

ADMG Regional Reports

A round up of regional reports made at the ADMG Regional Meeting at Inverness on 4 December 2013

1. W Sutherland DMG – David Allison

DA chaired the November meeting, at which the hot topic had been the Ardvar Woodland and the second round of the Section 7 agreement. 20 days were left of the prescribed six month period to reach a consensus. Sub groups were developing DMPs, also taking into account habitat condition and impact assessments outside Priority Sites.

2. N W Sutherland – David Allison

Wild Land Limited has purchased a large area within the Group and there had been a presentation by Thomas MacDonnell where responses to their proposed management objectives had been sought. A steering group has been set up to produce the Deer Management Plan, and principles agreed. Now SNH, which will support the process, will recruit a consultant to do the work.

3. Northern DMG – Anson Macauslan

A DMP is being put together by Rory Puttman. The Forestry Commission has sold some ground and there are some issues arising with the new owners – fences being cut, deer being shot and some bad feeling. An SNH count in February showed that hind numbers were up by 30 per cent, and individual estates were therefore adjusting culls accordingly. Stag numbers were not increasing.

4. Breadalbane DMG – Victor Clements

Group is working through its Section 7 Agreement. A number of NGOs (TS, JMT, SAC, FCS) all have an interest, and there is a lot of fenced forestry. Around 2500 deer shot per annum. 20% of the DMG area is designated sites although it's believed that as much damage is caused by sheep and not deer.

5. East Grampian DMG – Mark Nicolson

The Group has a wide range of land management interests. Its planning has been greatly helped by the Cairngorms/Speyside concept where deer aspirations are being mapped and focus can be made on those few areas where different objectives clash.. Generally Group meetings are now poorly attended, although the various sub-groups are well attended and are now where work is focused with the Group bringing it all together.. Count showed significantly reduced numbers from c 36,000 in 1992 to c 17,000 now (foot count).

6. South Ross Groups – Susan Steven

Glenmoriston DMG has adopted a Group mission statement, plans are being updated, habitat monitoring underway and professional advice being paid for. Strathconon DMG is updating its original DMP. Most stalkers have attended habitat assessment training.

7. Affric and Kintail DMG – Willie Fraser

A very lengthy DMP had been produced by Rory Putman. It was one thing having the plan produced but quite another to achieve targets at the end of five years. Culls were now being reduced, the Group having hit its target population for the habitat.

Socio-economic impacts are now also being considered. There is a danger in numbers being reduced by too many – although the Group is small it has a broad cross section of members. The Group has a DMP, and has signed up to the ADMG 'Principles'.

8. Glen Strathfarrar DMG – Frank Spencer-Nairn

Nine members attended the recent meeting – no NGOs, no FCS. Attendance by owners did not tend to be good, although attendance by stalkers was. The Group is mid-way through preparing its DMP, drawn up by Rory Putman. They have adopted a new format for meetings with half for discussion of general matters, and the rest devoted to deer management planning and review led by Graeme Taylor of SNH. These sessions are used to track how close they are to the Plan, and to decide required adjustments. There is a shortage of mature, shootable stags, and hind numbers are reducing. The stag season was difficult – a late rut, a good summer, but a poor spring, and a dominant east wind. At the east end of the Group estates have had issues with walkers and cut fencing, and an estate fencing itself off from the deer range. There are however some good examples of fencing in the Group area.

9. East Sutherland DMG - Peter Voy

This Group is fortunate, it has no NGOs and FES is peripheral. However a dispute has arisen over the sale of some FC land to a private owner, and there are conflicting stories between the rumours abounding and those of the forest manager. The Group is steady in terms of deer numbers. Formerly there was a uniform spread of deer, but now a growth in numbers towards Helmsdale is evident. The Rory Putman DMP was done four to five years ago. The DMG has started doing habitat monitoring. There is a feeling that something more dynamic than the existing Plan is needed, perhaps along the lines of the Cairngorms/Speyside-type map based format.

10. North Ross DMG - Crispian Cook

Two separate Section 7 agreements are running. There are two NGOs within the Group with different land use objectives. There are also some gaps in ownership, and the Chairman has recently resigned. The intention is to re-launch and reinvigorate the Group possibly with interim support from Randal Wilson as ADMG Regional representative. A plan of action is being developed, conscious of timeframe, but the Group wants to get it right this time – essentially now a 'blank canvas' to work with.

11. South West Ross DMG - Mark Pattinson

Covers Sheildaig, Lochcarron and Applecross. 15 estates are involved, and one third of them have changed hands in the last five years. One new owner of forestry wants to bring in large stags, and another area has good potential for a deer farm. Rory Putman did a plan five years ago that is in use, and a deer count is undertaken every two years.

12. Knoydart DMG - Robert Gordon

Difficulties with JMT have resulted into a split into two Groups. Andrew Barbour has done a draft DMP, which wasn't easy, and the separate Knoydart Community DMG is working hard on its Plan.

13. Glenelg DMG - Lynda Campbell

The Group has a draft DMP but is held back by an NGO. There is now a need to get the DMP finalised. Membership of the Group has changed. This used to be a very proactive Group – now doing habitat monitoring for which external help brought in, and habitat monitoring training.

14. Monadhliaths DMG - Jamie Williamson

This is one of the largest Groups, united by common purpose in 1965 with a plan to increase deer numbers. Group has now become fairly dysfunctional, with a range of different competing interests including conservation and grouse. A large estate at the centre of the Group area wants very few deer and regeneration without fencing. Also the assessment of an SAC as 'unfavourable/no change' by SNH has been challenged. The Group adopted a geographic mapping system in 2005, and a new DMP is due to be delivered in April, but because of difficulty of communication with certain owners this could more realistically be October.

15. Mid West Association - Ian Hope

There had been a debate about inviting Rob Gibson MSP to the last meeting of the Group. The Group has an adopted DMP and is working well in taking up the challenge of delivering the Code. Signing up to the ADMG 'Principles' should present no problem to the Group.

16. Inverary/Tyndrum DMG – Tom Turnbull

A DMP has been implemented with help from Victor Clements. Also working towards implementing habitat assessments, starting with three estates and others following on later. Poor attendance at meetings noted, but improving – broad range of interests represented: forestry, sheep farming; sporting. Some of the Group lies in the National Park, but the Group struggles to get attendance from Park representatives.

17. Balquhiddar DMG – Linzi Seivwright

Group is starting to work well with a stalker in the Chair and NGO representative as Vice Chair. The Group has a DMP, and a lot of information gathering and sharing happening with maps being produced.

18. Mull DMG – Bill Bewsher

The Group has a DMP, There are issues with farmers but generally progress is being made. There are a number of separate area plans. Deer management is being taken seriously.