

Minutes of ADMG Regional Committee Meeting

On: Thursday 6 June 2013
At: The Huntingtower Hotel, Perth

Present: Executive Committee
 Richard Cooke (RC) Chairman
 Andrew Gordon (AG) Vice Chairman
 Finlay Clark (FC) Secretary
 Dick Playfair (DP)
 Anson MacAuslan (AM)
 George Macdonald (GM)
 James Duncan Millar (JDM)
 James Adamson (JA)
 Linzi Seivwright (LS)
 John Bruce (JB)
 Victor Clements (VC)

Members attending

Seamus MacNally	Gairloch Conservation Unit
Jane Cheape	Moidart DMG
Crispin Cook	North Ross DMG
Heather Gow	North West Sutherland DMG
Kirsteen Currie	South West Ross DMG
George Leggat	Fealar Estate
Alistair Gibson	Glenfinnan Estate
Chris Gordon	Logiealmond
Blair McFarlane	
Highland Hill & Associates	Corporate Member
Ron Smith	Associate Member
Alix Whitaker	Smiths Gore

Apologies

Col HFO Bewsher	Executive Committee
Ewen MacPherson	Executive Committee
Colin McClean	Executive Committee
Glen Heggs	Executive Committee
Keith Falconer	Executive Committee (resigned)
Sarah Holman	Executive Committee
Stephen Gibbs	Executive Committee
Julian Clarke	Executive Committee
Leo Barclay	Executive Committee
Lynda Campbell	Executive Committee
Justin Irvine	Executive Committee
Susanna Thomson	Black Mount DMG
Mark Nicolson	East Grampian DMG
Henry Birkbeck	Glenelg DMG
Tim Atkinson	Islay DMG
A Macpherson-Fletcher	Monadhliaths DMG
Timothy Laing	Mull DMG
Martin Robb	South Perthshire DMG
WN Jackson	Strathtay DMG
Bruce Taylor	West Lochaber DMG

Robbie Kernahan	SNH
Douglas Waldron	Killin Estate
Andrew R McKelvey	Knockie Estate
Gordon Kerr	Smiths Gore
Robert Balfour	
Wattie Barbour	
Peter Huddleston	
Duncan Mackenzie	Clune Estate
George Seligman	

1.	<p>Draft minutes of ADMG Regional Meeting, Inverness on 27 November</p> <p>Acceptance of minutes proposed by JDM, seconded by VC. RC said that there were no matters arising from the minutes that would not be picked up on the agenda.</p>	
2.	<p>Chairman's report</p> <p>2.1 Meetings attended</p> <p>2.1.1 RC reported that he had attended the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 DMG meetings since February AGM • meeting of Scottish Venison Partnership • 3 meetings of SCSTG • ADMG AGM • WDNA Action Group meeting • SGA AGM (as speaker) • Deer Panel meeting (RC advised that both he and JB were members of the Deer Panel, and that this could be its final meeting as it has run its 3 year course, yet to be formally confirmed). • ADMG Chairmen and Secretaries seminar • meeting of Mar Lodge Section 7 Group • Edinburgh University/Cairngorms event (as speaker) • meeting with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change • DMRT meeting • Meeting with Scottish Land and Estates re new owners' guide – joint project • meeting of prospective new Strathdon DMG • SNH habitat monitoring meeting • SQWV Board meeting • Meeting with SNH (with FC). <p>2.2 London meeting</p> <p>2.2.1 The first London meeting was imminent. This was a new initiative. Normally ADMG held two or sometimes three regional meetings, and it had been decided this year to hold a third 'regional' meeting in London. Whilst 200 or so attend the AGM these are often the same people and "converted" whereas there are many owners involved in the deer sector who don't attend the AGM , and they miss the opportunity to be updated.</p>	

	<p>2.2.2 The intention is to hold an invitation-only meeting with owners who are based in the South to update them on changes and developments. The meeting takes place on 19 June; there are 40 signed up to attend so far. The programme consists of an introduction from RC, presentations from David Lowes on Glenfalloch, Randal Wilson, Chair of West Ross DMG, a political update from DP, FC on the role of ADMG, LS for SNH, Sarah Troughton on SCSTG, and a final round-up from AG, Vice Chairman.</p>	
3.	<p>Administrative and Financial report</p> <p>3.1 FC said the ADMG was now in the final months of the current year and for the year to date had a recorded income of £99,217 against a budget of £82,420, showing a positive variance on budget of £16,797. Year to date expenditure is £70,785 well inside budget but with a number of costs still to come such as work on the website and the London event. The surplus was due to the increase in subscriptions and more returns submitted for 'other species'. It looks like ADMG will be inside budget for the current year. ADMG currently has £20,066 at the bank which is typical position for this time of year.</p> <p>3.2 In response to a query about subscriptions from JB, FC said that the subscription for this year (2012/13) was the first at the new full rate. In budgeting, a cautious approach had been taken; also people were being more diligent in reporting other species, particularly an increasing number of roe being shot that should be reported.</p> <p>3.3 RC said that he was frequently receiving comment from grouse moor areas particularly about an increasing number of roe being shot on the hill.</p>	
4.	<p>Committee Reports</p> <p>4.1 <u>Scottish Venison Partnership</u></p> <p>4.1.1 DP said that SVP continued to be busy in addressing ways to increase venison production to meet market demand against a backdrop of a static/declining wild red cull.</p> <p>4.1.2 DP said that the UK retail venison market was reported as growing at some 25 per cent per annum, and that the major game dealers were importing in excess of the equivalent of 25,000 carcasses per annum from New Zealand and Poland. Spanish imports were also appearing.</p> <p>4.1.3 The objective is to increase venison production in Scotland by 1200 tonnes by 2020 to c 5000 tonnes.</p> <p>4.1.4 DP reported that SVP was to meet again for its AGM and regular meeting the following week.</p>	

Also SVP had had a stand at the Perth Meat Trades Fair and there had been a reprint of the leaflet for butchers funded by SNH. Two more butchers' events were planned in September at Stepps and Kilmarnock focusing on roe and involving the Lowland Deer Network. DP said that a paper on the future direction of SVP was to be discussed reflecting on the work that has been done and priority areas for the future.

4.1.5 DP gave an update on two research projects organised through Interface, one with Napier University Business School, and the other with Aberdeen University/The Hutton Research Institute plus the drive to marshal some more co-ordinated data through Scotland Food and Drink/Insights.

4.1.6 DP also gave an update on the application for Skills Development Scheme funding to support a £130,000 project for a deer demonstration unit to be set up over two years with Scotland Food and Drink. Other partners in the project were NFUS, SFQC and the Venison Advisory Service.

4.1.7 DP said that Scottish Venison Day 4 September would involve a Fife-based day focusing on deer farming and that the Cabinet Secretary had indicated he would attend and speak.

4.1.8 DP also said that funding for SVP was critical and this would be reviewed at its next meeting. SNH and FCS both contributed towards its activity.

4.1.9 RC said that good progress was being made on the venison front. He said that ADMG's recommendation was that members should be quality assured and supplying their venison to a quality assured (SQWV) processor of which there are three, and that some DMGs were seeking competitive tenders for their supply to their advantage.

4.2 Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group

4.2.1 RC reported that SCSTG had an excellent new website which also provided a good marketing tool for unlet stalking – hinds, stags and roe. A new series of *Fieldsports Welcome* courses has been launched, run by Nicki Barnett and targeted at stalkers and those who handle bookings and enquiries.

4.2.2 SCSTG is conducting a new survey funded by Scottish Enterprise to update existing figures (PACEC) on the economic value of country sports and will break out stalking figures from this.

4.2.3 SCSTG will have representation at the Royal Highland Show, GWCT Scottish Game Fair (on ADMG stand) and at

the CLA Game Fair.

4.3 National Access Forum

4.3.1 RC said that Robert Balfour represented ADMG on the National Access Forum. In his absence, RC said that there was little to report of relevance to deer management.

4.3.2 The interim report from the Land Reform Review Group has ruled out changes to Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act re access, and the LRRG has said that it regards this as outside its remit anyway.

4.3.3 The Forum is in discussion with RICS to ensure ways that new landowners are aware of their access responsibilities.

4.4 Moorland Forum

4.4.1 Robert Balfour also represented ADMG on this Forum. RC reported that re bracken control Asulam became available again for sale/transfer from 20 May as a short-term measure though longer term could be considered. The application period is from 1 July – 18 September and use-up period ends at 31 October after which remaining stocks have to be destroyed.

4.4.2 The Heather Trust is running a survey of outbreaks of heather beetle in 2013; the Muirburn Code, already in its 2nd edition, is under review; a Peatland Working Group has been set up and there should be a deer interest in this; Forest Enterprise Scotland has an 'open land project' underway, and there could possibly be implications for deer, and deer farming in this.

4.5 Best Practice

4.5.1 Colin McClean represents ADMG on the Best Practice Group. In his absence, JB was invited to report.

4.5.2 JB said that the Committee had been focusing on reassuring those who need to know that 'Competence is in safe hands' and that there were efforts being made to reach out to those who were resisting involvement to date and to get involved before their absence was noted.

4.5.3 JB reported that the group has ascertained that the bulk of people engaged professionally in the management of deer were 'pretty well trained', but not all, and there remained question marks over two areas, farming and crofting, These are just perceptions, not accusations, but they do need to manage their deer appropriately and within the confines of the law.

4.5.4 Two new documents had been produced, one an 'eyecatcher' and an introduction to deer and considerations about competence giving basic premises of what's involved and a list of places where further information can be obtained; the other is a more technical paper about who needs 'competence', what it means, what's involved in examination etc.

4.5.5 JB said that making every effort to encourage all to engage in Competence will make the sector stronger. It will also make it easier for those charged with the delivery of Competence to demonstrate that they have done what they were asked to do.

4.5.6 RC commented that there had been interesting discussion during the morning Executive Committee meeting about DMGs being open to other interests such as farming, and whilst there was a presumption that most interests in the mainstream deer management sector were already competent, at least to Level 1 and many to Level 2, it was incumbent also on DMGs to promote Competence to their neighbouring farmers and encourage them to take it seriously.

4.5.7 JB added that the literature had been updated to say that the SNH review would take place after April 2014 (not by April 2014). Also Louisa Roberts, NFUS Head of Regions, had joined the Competence Working Group following conversations with Nigel Miller and the NFUS legal and technical committee. This would help get deer higher up the NFUS agenda.

4.5.8 JB warned however that deer were viewed by some farmers as having negative impacts including the spread of pests, tick and other parasites and diseases. BDS is preparing an advisory paper on this issue.

4.6 SRDP review

4.6.1 RC said that he and VC had met with the SRDP review team to press that the scheme should be open to applications from Groups, enabling for instance SRDP support for a deer management plan which would not be possible under an individual application. The proposal, which has received support from other quarters, is that a Group application should be competent for support.

4.6.2 Also that the presence of deer should be taken into account in any stocking rate for sheep farmers where deer are also present.

4.6.3 VC said the new SRDP scheme would start in the Autumn and run through to Autumn 2020 with less money available. The current part of consultation runs to 30 June.

	<p>4.6.4 The current scheme (2008 – 13) had little in it of help to deer managers; the process is unwieldy so most people have chosen not to get involved. Breadalbane DMG had considered it but decided not to apply.</p> <p>4.6.5 VC said one opportunity was for a 'third party' such as a DMG to put in an application on behalf of a number of properties for a deer management plan or support for a deer larder for example.</p> <p>4.6.6 RC asked, whether in responding to a Government consultation such as this it was good to put in ambitious figures such as the case here (£150,000 for 5 years for developing traditional deer management support; £75,000 for 5 years for developing Lowland Deer Network) in the knowledge that a lot could be done for less.</p> <p>4.6.7 FC said that when applied to larders £100,000 was not an unreasonable figure.</p> <p>4.6.8 JDM asked whether the application could be made by a Group Chairman or Secretary on behalf of all as the involvement of 'third parties' (ie external consultants) could often be expensive, and that perhaps this should be redefined to include representative members of the Group.</p> <p>4.6.9 VC advised that there was also a possibility that there could be funding for establishing an ADMG Advisory or Arbitration service. Also there could be funding for Competence training for farmers and crofters. RC said that he thought that funding for training would be very valuable.</p> <p>4.6.10 Also Land Management Options (LMOs) uptake was very poor. VC said that there was a considerable amount of LMO money that had not been claimed. He thought NFUS would press hard to retain LMOs in some capacity. It was considered that SQWV membership for example might be able to be claimed through LMOs. VC concluded by saying that he believed there was opportunity to develop capacity in the deer management sector through these funding routes.</p> <p>4.6.11 Question as to whether funding support might cover costs towards DSC 1 and 2.</p> <p>4.6.12 RC asked VC to fine-tune his draft paper, pass by RC and FC and then submit by the consultation deadline.</p>	
5.	<p>Political and PR</p> <p>5.1 DP reported on the meeting in April with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, on other political issues and on land reform (report attached to minutes).</p>	

	<p>5.2 DP advised that the 2012 Stag Season Report was available and anyone wanting numbers of copies should contact him.</p> <p>5.3 The next Newsletter, SCOPE, will be published for Scone.</p> <p>5.4 The website has been updated with the DMG map, and the move to put separate DMG microsites/individual pages on the website was commencing. The objective is to have as many DMGs as possible with an individual presence on the website. DP is producing a template to circulate asking for information and images.</p>	
6.	<p>SNH Report</p> <p>6.1 LS reported that following discussion with Jamie Hammond of SNH she was not aware of any burning issues that needed to be addressed within the area, but if there were any arising from the meeting then she would feed these back to him.</p> <p>6.2 LS gave a brief update on <i>Wild Deer – A National Approach</i>, the vision for sustainable deer management for the next 20 years, currently being reviewed.</p> <p>6.3 Internally SNH has just gone through the process of developing a <i>Wildlife Management Framework</i>. This is currently for internal use only.</p> <p>6.4 In support of the Competence drive, SNH has now amended the Fit and Competent Register requirement to either Level 2, or Level 1 + one referee with Level 1.</p> <p>6.5 Regarding SNH support for DMGs, LS said that although her role was only part-time, she hoped to be giving more strategic support to DMGs, and would be concentrating on trying to develop tools/support within individual Groups to deliver sustainable deer management.</p> <p>6.6 She said that sustainable deer management was based on 3 pillars – environmental, economic and social. On the environmental side, SNH is pressing DMGs to undertake Habitat Impact Assessments supported by workshops and training events. She said that SNH recognises the difficulty of setting up plots and evaluating data and that there was a ‘blockage’ in DMGs using data that they had collected. Consequently, a simple tool is being developed to allow individual estates to upload data, produce maps and reports, and add count and cull data with a ‘pilot’ of this system in place later this year.</p>	

	<p>6.7 RC reported on the Birnam seminar for DMG Chairmen and Secretaries. The overall view was that this had been extremely useful, albeit there was still a hurdle to overcome regarding nervousness about the closer relationship between SNH and ADMG. It was noted that Government's view of the deer sector is that responsibilities are being taken seriously and progress is being made.</p> <p>6.8 RC said that the first point of access now to SNH for DMGs should be their local Wildlife Officer, whether for deer management plan help, habitat assessment help etc.</p>	
7.	<p>Local issues RC asked each DMG represented to give a brief resumé of their Group and any current issues.</p> <p><u>7.1 East Loch Ericht – James Adamson</u> Patrick Thomson is consulting about the dualling of the A9 and deer related RTAs, and the possible prospect of fencing the railway/A9.</p> <p><u>7.2 South Perthshire – James Duncan Miller</u> JDM said that the Group was split into 3 sub-groups, an eastern group focused on grouse; a central and northern group focused on grouse and deer, and the western group on sheep and deer. All have different objectives. Each sub group is creating its own deer management plan. In the north, there is a big issue of deer being perceived as carriers of tick and other diseases (both roe and red) resulting in quite a lot of fencing/electric fencing of some grouse moors. As a number of grouse moor owners don't want to be involved in deer management they have decided to call this an Estate Management Group and talk about 'deer and other issues'. The western group has slightly smaller landholdings and diverse interests, and is working on a DMP. The 3 sub-groups meet once a year for an AGM.</p> <p><u>7.3 Glenelg – Andrew Gordon</u> Some estates on the fringes don't get involved. Two meetings were held per year. The Group has no designated sites but a lot of hill walking, and deer numbers which are much lower than they were 20 – 30 years ago are now stable. The Group has a DMP and a good Chairman, and estates are starting to do habitat monitoring.</p> <p><u>7.4 West Grampian – Andrew Gordon</u> The SPA on Beinn a'Ghlo has been a holding area for a lot of deer for a long time. Grouse have virtually disappeared from south end. Some owners don't turn up, or won't hand responsibility on to others. The Group needs a new Chairman. Some large estates are heavily overstocked with deer and there is resultant habitat degradation but they don't want to get involved in Group.</p>	

There are issues, and it is amazing that the Group makes any progress at all. Glenfeshie is still an issue; Glen Bruar is shooting very few deer compared to previous years. A helicopter count has been done and shown a dramatic fall in deer numbers overall.

7.5 Breadalbane – Victor Clements

The Group is in the 4th year of a Section 7 agreement. A number of estates have joined together in the Loch Rannoch area for venison collections, and that seems to be working quite well. That's also happening now in Glenlyon. They are trying to get farmers involved in the Group, and need one or two to take a lead.

7.6 Inverary and Tyndrum

VC has also written the DMP for Inverary and Tyndrum Group – and describes this Group as 'generally on the up'.

7.7 Balquhidder

LS reported that that interests with the Group were split, the north mainly focusing on sporting and the south taking in the Forestry Commission and RSPB. There had been past conflict within the Group, much of which involved criticism of the Forestry Commission for shooting all the stags. The Chairman had taken leadership, information was now being shared, impacts of FC fencing were being looked at, and some predictive modeling done. The Group has moved from conflict to much more informed debate and dialogue. JDM said he thought it had helped that the Chairman was a stalker rather than landowner.

7.8 Moidart – Jane Cheape

7.8.1 The Group has had good attendance at meetings and a successful count, although there was some disagreement over how this should be paid for. The count showed that numbers have stayed stable for last 8 – 10 years. There was an issue over a Forestry Commission let, but this has been resolved by SNH. Poaching is not a major issue, although a lot of deer are killed on the railway. Deer on the Mallaig road are a concern with a couple of unpleasant car accidents attributed to deer, and there's now a survey happening. There's a degree of resistance to Habitat Monitoring. There is also an emerging view on the balance of stags and hinds and that more hinds should be shot.

RC observed that this demonstrated another 'turnaround' and that the Group was now in a creative, progressive phase having been very much stuck in old ways before and refusing to engage either with ADMG or SNH. Also the Group is writing it's own DMP – a good example of self-help.

	<p>7.8.2 RC said that the option of stalkers training to undertake habitat monitoring as some had done already was a good one.</p> <p>7.8.3 JB said that there was a student at the Hutton Institute working on developing on an App for habitat monitoring that could relay data by mobile phone to the computer.</p> <p>7.9 <u>NW Sutherland – Heather Gow</u> The Group comprises some 20 estates. There are some crofters but they don't participate. There is now also a significant new Danish owner in the Group, and concern that he may repeat Glenfeshie. He does need to take a big cull, but expectation is that he will do this gradually. The prospect of a DMP has been in the pipeline for a while. Sinclair Coghill said he would do it, but no sign yet. There are a lot of designated areas and several Munros. FCS shot a lot of stags in 2010/11 that created an issue for neighbouring estates, one of which only shot 1 stag last year. The Group has involved SAC to do initial planning for an SRDP bid for moorland/habitat management, but this has been costly to set up. A number of stalkers are doing training for habitat monitoring. RC said that the prospect of new ownership could act as a catalyst to bring the Group together and he sensed this at the meeting he had attended. There may be a difficult period, and more reduction culls, but ADMG was ready to help if needed.</p> <p>7.10 <u>West Lochaber – Alastair Gibson</u> 7.10.1 The A830 Mallaig road is the southern boundary of the Group. Data is being sent back to SNH monthly from the stalkers concerning deer and the road. The Group is made up of 6 main estates – they don't change hands often. A good foot count is planned every two years and if not done then a count is definitely carried out in the third year – however this year the boat broke down and the Loch Morar side couldn't be counted, although a fair bit was counted between Achnacarry and Mallaig. Habitat assessment is coming. It's quite a harmonious group, although one member doesn't turn up but he is represented every year. Meeting dates being changed to get this particular owner's attendance.</p> <p>7.10.2 JC asked how counting should be paid for, and whether reciprocal arrangements were the norm. AG said that any costs should be shared irrespective of acreage as this was the only fair way.</p>	
8.	<p>AOB 8.1. <u>Southern/London Owners</u> AG asked that anyone who knew of south-based owners who should be invited to London event to should give those names to FC.</p>	

	<p>8.2 Poaching FC said that poaching had been an issue at Blackmount but that a conviction had been secured at the Sheriff Court with a fine and confiscation of vehicle and firearms.</p> <p>8.3 SQWV VC asked whether there was merit in a 10 year review of the scheme, possibly a conference or at least a media release from SVP .</p> <p>8.4 NW Ross 8.4.1 AG asked whether anyone knew who was advising the new owner in NW Ross about growing trees without fencing. This topic has been addressed at Mar Lodge and NTS has recognised that they have to use fencing to grow trees or the alternative is wholesale slaughter as the deer will keep coming in.</p> <p>8.4.2 FC said there was a big difference between planting and natural regeneration.</p> <p>8.4.3 RC said that he understood that the use of electric fencing had not been ruled out, or the use of fencing where appropriate.</p> <p>8.4.4 AG said Fealar had been successful using stock fencing with an offset electric wire. This had been effective except at times of snow, over a relatively small acreage.</p> <p>8.4.5 It was agreed that general issue of fencing should be raised at the London meeting and that natural regeneration without fencing was no longer considered appropriate. RC said that there should be an economic appraisal in advance of any action being taken as well as an environmental study.</p>	
9.	<p>Lord Burton RC asked the meeting to take note that Lord Burton had died. He had been 'close to the backbone' of the deer sector for some considerable time. He was often controversial in his views, but very much with deer at heart. Those attending expressed regret at his passing.</p>	
10.	<p>Date of next meeting Inverness, 4 December – further details to be circulated nearer the time.</p>	