details to follow in due course.

12. Date of next meeting

12.1 The spring meeting is to be held at Culligran on Monday 27 March 2017 at 2.30pm.

Deer Management Planning Forum

1. Review of the 2016 Stag Season

1.1 Those present gave a verbal report on the numbers of stags culled and identified the likely numbers of hinds to be targeted during the hind season. This is summarised in the table below.

PROPERTY	STAGS SHOT	PROPOSED HIND CULL	COMMENTS
West Monar & Pait	28	72	Dougie Lippe commented that mature stags with hinds only appeared on the ground later and there appeared to be a general shortage of hinds. Due to unfavourable winds the stags remained on steep faces which prevented access for culling. Noted there were plenty of young stags but they were not running with the hinds. Hinds are on the ground intermittently and remain high up. The levels of Loch Monar have been reduced significantly due to the refurbishment of the SSE Deanie Power Station and this is causing access problems.
East Monar	28	40	Stephen Potter noted that the rut was relatively quiet with not much roaring and the stags started in good condition but quickly lost their fat. Similar to West Monar & Pait, East Monar is also struggling with a lack of water in the loch. Noted that there were less hinds being observed on the ground than were counted during the helicopter count.
Braulen	131	369	Richard Smith noted that the rut began early and lasted until the weekend of 15 October with lots of noise. Noted that the stags were quite thin by the end of the season and attributed this to being with the hinds for quite a long time. Richard Smith observed the hind numbers were as anticipated. Noted that there had been no disturbance from walkers and recent signage erected at hillwalker car parks seemed to be an effective way of informing walkers about stalking activities.
Culligran	30 (23 on Culligran)	70	Hamish Fraser noted that the rut was quiet with little roaring. The stags were fit but quite light by the end of the season and the south wind had kept the stags

	side and 7 in the Orrin)		quite low. Noted that not very many hinds had been seen.
Erchless	25 all open range	80	George Fraser reported that the stags were in good condition early in the season but by the last four days were very light. Noted that mostly old stags were seen. The majority of the hinds were down at the march with Fairburn.

PROPERTY	STAGS SHOT	PROPOSED HIND CULL	COMMENTS
Struy	27	20	Greg Fraser reported that the rut started quietly and that the stags remained with the hinds throughout. The stags were in good condition but had lost weight by the last week of the season. The usual numbers of hinds have been observed with no obvious effect from the work at Dunmaglass.
Farley	12 open range (plus Sika in woods)	40	Martin Mackay reported on behalf of Farley noting that there were no particular problems in achieving the stag numbers other than the ongoing significant problems with rambles in this area. Farley is continuing to liaise with the local access officer to try to put in place a satisfactory access policy that ensures that the deer cull can still take place.
Glen Cannich	47	202	Donald Fraser reported that the stags were in very good condition with above average weights and more mature stags were observed. Noted that the rut was quite quiet and the stags lost condition rapidly towards the end of the season. There were significant issues with walker disturbance at Glen Cannich.
East Benula North	14	107	Donald Fraser reported that they struggled to get the numbers on East Benula with several blank days until the rut started and a lot of stags moved off the ground quite early.

2. Update on DMG Population Model

- 2.1 Noted that there was no great need to significantly amend the model as the proposed numbers were within the parameters of the model. Noted that hind culls would remain as agreed at the stalkers' meeting on 13 June 2016.

3. Discussion and Planning of the Hind Season Cull 2016 / 2017

The Chairman noted that Culligran proposed to start their hinds early in the Orrin as access is prevented due to distance and limited day light. All members agreed that collaboration between members will be required to achieve this ambitious hind cull target with the importance of exchange of information and regular updates between members.