ADMG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

**at Mar Lodge, Braemar,**

Wednesday 29 July 2015

**Attending:**

Richard Cooke (RC) Chairman

Finlay Clark (FC) Secretary

Victor Clements (VC)

Alastair Gibson (AG)

Robbie Kernahan (RK)

Doug McAdam (DM)

Colin McClean (CM)

Bob McIntosh (BM)

John Morison (JM)

Dick Playfair (DP)

Linzi Seivwright (LS)

Randal Wilson (RW)

Holly Deary (HD) In attendance, SNH

**Apologies:**

Andrew Gordon (AG) Vice Chairman

James Adamson (JA)

Col Bewsher (HFOB)

John Bruce (JB)

Lynda Campbell (LC)

Julian Clarke (JC)

James Duncan Millar (JDM)

Willie Fraser (WF)

Stephen Gibbs (SCG)

Willy Inglis (WI)

Justin Irvine (JI)

George Macdonald (GM)

Ewen Macpherson (EM)

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| 1. | **Minutes of previous meeting**  The minutes of the ADMG Executive Committee meeting on 17 June 2015 were approved, proposed by VC, seconded by DM. |  |
| 2. | **Matters arising**  There were no matters arising that would not be dealt with under the agenda. |  |
| 3. | **Chairman’s Update**  The Chairman said in summary that the Land Reform Bill had been published prior to which ADMG had submitted comments which could be seen on [www.deer-management.co.uk](http://www.deer-management.co.uk) . He had also met with SNH. ADMG had been well represented at the Scottish Game Fair. |  |
| 4. | **Land Reform Bill**  4.1 The ADMG draft response to the Bill had been circulated.  4.2 Sporting Rates proposal  4.2.1 It was suggested that it might be helpful to offer a definition for ‘non-sporting’ cull in the context of the proposal (Part 8) to reintroduce sporting rates; also that in relation to sporting rates all culling could be classified as management. It was agreed there were anomalies. The situation was very different from, for example, a pheasant shoot where birds were being put down.  4.2.2 The Chairman is involved in a SL&E group that is working on sporting rates, their implications and economic impact. There had been 250 responses to this group, and a meeting had taken place with the Assessor.  4.2.3 It was said that exemptions to sporting rates could be at the discretion of local authorities and thereby unevenly applied. Also it was likely that where rates across different business interests were compounded this would penalise ‘diversified, more switched-on’ businesses.  4.2.4 It was noted that the Scottish Government had not yet provided an economic assessment of sporting rates impact.    4.3 Proposal for New SNH powers  4.3.1 ADMG is to give evidence to the RACCE Committee on Part 8 of the Bill (new powers for SNH) on 30 September.  4.3.2 It was asked whether ADMG was prepared to concede to more powers for SNH as on paper these did not present a major issue although he said there was concern over the scale of the proposed £40k penalty.  4.3.3 The Chairman said that any new powers would not be implemented until after the 2016 review and he understood they would be ‘surgical’ in application to deal with particular local problems and not a blunt instrument to be applied to the deer sector across the board.  4.4 General discussion on deer management aspects of the Bill  4.4.1 With some Groups, there was still an issue over how to get certain owners to engage, particularly commercial forestry and agriculture interests who saw deer as an ‘irritation’ rather than a resource.  4.4.2 All in an area with an interest in deer management should be active in their respective Group, as affirmed in the Code.  4.4.3 It was asked whether all who were shooting deer under the General Licence were actually involved in DMGs.  4.4.4 It was suggested that the cull returns did not capture all information. Clearly some culls are still not reported to SNH. |  |
| 5. | **Interim report to RACCE Committee**  5.1 The Chairman said Graeme Dey MSP’s feedback to him was that MSPs think little is happening and progress is slow. However from a recent joint meeting with LINK, chaired by SNH, LINK representatives appeared to be more positive about the progress being made by DMGs. SNH would be reassessing DMGs through Spring/Summer 2016, by which time most DMPs should be finalised. The RACCE Review could be as early as Autumn 2016.  5.2 SNH perspective is that Groups were making progress in developing DMPs, although how DMGs communicate with local communities and other interests is now also perceived as being a priority matter by the RACCE Committee. The Monadhliaths DMP exercise had set the bar very high but all DMGs should communicate in a way that reflects local circumstance.  5.3 It was asked whether the criteria on which the RACCE review would be based would be published in advance.  5.4 The SNH response was that the review was likely to focus of the accessibility of DMG information, how that had improved, and also whether DMPs were being produced, reviewed and implemented.  5.5 After the Autumn evidence sessions on the Bill the RACCE Committee would write to the Minister with its findings and any recommendations. |  |
| 6. | **Deer Management Planning – Progress Report**  6.1   * NW Sutherland and Monadhliaths Plans had been approved prior to the DMP funding package. * 18 more DMPs have subsequently been approved for funding. * 4 DMGs were producing their own Plans. RC urged that these Plans should be reviewed by a consultant to ensure they come up to scratch. * 13 more Plans were in the pipeline or applications for grant funding were being progressed.   6.2 New Groups, or previously inactive Groups, were being encouraged in areas including: Skye, East Sutherland, Cowal, Cabrach, and Donside.  6.3 SNH was engaged in organising ‘start-up’ meetings in areas identified as having issues, where there were marauding deer etc but currently without a DMG.  6.4 Accreditation  6.4.1 A sub group comprising BM, LS, JDM and VC had been set up at the last meeting to look at developing the benchmarking process which might become an Accreditation system at some later time It was agreed that there was a risk in adding yet more work for DMGs, particularly if there was no direct benefit to them from it  6.4.2 The Chairman said it was important to recognise that the process was one of evolution and that there was no fixed end point, and DMGs should be asked first what they think of the Accreditation concept in relation to DMPs.  6.4.3 It was said that if SNH had signed off a Group’s DMP this in itself should constitute an external ‘seal of approval’.  6.4.4 A question was asked as to what and who exactly Accreditation was for, and if it was intended to be similar to, for example, WES or SQWV as there would already be some crossover for those in these schemes.  6.4.5 It was mentioned that it was important to recognise that there should be a process of continuous improvement and Accreditation could support this.  6.4.6 Running a pilot with one DMG was suggested.  6.4.7 It was agreed that Accreditation should be a long-term aspiration to show that Scotland’s deer management system was equal to the best in the world.  6.4.8 It was suggested that the Assessment would provide a good basis for Accreditation.  6.4.9 The view was that the Accreditation sub-group should continue, and that the Mid West Association would make a good pilot Group.  6.4.10 It was noted that SNH was not pushing Accreditation, and that already a lot of criteria were being met, although he felt that some Groups would want to step up.  6.4.11 SNH currently working up criteria for collaborative management at ADMG’s suggestion so that there is an objective assessment method for when a DMG is needed. |  |
| 7. | **Website**  7.1 Two tenders had been received for developing a template for individual websites for DMGs and it was recommended to progress with Aerovision IT, incumbent web designer to ADMG.  7.2 A meeting is to be held with Aerovision IT to progress. Website development would be one of the topics to be covered at a proposed Autumn Birnam seminar. | DP  LS |
| 8. | **Future project funding**  8.1 A project officer position was under discussion with SNH. Much additional capacity has been added to ADMG with LS’s involvement covering among other aspects the SWARD Project, Birnam seminars, Habitat Impact Assessment support, SRDP applications (for deer counts, HIAs, physical projects, web capacity). If this could be supported by SNH and formalised it would be very beneficial to the capacity of ADMG to support its members.  8.2 Funding for a Project Officer position might be sought through the Environmental Collaborative Action Fund (ECAF). This has a three month application window from August. |  |
| 9. | **HFTSH**  The level of information from DMGs for this had been disappointing given that ADMG had pushed SNH hard to maintain this resource. The Chairman reminded everyone that ‘no issues’ was a legitimate response. |  |
| 10. | **PACEC**  With FE numbers now submitted, the responses to the PACEC questionnaire now covered over 3.5 million acres of deer range. The first draft of the report would be signed off by the end of the year with potential launch at the 2016 AGM. |  |
| 11. | **Any other business**  11.1Seminar  A further seminar was being planned for November (date subject to confirmation) covering:   * Update on land reform * Progress report on Deer Management Planning * Transparency of DMGs * DMG website development   11.2 Invitation to Minister to next regional meeting  An invitation would be extended to the Minister to attend the next regional meeting in Inverness. A change of either the date and/or venue might be required in order to fit with the Minister’s schedule. | LS  RC |