

Subject: Glen Strathfarrar Deer Management Group
 Project: Spring meeting
 Date: 27 March 2017
 Location: Culligran Estate
 Present: Frank Spencer-Nairn Culligran (Chair)
 Hamish Fraser Culligran
 Anthony Fuller Glen Cannich and East Benula North
 Sir James Fuller Glen Cannich and East Benula North
 Andrew Fraser Glen Cannich and East Benula North
 Douglas Lippe West Monar & Pait
 Clive Meikle Braulen
 Richard Smith Braulen
 Steven Fraser Braulen
 George Fraser Erchless
 John Mackay Erchless (Treeline Forestry)
 Greg Fraser Struy
 Andrew Slaughter Inverinate
 Sinclair Coghill SNH
 Paul Stirling Strathglass Community Council
 Linzi Seivwright Caorunn (DMP Contractor)

Distribution: All DMG members, SNH, SCC, Caorunn

MINUTES

| ITEM | ACTION OWNER |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Welcome and Apologies | |
| 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all those at the meeting. | |
| 1.2 Apologies were received from: | |
| Michael Spencer-Nairn (Struy) | |
| Donald Fraser (Glen Cannich and East Benula North) | |
| Charlie Thomson (Farley) | |
| Peter Sinclair-Knipe (Erchless) | |
| Martin Mackay (Farley) | |
| Colin Stroyan (Pait & West Monar) | |
| Fiona Mackie (Bidwells) | |
| 2. Approval of minutes | |
| 2.1 Autumn meeting 21 October 2016 | |
| The Chairman conducted a review of the minutes. Anthony Fuller proposed approval which was seconded by Richard Smith. | |

2.2 Extraordinary meeting – 18 January 2017

The meeting reviewed the minutes, noting that Andrew Fraser's apologies should be added to the minutes. Hamish Fraser proposed that the adjusted minutes be approved. This was seconded by Richard Smith and the minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1 John Mackay provided an update on behalf of Erchless Estate. The estate remains keen to carry out a native woodland scheme but is now considering revising the fencing arrangements in order to minimise impact on deer movement. FCS has approved the contract and the scheme could be implemented as is or revised. It is likely that the scheme will not be started until spring 2018 although preparatory works maybe undertaken in advance of that date.

No additional culling has been undertaken. Although an application for out of season hind culling was made, it was not pursued since the nature of the scheme was being reconsidered. Mr Mackay confirmed that any revisions to the scheme will be discussed with the Deer Management Group. The Chairman noted all this and advised that the group was keen to understand the impact on deer numbers and movement, it was observed the contract with FCS had allowed for a reduction cull of 80 hinds and 30 stags. Mr Mackay hoped that the scheme revisions would mean that no stag reduction cull was required.

- 3.2 ECAF funding update – Noted that GSDMG had been successful in their application for ECAF funding but the ECAF scheme, as prepared by Scottish Government, was considered not to be compliant with EU regulations and the scheme had therefore been withdrawn. However, SNH has received funding to the tune of £175,000 from Scottish Government specifically for deer management, some of which might be available to GSDMG as a successful ECAF applicant. This funding cannot yet be applied for but in due course it may allow for the group to obtain funding to take forward the 2017 work programme particularly habitat monitoring and management.

The SNH funding support will also cover training and development, and in particular "capacity building" for addressing reduction culls, which is designed to help estates work together where deer culls deliver results against an adopted Deer Management Plan. The funding could provide additional staff and possibly resources (eg helicopter) where appropriate.

It is understood that a replacement ECAF scheme may be available by autumn 2017.

- 3.3 SNH habitat monitoring report – Sinclair Coghill provided an update on this work. The contractor, Colin Wells, had provided a second draft of the report in early October 2016. SNH was in the process of finalising the report and anticipated it would be available by the end of the month.

Agreed that Linzi Seivwright will then incorporate the report into the Deer Management Plan as an appendix.

LS

4. Deer Management Plan update

- 4.1 Linzi Seivwright provided an update on the Deer Management Plan.

- 4.2 The Deer Management Plan has been agreed by all parties and we are now in the delivery phase. However, there has been a hiatus with funding and this has had an impact on a suite of actions which were to be supported by the ECAF scheme.

4.3 The priorities were now considered to be as follows:

4.3.1 Ensuring habitat impact assessment work is undertaken on every estate in the group in 2017 by addressing the following:

- Preparation – Provision of materials and location of plots.
- Training day
- Collection of data by estate staff (help available from Linzi at cost if required).
- Collating data – Linzi will map the data and co-ordinate the results.
- By the end of the summer it is hoped to have a broad base of habitat impact assessment data across the whole of the group.

4.3.2 Linzi to review and update the working document within the Deer Management Plan and to note progress (ie hopefully moving from red through amber to green on the assessment chart).

LS

4.4 Noted that it is important for the group to address the concerns of the Scottish Government ECCLR committee regarding environmental impact of deer. This is likely to involve identifying improving habitat and reducing deer impact (and numbers).

5. Financial report

5.1 Subscriptions

The Treasurer presented an update on the group's financial position. The Treasurer noted that the DMG contribution to the running of ADMG would now be assessed at revised rates (stag £4, hind £2, calf £1). These changes would take effect from 1 July 2017. Invoices for individual members' subscriptions had been issued and the majority had been collected by the date of the meeting.

5.2 Review of budget without ECAF funding

Linzi Seivwright provided a paper identifying the extent of work that could be undertaken within the group on the basis of existing funding (subscriptions only) in the absence of ECAF funding. The proposed work plan and budget proposed by Linzi (a copy attached to these minutes) was approved by the meeting.

5.3 Future ECAF application

Linzi reported on opportunities for future ECAF funding which it is hoped will come forward during the autumn of 2017.

5.4 Other financial matters

5.4.1 It was noted that the Treasurer had previously circulated a note regarding secretarial fees which he suggested required to be subject to review at the 2017 AGM.

CWM

5.4.2 Noted that Linzi Seivwright had incurred additional costs in drafting consultation responses on the Erchless native planting scheme. The division of these costs amongst members was discussed with the chair asking John Mackay if he could secure a contribution from Erchless Estate.

JM

6. Association of Deer Management Groups

6.1 AGM report and update

The Chairman provided a report on the ADMG AGM, noting that the Chairman had been co-opted onto the ADMG committee as the ADMG representative on the access forum. Members present expressed their appreciation for the Chairman's commitment to this work.

Noted that of the 44 Deer Management Groups, 31 now had an operational web page on the ADMG website. The majority of groups now had a new Deer Management Plan in place and government is keen to see habitat impact assessment underway by groups and by individual estates.

6.2 Update on DMG review by SNH/Scottish Government

Noted that the ECCLR Committee will be considering various deer management issues and will be placing particular focus on improvement in habitat. Habitat impact assessment is therefore an important tool in informing this debate. All parties agree that Deer Management Groups are making progress on this front, but some parties consider not sufficient progress is being made quickly enough.

The SNH review of deer management was issued at the end of October 2016. The ECCLR committee took evidence following this, including from ADMG and SLE. Some scrutiny of the SNH report led to calls for further expert evidence on deer count data and other issues.

Scottish Government scrutiny of the deer sector continues and all Deer Management Groups will require to demonstrate positive action.

The earlier work by FCS (native woodland survey) provides background data on woodland across Scotland. However, there are some concerns about the way in which deer impact was interpreted in that survey which may be disadvantageous to deer management interests. Noted it would be useful to look at the priority areas in the woodland survey and see how we can address these.

All estates represented agreed to embark on habitat impact assessment work during 2017.

ALL

7. Habitat monitoring by group 2017

7.1 Linzi Seivwright gave a brief overview of particular areas which would best be subject to habitat monitoring, including dwarf shrub heath and blanket bog.

7.2 A habitat monitoring training day had been organised for the group to be held on Tuesday 2 May at Cambussory (Braulen). (Later postponed and held on 15th June).

7.3 A discussion ensued regarding equipment and plots. Linzi to circulate a list of plots and basic equipment required.

LS

7.4 All estates present agreed to undertake habitat monitoring assessments. Of those not represented at the meeting, noted that Farley Estate had previously made a commitment to undertake this work. East Monar Estate was not represented at the meeting and the Chairman undertook to speak to Steven Potter in the hope to agree that habitat monitoring would take place at East Monar.

8. Any other business

8.1 South Ross liaison meeting

8.1.1 The Chairman noted that this year's annual meeting was to be hosted by Ewen Macpherson at Attadale Estate during May 2017. Dates were being finalised.

8.2 Peatland restoration – Noted that the Scottish Government had made available £8m to grant aid peatland restoration. Any queries should be addressed to SNH (via Sinclair Coghill). The group was encouraged to consider areas which may be appropriate for peatland restoration.

9. Date of next meeting

9.1 It was agreed the next meeting would be held on Monday 23 October at 2.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

DEER MANAGEMENT PLANNING FORUM

1. Review of the 2016/2017 hind season.

Those present gave a verbal report on the hind season as follows:

| PROPERTY | HINDS SHOT | CALVES SHOT | PROPOSED STAG CULL (TO BE CONFIRMED) | COMMENTS |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| West Monar & Pait | 8 | 0 | 30 | Stalking at the top end of the loch had been difficult due to adverse weather conditions and the low level of the loch. Hinds had not tended to move to the east end of the loch and whilst there were hinds intermittently at West Monar & Pait, the hinds tended to move off the ground during the hind stalking season. Winds had been unhelpful in this respect. |
| East Monar | 40 | 6 | | No report from East Monar. |
| Braulen | 377 | 110 | 130 | The season started well but hinds were wild during December and January and difficult to stalk. However target cull achieved by the end of the season. Concerns regarding the requirement for continuing high cull numbers next season as hinds will almost certainly be difficult to stalk. Noted a number of carcasses condemned as affected by warble (some other estates also affected, Chairman undertook to discuss this with the game dealer). |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----|--|
| Culligran | 74 | 27 | 30 | Most hinds were shot towards the east end of the estate. The hinds were mainly in reasonable condition though quite a number were not in calf and there was a wide variation in sizes of foetuses. There were difficulties in carrying out stalking without any snow cover and interference was encountered from walkers. The hind cull opposite includes 2 hinds and 1 calf shot in Glen Orrin. |
| Erchless | 80 | 31 | 25 | This was an extremely difficult season with mild weather resulting in deer mainly being in Glen Gowrie. Shooting on Farley resulted in deer moving onto Erchless. Deer in reasonable condition until towards the end of the season. |
| Farley | 40 | 14 | 12 | No report received from Farley. |
| Struy | 21 (plus one in woods) | 8 calves (plus one in woods) | 27 | Hinds were in good condition, healthy and many were in calf. |
| Glen Cannich | 202 | 48 | 47 | Andrew Fraser had carried out much of the work this season. The hinds were in good condition throughout a very open winter, but the lack of snow made stalking difficult. |
| East Benula North | 83 | 23 | 14 | Stalking was made difficult in a southerly wind due to difficulties in anchoring the boat making it difficult to get onto the north side of the property. |

2. Review/update of population of model

- 2.1 Sinclair Coghill distributed the population model (although this would require updated following the collection of the full results at the group meeting).
- 2.2 Sinclair noted it would be useful to understand the recruitment rate being observed on the ground, ie what calves are entering the population this year. Stalkers were asked to observe how many calves are with hinds to give an idea of percentage calving, especially during the month following the meeting. Building in the real mortality rate and real calf survival can help refine the model.

ALL

In respect of deer impact, consideration should be given to whether stags are using areas of the SAC as wintering ground. It may be necessary to target these particular stags and areas in the forthcoming season.

A full helicopter count in 2019 will be useful.

- 2.3 The Chairman requested a report from each estate at the October meeting on whether there appears to be a build up of younger stags on the ground. **ALL**
- 2.4 The hind cull for the year ahead will be set in October but it was noted that the group is committed to a second year of culling circa 1,000 hinds across the group, so targets are likely to be similar to the 2016/20176 season.
- 2.5 Linzi Seivwright requires to update the Deer Management Plan and therefore requires records and data from each estate. Linzi will circulate questions for estates to complete in order to allow the plan to be updated. **LS**