



Client: Glen Strathfarrar Deer Management Group  
 Project: Spring Meeting  
 Venue: Culligran Estate  
 Our ref: 115/05  
 Date: 21 March 2016

|          |                       |   |
|----------|-----------------------|---|
| Present: | Frank Spencer Nairn   | Culligran (Chair)                                 |
|          | Hamish Fraser         | Culligran   |
|          | Donald Fraser         | Glen Cannich and East Benula North (Deputy Chair) |
|          | Anthony Fuller        | Glen Cannich and East Benula North                |
|          | Sir James Fuller      | Glen Cannich and East Benula North                |
|          | Stephen Potter        | East Monar  |
|          | Richard Smith         | Braulen   |
|          | Chris Shankland       | Braulen   |
|          | Clive Meikle          | Braulen (Treasurer)                               |
|          | Fiona Mackie          | Braulen   |
|          | Douglas Lippe         | West Monar & Pait                                 |
|          | George Fraser         | Erchless  |
|          | Michael Spencer-Nairn | Struy   |
|          | Greg Fraser           | Struy   |
|          | Sinclair Coghill      | SNH   |
|          | Linzi Seivwright      | Caorann (DMP contractor)                          |
|          | Paul Stirling         | Strathglass Community Council                     |

Distribution: All DMG members, SNH

| Description   | Action              |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>1 Welcome and Apologies</b>  |                     |
| 1.1 The Chairman welcomed those at the meeting and introduced Paul Stirling, the new Deer Representative on the Strathglass Community Council.<br><br>The Chairman also thanked Linzi Seivwright for making the time to attend the meeting and noted that she was only available to attend the first part of the meeting as her attendance was required elsewhere later in the afternoon. |                     |
| 1.2 Apologies were received from:   |                     |
| Martin Mackay   | Farley              |
| Colin Stroyan   | West Monar and Pait |
| Mr and Mrs Bussey   | Craskie             |
| <b>2 Deer Management Plan (Linzi Seivwright)</b>  |                     |

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- 2.1 LS thanked all members for their input during the preparation of the plan.
- 2.2 LS noted that the plan is made up of three parts and parts two and three are close to being signed off. Parts two and three are largely static whilst part one is the working plan which will be continually updated with annual cull figures etc.
- 2.3 Public Consultation
- Noted that a joint public consultation with Glen Affric and Kintail DMG took place on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February at Cannich Hall and was well attended by members, community members and representatives from other organisations (Trees for Life, Mountaineering Council of Scotland, Aigas Field Centre and RSPB).
- LS suggested that there may be merit in holding another consultation mid-way through the plan life cycle.
- Feedback:
- LS noted that largely positive feedback had been received from various local community councils and that it was important to maintain engagement with the community.
- Paul Stirling from the Strathglass Community Council (SCC) reiterated this view on behalf of the SCC and commented that the Council always felt well informed by the group and that there was a good level of communication.
- 2.4 LS noted that if the Scottish Government continues to endorse the principle of voluntary deer management, it is important that the group is able to deliver against the actions it has committed to.
- 2.5 LS emphasised the importance of ensuring the DMP targets are measurable as the government will be using the red/amber/green criteria to measure progress.
- 2.6 Native Pinewood Managers Visit – 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016
- FSN advised that the Native Pinewood Managers are due to visit the areas of Caledonian pinewood on both Struy and Braulen estates on 5<sup>th</sup> May.
- LS noted that it was important to feed back the outcome of the visit to the wider group.
- 2.7 Kilmorack and Strathglass Community Council feedback
- Paul Stirling noted that the CC felt that there was a good level of engagement from the Group and that the CC felt well informed and were supportive of the aims of the DMG.
- LS noted that the group's website will help with communication and transparency
- 2.8 Woodland

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LS advised that there was a keen focus on deer numbers and impacts in relation to woodland at the moment. It is important to be able to provide clear reasons for deer numbers, particularly on designated sites.

Noted that there could be a divergence of opinions where principal objectives varied between expanding forestry regeneration and maintaining a sustainable deer population.

It was agreed that it was important to share the positive stories in forestry such as the Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Division's (SGRPID) determination that the woodland is regenerating successfully without the requirement for further fences and that current deer numbers are not impacting on the regeneration.

### 2.9 SNH Assessment

Noted that this is the group's next major milestone.

LS thanked Sinclair and SNH for their help and support in getting the group to this stage. This was reiterated by all.

Sinclair commended the group's progress.

Sinclair advised that the count and population figures will need to be available for review. Noted that the count figures will be available from SNH by the end of the week and count maps could be expected in six weeks' time.

### 2.10 Status of Plan

It was confirmed that the plan was now agreed.

LS advised that FCS now want to be consulted on plans.

It was agreed that LS would produce hard copies of the plan for members.

LS 30/6/16

## 3 Helicopter Deer Count (Sinclair Coghill)

3.1 SC advised that the count had gone well. West Monar and Pait was counted on 10<sup>th</sup> March with the rest of the group counted on 14<sup>th</sup> March. Noted that four helicopters were out on the same day (three counting Strathfarrar and one counting Strathconon). The Orrin was also counted on 14<sup>th</sup> March. DF was in the helicopter from Glen Cannich down to Farley. CS had been in the helicopter over Braulen.

Noted that there was good weather and conditions.

Braulen – RS and CS attended the SNH office to count photographs on 17<sup>th</sup> March. Noted the pictures were clear for identification.

East Benula – DF generally thought that numbers were up, particularly hinds on East Benula. DF noted that he will require a high hind cull to maintain the population numbers outlined in the plan.

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Farley – noted that there was no representative from Farley at the meeting but that there were significant numbers of hinds and stags counted on their ground. It was agreed that Farley's stalker should be encouraged to attend the stalker's meeting as their cull figure will have to be increased.

3.2 SC to issue count figures to all estates.

3.3 Payment for count:

As agreed Culligran will invoice each individual estate as per flying time information provided by SNH.

The principle of "team culling" was mentioned to assist smaller member estates if they are having to achieve a substantially higher cull than usual.

The date for the stalker's meeting was confirmed as 15<sup>th</sup> April at 3pm, Beauly. The Chairman advised that he would contact Farley and encourage them to attend the meeting. Agreed neighbouring estates should also be invited: Strathconon, Lochalsh, John Hay, Angus Hughes of Mullardoch, South Benula, Inverinate and Fairburn.

3.4 It was agreed that a similar exercise should be carried out after the habitat impact assessment of the Strathglass SAC (draft report is due in September). Noted that hind cull figures would be critical to this exercise.

3.5 Habitat monitoring

SC confirmed that Colin Wells was the appointed contractor who will be carrying out monitoring on Pait, Braulen, Glen Cannich and East Benula this summer. The programme will run from May until the end of June with monitoring on Braulen first due to the early start of their stag season.

SC confirmed that the monitoring will be a repeat of the 2009 survey of open range features.

Voluntary habitat monitoring by members - Noted this was dependent on securing ECAF funding. If funding is secured, then it is likely that training will take place around June. To be discussed further at stalker's meeting.

Noted that East Benula, Glen Cannich and Braulen all intend to carry out their own habitat monitoring.

## 4 Approval of Minutes of 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015

4.1 DF proposed approval and AF seconded. Minutes approved.

## 5 Matters Arising

5.1 New Members

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Noted that the three smallholdings (Craskie, Hummels Corrie and Glassburn) should continue to be informed of meeting and remain on the circulation list for minutes. It was suggested that they should be offered Associate Member status.

### 5.2 Community Council Representative

As noted above, Strathglass CC has appointed Paul Stirling as their Deer Representative.

### 5.3 DMG Website

The Chairman advised that the website for the group was now up and running and encouraged all to interact with the site.

## 6 Financial Report (Treasurer)

6.1 CWM reported that group and ADMG subscriptions had been raised together with an additional uplift to increase group reserves in anticipation of unforeseen costs.

6.2 Noted that ECAF funding may well cover much of the additional administrative costs that DMGs are likely to incur in the future, although this must be match funded by members.

### 6.3 Calculation of subscriptions:

The group discussed whether the current method favoured members with low numbers given then deer management is more than just cull numbers. The idea of a minimum subscription was mooted, although it was also felt that cull figures represent the proportion that deer management plays on each estate.

CWM and FSN to consider this proposal prior to the Group AGM in October.

### 6.4 ECAF (Sinclair Coghill)

Noted that this was a fund to facilitate landscape-scale actions. The funding for deer management is 50% of costs whereas some other areas of work are 100% funded. SC noted that there was approximately £1.2 million set aside to assist with deer management.

Sinclair Coghill advised that only four DMGs, including this group, had been able to submit an application in time for the first round of funding that closed on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Outcome of the application will not be advised until May 2016 at the earliest.

If the group is not successful in securing ECAF funding it will be necessary to consider how to facilitate the ongoing delivery of the plan.

SC advised that there may be another application round for ECAF funding towards the end of this year.

## 7 ADMG (Chairman)

7.1 AGM Report – noted that land reform was a major topic of discussion. This was further covered in the recent issued of E-Scope magazine.

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Environmental Health – noted the recent incident of food poisoning attributed to wild venison burgers has sent a severe warning to the venison industry and re-emphasised the responsibility each estate has for producing a clean carcass for the game dealer. Noted that if the beast is shot through the gut there is a high risk of e-coli contamination.

### 7.2 Training Day (Birnam)

Noted that this was intended to cover website management but was of limited value due to technical issues.

### 7.3 DMG Website administration

Noted that Bidwells should administer website in the first instance.

Agreed it should be established whether multiple users can have administration rights to the website to upload and update content.

A protocol for website management will be prepared and reviewed at the October meeting.

The Chairman also highlighted the benefit of referring the public via signage to the website for further information.

### 7.4 SNH Review

As noted above this will take place towards the end of May with office bearers and SC. RS of Braulen also volunteered to attend.

## 8 South Ross Liaison Meeting

8.1 Noted that this would take place on 9<sup>th</sup> May at 12.30 pm at Affric Lodge. FSN and DF to attend.

## Deer Management Planning Forum

### 1 Review of the 2016 Hind Season

1.1 Those present gave a verbal report on the numbers of hinds culled This is summarised in the table below.

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| Property          | Hinds Shot           | Calves shot         | Proposed stag cull (to be discussed 15/4) | Comments   |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| Pait & West Monar | 14                   | 0                   |   | Dougie Lippe noted that he had not seen a great deal on the ground. Of those that were shot he reported that the hinds were in good condition.   |
| East Monar        | 17                   | 1                   |   | The yeld hinds were in good condition until the last week. Noted that the wind and gales had prevented Stephen Potter from getting up on to the hill.  |
| Braulen           | 191                  | 60                  |   | Richard Smith noted all hinds in good condition and most were in calf. The average weight of calves had increased by 8lbs. Approximately 100 hinds shot with guests. Exceeded target of 151 to ensure effective cull on south side.  |
| Culligran         | 45                   | 17                  |   | Struggled to achieve desired cull although all shot were in good condition. Most hinds shot were in calf. Noted that there were less calves than in other years. An army exercise in November with 50 people on the ground three times a fortnight apart may have caused some disturbance. |
| Erchless          | 41 (+ 4 in forestry) | 11 (+1 in forestry) |   | All in good condition, majority of hinds in calf. All shot with guests. Noted not too much disturbance.  |
| Farley            | 6                    | 2                   |   |  |

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| Struy             | 15 | 5  |  | Deer were high on the ground and hinds were in big groups. Reported less hinds on the flats at Dumnaglass as they had moved further up the hill. Noted that Struy's tenant had been taking groups of students out during the hinds which may have pushed the hinds further out on to the hill. |
| Glen Cannich      | 61 | 13 |  | All in good condition. Noted that they were high out on the hill. DF reported that his target of 60 will have to be increased for the forthcoming season.  |
| East Benula North | 42 | 8  |  | Noted that the big group of hinds were now back on the ground. The weather had made it difficult to access the hill up the loch. As above, maintenance cull of 40 will have to be increased.   |

## 2 Update on Population Model

- 2.1 There was a general discussion about what has caused the general increase in hind numbers across the group. It was suggested that the effects of a few good years were now bringing the hind numbers back up. This is reinforced by the fact that most hinds shot were in calf.
- 2.2 SNH noted that the population had out-performed what had been forecast by the population model.
- 2.3 SC advised that the model had been using a calving rate of 28% since the 2012 count. It would therefore be helpful if members could carry out sample recruitment counts each year to get a better idea of calving rates between counts. This will allow the model to be adjusted accordingly.
- 2.4 It was anticipated that the severe winter of 2014/15 and the wet spring would have taken its toll but this has not been the case.

## 3 Discussion and Planning of the Hind Season Cull 2015 / 2016

- 3.1 This discussion has been deferred until the stalker's meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> April by which time count maps will be available from SNH.