

Meeting of Glenmoriston Deer Management Group
Held at Glenmoriston Memorial Hall, Invermoriston
on 2nd December 2019 at 2.00 pm

Present

Martin Girvan	DMG Chair. Ceannacroc
Martin Girvan Jnr	Ceannacroc
Doug Gilbert	Dundreggan, Trees for Life
Allan Common	Dundreggan, Trees for Life
Heather Ward	Dundreggan, Trees for Life (Trainee)
Jimmy Gibb	Balmacaan
Russell Cooper	Forest Enterprise
Watt Forbes	Corrimony
Simon Mclaughlin	RSPB Corrimony
Willie Fraser	Affric and Kintail DMG
Sinclair Coghill	SNH
Linzi Seivwright	DMG Secretary

1. Apologies

Alex Grigg	Hilton/Guisachan
Steven Miller	Achlain
Alex Dunnings	Achlain
Ian Reynard	Wester Guisachan
Alan McIntosh	Wester Guisachan
Nout Kwint	Wester Guisachan
Lynda Campbell	DMG Treasurer, Corrielaire
Graham Wood	Community Representative
Steven Gray	Glenmoriston
Robin Poore	Balmacarn
Ed Poore	Balmacarn
Tom Girvan	Tomchrasky
Ali McKnight	Consultant

Agenda Item	Detail	Actions
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 14th August	
	Approval of the minutes was proposed by MG (Jr) and Seconded by AC .	
3.	Matters Arising from Meeting held on 14th August	
	All outstanding matters arising were covered under the Agenda.	
4.	Land Management Plan Glen Affric	
	RC provided an update to the meeting on progress with the Land Management Plan for Affric. He wasn't sure when consultation was due to end but the end of March was looking like the deadline for the final plan. MG Jr updated the meeting on a site visit that had taken place since the last meeting. Following a discussion with FLS at a consultation meeting on 31 st August, 12 people had been ferried around Affric to look at non-native woodland removal etc which was encouraging. There was also discussion about culls for montane willow in the South Affric area. A discussion had taken place with Ben Griffin and Giles Brockman regarding what might be looked at before the implementation of culls. A site visit took place at the beginning of November with GB, MG, MG Jr and a local fencing contractor. The site was walked as far as possible and the fencer	

reckoned the project was feasible albeit a challenge. Due to snow cover on the ground, it was agreed that the fencer would have to wait until spring until snow goes to make a final assessment. GB insisted that FLS weren't committing to the scheme but indicated that they would be happy to look at it.

FLS were asked about culls being undertaken before the outcome of the fencing appraisal is known. FLS confirmed that as yet, there were no plans for Out Of Season culling in South Affric until they know what the land management plan going to deliver. FLS confirmed that OOS culls were on hold until then.

MG Jr commended FLS on their openness and willingness to discuss alternative approaches and on the way to Corrie Ciche it was pointed out that FLS have already taken down a lot of fencing and opened up an area at the top part of Glen Affric to deer.

RC reminded the group that along with the development of the Land Management Plan and objectives, there is still the need to reduce the population that over-winters in South Affric because the heath and blanket bog habitats that were surveyed in 2019 are deemed to be in unfavourable condition. The Affric and Kintail Collaborative Land Management Plan states that habitats must be in good condition. RC reinforced the point that people should be aware that something that will have to be done.

RC reminded the group that at the last DMG meeting, the Group had been looking at the population overall and had identified that Corrielaire, Ceannacroc and Tomcrasky were holding a lot more hinds in the area than stags. This meant that these properties would be relying on stags coming from elsewhere. The questions was asked by SNH whether there was scope to properties considering having less hinds? This wasn't a suggestion about reducing numbers per se but about taking hinds down to allow stags space to overwinter. MG Jr indicated that it was certainly the aspiration that eventually most of woodland on Ceannacroc will be open to deer but they weren't quite there.

The point was argued that it was likely due to all the fencing in Affric that was resulting in the high impacts being experienced in S Affric. However it was counter argued that if all fences were removed then whole DMG would have to sign up to that. RC indicated that the issue in South Affric was a temporal one and that the habitat is being adversely affected by numbers that are using the site only at certain times.

The Group discussed that a fence had been erected around the march would be a long time ago and why couldn't it be reinstated. RC indicated that such a proposal was unlikely to be popular? Would people be happier knowing that Montane willow is being protected? Ultimately it would be down to the Joint Agencies to make the decision. To date 1000s of deer have been shot in South Affric, yet despite this the habitat is still being affected by stags in winter. RC reminded the Group that work done with the various DMGs surrounding South Affric had identified one group producing 300 more stags than they need every year. This was likened to a tap pouring deer into South Affric.

WF made the point that the meeting was already 20 minutes in and the discussion had been all about the issues in Affric and Kintail DMG. The same issues were now being discussed at two separate meetings. He highlighted that this was not a productive use of time and suggested that these discussions need to be discussed in a wider forum in future. WF also disagreed with FLS that impacts in South Affric were terrible across the board.

	<p>It was noted that there was much talking around the table as to what the forestry was doing but not enough discussion on what the wider group could do. It had been identified time again that hinds are the solution and yet the Group are not prepared to do anything about it. If key estates were to shoot a few more hinds this would draw stags away. Until this happens, South Affric is surrounding by high hind concentrations all around. The choice was clear – the Group can either carry on as it is and will still be having same discussion year after year unless it can come up with solution.</p> <p>WF noted that from experience, maintaining fence at high altitude is not practical particularly due avalanche risk. A high altitude fence would be a waste of time and would have to be brought down the hill.</p> <p>It was noted that the is a fence practically all through Affric which has reduced low ground for deer. RC indicated that DMGs have to realise that the reality is that forestry areas can't always be opened up so they need to find their own solutions. If estates want deer in the future they are going to have to look after their own deer. It was argued that the S Affric issue with stags is self-inflicted because FLS had reduced hinds and drawn in stags. RC argued that if they stopped shooting hinds they would still end up with too many deer and the reality is that there are too many mouths o the ground. FLS were asked if they would be prepared to sell the area around marches? RC couldn't say, so recommended that the individual contact FLS directly. In any case the Community would be offered the land first and as it was part of the NNR it would unlikely be sold.</p> <p>FLS were asked if they could take the forestry fence back into the woodland to provide shelter. FLS couldn't think of anywhere where this had been done but it was suggested that there was capacity to do a bit on both sides and asked why the couldn't take responsibility also?</p> <p>MG agreed to do written submission to FLS consultation on behalf of the DMG.</p>	<p>AP 1</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Funding Update</p>	
	<p>It was confirmed that funding from the Wind Farm will be made available once the DMG has submitted final reports and have received an invoice from the contractor.</p> <p>MG Jr spoke to Angus Robertson from the Windfarm Fund regarding support for a 2 day First Aid Course that was being run in Inverness costing £146. AR had confirmed that the DMG needed to complete the application they already had and that applications couldn't be made for work carried out retrospectively. Unfortunately it looked like an application for funding for heli count would not be possible this time due to timings the Group agreed that MG Jr is to work with LS to put in another application in the future.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Updated Working Plan</p>	
	<p>6.1 Cull Updates</p>	
	<p>Members provided proposed cull numbers at the meeting. These are collated in Table 1.</p> <p>FLS were asked how targets are calculated by FLS? RC indicated that if the area has recent dung counting information or if an open ground count has been done they will use that. National Forest Estate target to have low populations nationally. Culls targets were in the region of 35,000 last year but were going to rise to 40,000.</p> <p>It was noted that you don't get the same extent of winter mortality in forestry and fecundity is comparatively high to that of open ground. There have been definite</p>	

	cases of calves pregnant at 7 months old in Sika. It is not possible to calculate deer in woodland at the same time as the heli count and dung counts have not been prioritised for this area.	
	6.2 Winter Mortality & Recruitment Counts	
	It was noted that calving had been better than last year.	
	6.3 Updated Population Models & Targets	
	LS to update working plan and population models and circulate to the Group in the Spring.	AP 2
	6.4 South Ross Count 2019	
	SNH indicated that the count could happen in March so all advised to take the hind cull before the count. The costs would be allocated as before based on counting time on each estate and other costs would be divided on a prorate basis. SNH confirmed that the count will be invoiced this financial year. SNH confirmed that they would be contributing half the cost. DG agreed to check if TFL could stand the invoice (in order to claim the VAT) and claim from all individual estates. The issue previously had been that some estates were slow in paying. MG insisted that payment should be made on return. The Group agreed that it would be useful to include a contacts list in the DMP to include a phone number and email. The Group also agreed to produce a short list of those who wanted to up.	AP 3
	6.5 Native Woodland Condition and Woodland Expansion	
	Ceannacroc confirmed they had just finalising their planting. Dundreggan updated the DMG on the proposal to fence 280 ha of montane area high up (north corner) to promote scrub regeneration. It was noted that with regards to the density of deer on the ground, the SNH assessment was based on whole ownership stuck together and doesn't take account areas less available to deer. The density of group doesn't necessarily show true impact. It was agreed that although the effective deer range may not be not be represented management should be about impacts.	
	6.6 Habitat Impact Assessment	
	AM had been unable to attend the meeting but sent an update to the group of headline figures. SNH indicated that maps would be useful to look at distribution of impacts. The contractor had completed most of the analysis and was just finishing writing up the report. Levishie Woods SSSI required to be done in Spring 2020 and a Training Event for the local community will need to be organised for next year.	AP 4
	6.8 Peatland Restoration	
	Ceanacroc confirmed that they have had a project approved (46 ha). Peat hag reprofiling and lot of small dams. Tendering for contractors had just finished but this had been the biggest challenge in finding a contractor. Dundreggan indicated that they had a 2/3 years project to monitor peatland and remove trees from deep peat. Have already flooded areas.	
	6.9 Deer Vehicle Collisions	
	SNH provided information to the Group regarding a report published on Friday of DVCs nationally. This included a range of maps showing roughly where they are occurring allowing hotspots to be identified which was now in the top 200 in the country. One had been identified along the road from Corriclair to Kintail. WF	

	<p>updated that NTS had an early start to stags had concentrated on stags along roadside in Glenshiel. There were still significant issues however on a particular stretch between Clunie and Corriclair with a lot of deer congregating beside road. Locally the issue was continuously brought up and it was feared that it was just a matter of time before there was a serious incident. NTS want to be seen to be doing something locally. SNH emphasised that it was up to the voluntary sector to take action and they would supply out of season and night shooting authorisations if required. It was noted that woodland is being used on Ceannacroc to put up fencing to prevent movement. The Chair agreed to discuss the issue with LC</p> <p>It was noted that there are still issues with deer near Dungreggan crossing river and getting trapped by fence. Road construction now needs to have 20m from main road – far enough to stop funnelling into road.</p>	AP 5
	6.10 CWD and Lyme Disease	
	The Group discussed the ongoing need for vigilance in preventing the introduction of CWD to the UK. There was nothing to report on Lyme Disease.	
	6.11 Venison Update	
	There was nothing to report.	
	6.12 Deer Welfare -larder data	
	LS agreed to circulate a larder proforma to the Group to enable data to be collected and analysed at a group level. This would include ages, weights as well as information on reproduction in females.	AP 6
7.	Treasurers Report	
	Concerns had been raised by LC about how much the Group is spending on various projects. There was a need to keep an eye on what the Group is spending. It was noted that costs have been increasing but these are just addressing what SNH has asked for. The balance was currently £1874.93 with £1460 due to come. ADMG Invoice had been received for £2,911.40.	
8.	Access Issues	
	There were no access issues to discuss.	
9.	Training Update	
	Dungreggan noted that they have appointed a trainee who was present at the meeting.	
10.	Community Engagement	
	There were no Community issues to discuss.	
11.	Out of Season Authorisations	
	MG reported on an OOS for Ceannacroc which had been used for agricultural damage last year -2 stags and 2 hinds. Dundreggan haven't applied yet and haven't decided if an OOS/Night Shooting Authorisations is required as in previous years (for Sika and Reds in enclosures).	
12.	SNH Update	
	SNH Review of Deer management report had been published on Friday (LS had circulated link). Report was generally positive about way in which DMG have responded but indicates that there is more to do with regards to woodland and peatlands. As well as the DVC report, a further report on national trends in deer density and a Lowland Deer report had also been published. It was noted that this area looks like high density but didn't reflect current population.	

	<p>A report was still expected from the Deer Working Group (early December) and SNH hope to be able to get sight of that before long. However, SNH indicated that it was unlikely that the Scottish Government would issue recommendations until that report has been submitted and considered alongside all the others. SNH had no idea what will be in report. The Working Group was made up of individuals appointed by Government including Dr Andrew Barbour (Chair) located in Perthshire, Robin Callander (based at Birse) and Dr Jayne Glass (based in Perth). Group had been Chaired by Simon Pepper but he had sadly passed away during the process.</p>	
<p>13.</p>	<p>ADMG Update</p>	
	<p>ADMG were working to respond to the SNH Review and to the media coverage that had resulted. On the whole they were generally happy that progress in the Deer Sector has been recognised but ADMG had been disappointed that not more recognition of support provided to groups had been made in the report.</p> <p>At the Regional Meeting in Inverness in November the issue of fencing budgets and FLS had been raised. Ian Ferguson from FLS had talked about capping of fencing budget which will inhibit FLS to use fencing in the future. It had been made clear that FLS were moving away from fencing and more emphasis was being out on control.</p> <p>WF indicated that Affric and Kintail DMG had drawn down a Forestry Cooperation Grant from Forestry Scotland looking at opportunities for woodland expansion and native woodland. The consultant drawn out riskier areas, looked at topography and costs and was completing a report on what group could realistically look at with regards to woodland but the reality was that it would probably look more like couple hundred hectares. The report had identified risks associated with Grant conditions and was providing realistic and useful advice to individual estates.</p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p>Other DMG Update</p>	
	<p>The issues in South Affric had already been discussed.</p> <p>WF indicated that next year Affric and Kintail would be looking at reviewing and developing a new plan. This plan would be about collating information gathered through the peatland feasibility study and Forestry Cooperation Grant. Scottish Government would likely be looking to DMG to be forward looking. A & K DMG will look at information and see where there are opportunities to deliver. Most likely to be in the west and not in the east.</p> <p>WF reiterated the point that probably a quarter of this DMGs time is spent discussing A&K and the next plan needs to address this and to identify areas of overlap between the various DMGs. Corriclair has a greater impact on Affric than Glenmoriston but they are not currently involved in A&K planning process. This needs to be discussed moving forward. Key stakeholders will also be essential to include I the planning process.</p> <p>It was noted that population modelling is currently failing because DMG geographical areas are too small. If the A & K population model is right, the Group will have easily delivered targets however significant deer movements bring uncertainty that this is the case. Key will be vision for the Group moving forward and what the Group does with information moving forward. For progress to continue A & K will have to access information moving forward.</p> <p>Native woodland, new woodland and peatlands have all been looked at, opportunities for further work identified. Surveys will allow Group to prioritise and</p>	

	<p>focus on areas where most to gain. Peatland hasn't identified man-made issues so most will be reprofiling of areas.</p> <p>WF reiterated that moving forward there has to be greater and more constructive interaction between Groups. When Groups have a shared population of deer there needs to be a share in their management and a wider responsibility for management across borders.</p> <p>MG asked Affric and Kintail how much they had actually delivered? WF reiterated that the Group was in the process of information gathering and the next phase of the plan would be about delivery. MG argued that Glenmoriston DMG were already being proactive in delivering woodland and peatlands and that the likes of Glenmoriston, RSPB, Achlain, Ceannacroc, Dundreggan etc are just getting on and doing it. The DMG has also been instrumental in trying to move discussion with S Affric on by engaging and getting a site visit organised.</p> <p>WF reiterated that there is always going to be wider habitat issue in South Affric. Montane willow is just one issue as the area is a vacuum for stags because hinds not being shot elsewhere. Groups cannot dictate what someone does with their land so we all have to try and compromise. Groups can't sit in isolation and say they are not going to do anything and expect everyone else to take action. There needs to be wider action between groups particularly to look at issues and focus on estates that are directly impacted. The Action needs to be to identify who should be part of a wider Affric and Kintail group (not necessarily the whole of Glenmoriston DMG).</p> <p>This is an issue of trust and it is unlikely to be resolved until the tap that is producing stags is turned down and places where estates producing more stags than they need consider their management of hinds.</p> <p>SNH had been considering figures and at the last South Ross count there was 9,400 stags and approx. 16,000 hinds counted. SNH are hoping that the next count sees a lower proportion of stags to hinds. The Group discussed the work of Paddy Meiklejohn which had documented the manipulation of stags and hind numbers.</p>	
16.	Any Other Business	
	DG indicated that the Dundreggan Plan is up for mid-term review.	
17.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	Tuesday 21st April and 2pm. Count likely to be end Feb/March. Chair thanked everyone for coming.	

Table 1: Updated Culls for 2019/2020

Property	Stags	Hind Target (cull to date)
Corriclair:	22	40 -50 (18)
Ceannacroc	31	50 (10)
Tomcrasky	25	50 (including calves)
Balmacaan	39	30 (12)
Balmacarn	1	5
Wester Guisachan	20	25
RSPB Corrimony	8	10 (2)
Dundreggan	28 , 2 roe	45 (25 and 12 calves)
Corrimony	12	? (none)
<i>Hilton</i>	5	0
Glenmoriston	25	65
FLS	96	450 deer in total (19 hinds and 19 calves)
Achlain	15	20

4b. Summary of Action Points from 2nd December 2019.

Action Point	Detail	Who
1.	MG to provide a written submission on behalf of the DMG to FLS on Affric Land Management Plan	MG
2.	LS to update Working Plan in Spring 2020 and compile a contact list for each estate.	LS
3.	DG to check with TFL regarding paying count invoice	DG
4.	LS to organise a Community HIA Training Event for Spring 2020	LS
5.	MG to speak to LC about DVC hotspots	MG
6.	LS agreed to circulate a larger proforma and stalkers to complete for as many hinds as possible	LS & Stalkers