



**ASSOCIATION OF DEER MANAGEMENT GROUPS**

**Regional Meeting**

**At Glenfinnan House Hotel, Glenfinnan  
on Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017 from 11:00 to 13:00**

## MINUTES

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**In Attendance:**

Richard Cooke (RC)	Chairman
Finlay Clark (FCC)	Secretary
Col. Bewsher	Executive Committee & SVP
Lynda Campbell	Executive Committee
James Duncan Millar	Executive Committee
Dick Playfair	Executive Committee
Karen Ramoo	Executive Committee
Linzi Seivwright	Executive Committee
Tom Turnbull	Executive Committee
Paul Bekier	FES
Hugh Cheape	Glenaladale
Jane Cheape	Glenaladale
Victor Clements	Balquhidder DMG
Holly Deary	SNH
Paul Dorrian	Glenfinnan Estate
Donald Fraser	SNH
Willie Fraser	Affric & Kintail DMG
Alistair Gibson	Glenfinnan Estate & West Lochaber DMG
Bruce Gillan	Argyll Estates
Peter Lawson	Morvern DMG
Ian Leith	Glenfinnan Estate
D McCauley	Glenaladale Estate
Drew McFarlane-Slack	Monadhliaths DMG
Hugh Nicol	Inveraray & Tyndrum
Niall Rowantree	West Highland Hunting
Robbie Rowntree	East Sutherland DMG
Beth Wells	Moredun
Sandy Walker	Associate Member

1.	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Andrew Gordon Executive Committee</p> <p>Peter Mayhew Executive Committee</p> <p>Colin McClean Executive Committee</p> <p>John Morison Executive Committee</p> <p>Bruce Sewell Executive Committee</p> <p>Tom Turnbull Executive Committee</p> <p>Randal Wilson Executive Committee</p> <p>James Baillie Glenelg DMG</p> <p>Alistair Bruce Glen Spean Estate</p> <p>Tom Chetwynd East Sutherland DMG</p> <p>Crispian Cook North Ross DMG</p> <p>Patrick Creasey North Ross DMG</p> <p>Michael Laing Glenelg DMG</p> <p>Archie MacLellan Applecross Estate</p> <p>Seamus MacNally Gairloch Conservation Unit</p> <p>Angus Macpherson Biallid</p> <p>Ewen Macpherson Lochalsh DMG</p> <p>Joanna Macpherson Lochalsh DMG</p> <p>Peter Urquhart East Benula South</p> <p>Elisabeth Van Basten Batenburg Barrisdale Estate</p>	
2.	<p><b>Report on Regional Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and matters arising</b></p> <p>The report was confirmed as a true record of the meeting and adopted on the proposal of Lynda Campbell, seconded by Bill Bewsher. There were no matters arising.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Chairman's Report</b></p> <p><b>General update</b></p> <p>RC reported that the deer sector had 18 months to demonstrate real progress with DMPs and habitat assessments (HIA), forestry expansion and delivery of the public interest in advance of the next review and reassessment in 2019.</p> <p>RC reported on SNH's enhanced and more assertive role in engaging with DMGs and particularly those DMGs where there was insufficient progress in relation to DMPs etc . RC confirmed that SNH has funds available to support DMG habitat impact assessment and other work and stressed that all DMGs should take advantage of this financial funding as it is not helpful where the sector does not take up funding on offer particularly if it should fall short at the next review.</p>	

	<p>SNH would be revisiting all Section 7s within the next few months and it was clear from recent SNH Board papers that SNH would seek swift and measurable outcomes in relation to Section 7 Agreements, which failing, Section 8 compulsory control schemes are likely to be used. The recent SNH board paper also indicated that the more proactive SNH approach would take the form of close attention to the poorer performing DMGs and less to those that are making good progress. RC added that ADMG would also make themselves available to those Groups which were behind the curve.</p> <p>RC commented on a busy summer which, on the political side, had culminated in the ECCLR Committee's recommendations and the Cabinet Secretary's report. ADMG had also attended Scone Game Fair, Moy Game Fair and organised a Birnam Seminar event. ADMG will contribute £1k pa for 3 years to the cost of a James Hutton Institute project on the effects of access and human activity on deer movements and welfare.</p> <p>On sporting rates, RC commented that the Assessors had been granted a six months' extension relating to the issue of Sporting Rates assessments. It was anticipated that the first rates' notifications would be received by holdings in September. It was recognised that the Assessors' Office had found the issue and subsequent management of a potential 55,000 questionnaires challenging.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Administrative Report</b></p> <p>FCC reported briefly on the year end position to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Income was some £14,982 ahead of budget and this was largely down to donations received for project work. There were cost savings in the region of £20K and at year end a positive variance on the budget of c. £30K. There would be some minor adjustments during the audit process but by and large budget had been exceeded and the ADMG was in good financial health. There was currently approx. £100K cash in the bank. The budget proposed for 2017/2018 was tabled and again a break-even budget was recommended for approval by the Executive Committee. Income was budgeted to increase following the membership subscription increase approved at the AGM. Donations were expected to be less than last year. Project expenses to include part time employment of Linzi Seivwright and JHI accounted for approximately £16K of expenditure.</p> <p>Bill Bewsher expressed thanks to the Secretary and to Helen Polley for the effective administration of the Association and for the good governance and management of finances.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Current Matters</b></p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that dialogue with Scottish Government (both Cabinet Secretaries) was on-going along with liaison with SNH, FCS, FES and many other organisations. ADMG would in due course make a point of</p>	

<p>meeting with the newly appointed Chief Executive of SNH, Francesca Osowska OBE. Ms Osowska is being seconded from her current role as a Scottish Government Director in the Scottish Office and will take up her appointment in October. Ms Osowska had previously been the principal private secretary to Alec Salmond when First Minister from 2007 to 2009.</p> <p>A Birnam Seminar had been held for Chairs and Secretaries, the focus being on delivery of DMPs by DMGs. The Chairman confirmed that Linzi Seivwright would continue to support the Association at least one day per week, and thanked Linzi for her commitment to the sector.</p> <p>Linzi Seivwright then updated the meeting on areas of operational activity:</p> <p>The Scottish Government will undertake a further review of the Code of Deer Management in 2019 and it was anticipated that the DMGs would undergo a further Assessment early that year. LS confirmed that ADMG is available to support those DMGs where further work is required to deliver effective DMPs or indeed those newly formed DMGs where the planning process is just beginning.</p> <p>LS confirmed that short training videos would be available early next year based on the Best Practice guides on Habitat Impact Assessment and Monitoring. This will be available well in advance of Spring 2018. The Chairman commented that he felt that Best Practice had in some ways lost its impetus and that an independent Chair is to be identified to rejuvenate a world class initiative.</p> <p>LS commented that there had been a poor response to the questionnaire on the demand by DMGs for SNH funding support for habitat monitoring and impact assessment and it was agreed that this will be recirculated. The window of opportunity to draw down funds is short as it will only be available for this financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.</p> <p>LS updated the meeting on the SWARD (Solving Wild Area Range for Deer), data management tool which links habitat assessment and population modelling to assist management decision making. SWARD currently sits with SNH for testing to ensure that the system can deliver under operational conditions. On conclusion of that stage it will be trialled at DMG scale, hopefully in 2018, before full roll out.</p> <p><b>Access Project / JHI</b> - ADMG had committed to contributing £1,000 pa over the next 3 years to a deer welfare project being run by JHI. The project will look at the interaction between access users and deer and consequent habitat impact. The study will be based in Glen Lyon.</p> <p>The Chairman reported that the service of Sporting Rates assessments had been delayed by 6 months' and that the first tranche is likely to be issued in September. Members were advised to appeal assessments within 6 months of receipt, as the system allows, on a precautionary basis until the new system can be assessed at individual landholding level and for the sector as a whole. He further advised that members cite membership of DMGs, providing public benefit, compliance and costs relating to deer management being relevant in an appeals process. Under the Small</p>	
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	<p>Business Bonus Scheme, those with rateable values under £15,000 should qualify for 100% relief. An unintended consequence of the reintroduction is that it is likely to be a disincentive to some landholders to declare their culls even though the Assessments are understood to be based on area not yield. This does not help to establish the scale of the national cull which is very necessary information not currently available to a complete and reliable standard.</p> <p>The Chairman added that many DMGs are now involved with both peatland expansion and woodland expansion plans and that these will be important criteria for assessing the progress of the deer sector at the 2019 Review.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>SNH Update</b></p> <p>Donald Fraser reported that SNH had now appointed a Best Practice Project Officer and that online BP updates will follow shortly. There will be no more hard copy updates. A short discussion followed on habitat impact assessment methodology and Peter Lawson (Morvern DMG) highlighted the differences between recent and previous best practice sheets and requested clarity from SNH.</p> <p>Robbie Rowantree commented that his DMG had received excellent support from SNH and added that he hoped that Scottish Government and SNH would apply equal weighting to economics, employment and the environment in the 2019 review.</p> <p>Peter Lawson queried what the holdup was with SWARD. Donald Fraser responded that Scottish Government / SNH had already invested £35K in SWARD and that it has the potential to be an excellent management tool once all the bugs have been dealt with and it has been field tested. In the meantime, there are already ways to analyse data and make management decisions in relation to population modelling and culls and that the delay in completing SWARD should not delay DMGs making management decisions on deer management planning.</p> <p>Donald Fraser explained the “enhanced” role which SNH will be taking and confirmed that focus would be directed towards those DMGs that were performing less well in the 2016 Assessments and to those DMGs where SNH felt extra support is required. All Section 7 Agreements will shortly be reviewed and where necessary changes will be made and new targets be set. Where targets are not achieved in an agreed timescale SNH has the option to move quickly to use its statutory powers, i.e. for the most part S8. DF said that SNH is recruiting additional staff to take on the increased work load.</p> <p>DF also confirmed that, ECAF having been withdrawn at least temporarily, SNH had been provided with substitute funding to support DMGs. He emphasised the importance and urgency of applying for funding within the present financial year. The level of interest from DMGs to date has been disappointing despite a questionnaire exercise promoted by ADMG.</p>	

	<p><b>Presentation by Beth Wells of Moredun Foundation</b></p> <p>Beth Wells outlined the Scottish Deer Health Survey 2017 to 2019. The Moredun Foundation, in partnership with Edinburgh University and the deer sector in Scotland (including ADMG, LDNS and SVP), is undertaking a wild deer health survey over all deer species across Scotland. The project is jointly funded by the Scottish Government and Food Standards Scotland. The objective is to assess the prevalence of E. coli O157, Cryptosporidium and Chronic Wasting Disease in the Scottish wild deer population. It is hoped that each DMG will provide 10 completed samples from stags, and a further 10 from hinds later in the season. Packs were already being distributed to DMGs by post and will also be circulated at the November ADMG meeting in Inverness. Instructions on how to collect samples are contained within the packs and are also available on the ADMG website <a href="http://www.deer-management.co.uk/links">www.deer-management.co.uk/links</a> Further details can be obtained from Tom McNeilly (<a href="mailto:Tom.McNeilly@moredun.ac.uk">Tom.McNeilly@moredun.ac.uk</a>) or Beth Wells (<a href="mailto:beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk">beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk</a>) tel 0131 445 6157 both of the Moredun Foundation.</p>	
7.	<p><b>DMG Reports and any local issues</b></p> <p><b>West Lochaber:</b> Alistair Gibson confirmed that the DMG would undertake the deer health plan project. Woodland habitat assessment was ongoing with external support.</p> <p><b>Mull:</b> Bill Bewsher confirmed that Mull would participate in the deer health project. Habitat impact assessment was ongoing but he did not feel coverage was wide enough and requested support from SNH. BB looked forward to welcoming the Chairman to the Mull DMG meeting scheduled for the Autumn and hoped his input would be helpful to the Group</p> <p><b>Ardnamurchan:</b> Niall Rowantree reported that Max Hartley had been confirmed as the new Chairman. The Group would also support the deer health project. NR felt that around 90% of the Group was undertaking habitat impact assessments but requested SNH assistance for the west end of the Group.</p> <p><b>Affric &amp; Kintail:</b> Willie Fraser confirmed that the DMG would participate in the deer health project and also noted that habitat impact assessments were now in place over almost all of the Group area having been outsourced. WF felt that there were no significant outstanding issues within the Group.</p> <p><b>Glenmoriston:</b> Lynda Campbell confirmed that Glenmoriston would undertake the deer health project. LC acknowledged that habitat impact assessment was sporadic albeit the appointment of Linzi Seivwright as Secretary and agreement of 3 meetings per annum should move the Group forward in a positive way.</p> <p><b>Knoydart:</b> Lynda Campbell confirmed that Knoydart would participate in the deer health project. Habitat impact assessment was sporadic throughout the Group albeit the Secretary, Linzi Seivwright, was working hard to encourage</p>	

<p>monitoring and was also working on population modelling and developing links with West Knoydart DMG.</p> <p><b>Morvern:</b> Peter Lawson undertook that Morvern DMG would participate in the deer health project and also confirmed that Susan Larson was now the Secretary of the Group. A habitat impact training day had been conducted. The Group had agreed to a helicopter count in 2018 which was deemed essential given the significant management changes proposed within a major landholding within the Group. PL noted that the Group was working well and closely with each other.</p> <p><b>East Loch Shiel</b> were absent from the meeting albeit Dick Playfair commented that the website was on-line with DMP attached.</p> <p><b>Moidart:</b> Hugh Cheape said that Moidart DMG would undertake the deer health project. HC also reported that the helicopter count of 2016 was consistent with foot counts in previous years. Cull targets are in line with the DMP and habitat impact training had taken place in 2016 and assessment was in line with the plan. HC confirmed a population of between 10 and 11 deer per square km and noted that the Moidart DMG had undertaken a TB survey some years earlier.</p> <p><b>Beadalbane:</b> Victor Clements confirmed that the DMG would undertake the deer health project. Deer numbers in the west of the area were around 5 deer per square km and 16 in the east. Habitat impact assessment was in place for 2018 and he noted that almost 20% of the DMG was designated.</p> <p><b>Monadhliath:</b> Drew McFarlane-Slack confirmed that Monadhliaths DMG would participate in the deer health project. The Group AGM had been held on 11<sup>th</sup> August with a drive towards meeting 2017/18 cull targets. A helicopter count had been confirmed for 2018. The elements of the DMP Action Plan could bring in £500K to £1M over the next 5 years, for woodland expansion and peatland restoration. A consultant was coordinating the grant applications. Monadhliaths DMG proposed to carry out an interim review of the DMP and was planning a reduction in hind numbers in the region of 2,500 hinds plus calves. DMS emphasised the need for collaboration and that Monadhliaths DMG would be looking to secure a regional Authorisation to kill hinds from 1st September to end of March 2018. A spotter plane would be used to identify groups of deer with monthly returns coming in from the members.</p> <p><b>East Sutherland:</b> Robbie Rowantree confirmed that East Sutherland would participate in the deer health project. The Group now meets four times per annum to set culls and habitat impact assessment planning and training. He highlighted the excellent support the Group had received from SNH. Deer densities were quoted as being as low as 4 in some areas, but as high as 30 in others.</p> <p><b>Black Mount:</b> Finlay Clark confirmed that Black Mount DMG would participate in the deer health project and reported that the Group had recently met to review the current DMP. Habitat impact assessments had been carried out over most of the DMG and would continue to focus on</p>	
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	<p>designated sites. The Group was making good progress and was very focused on DMP delivery.</p> <p><b>Mid-West:</b> Finlay Clark confirmed that Mid-West would participate in the deer health project and said that a meeting had taken place recently to discuss the DMP with particular emphasis on habitat impact assessment, cull setting, management of designated sites and DMP delivery. FC commented that he thought the Group was working well with full participation throughout.</p> <p><b>Inverary &amp; Tyndrum:</b> Hugh Nicoll confirmed that Inveraray &amp; Tyndrum DMG would participate in the deer health project. The deer were in good condition with high calving rates and some deer reduction culls were planned. The DMP is driven by habitat condition and a contractor has now been appointed to progress habitat impact assessment training and translating the HIA results through to the DMP. HN highlighted the support that Inverary &amp; Tyndrum DMG received from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.</p> <p><b>East Grampian:</b> The Chairman reported that the former East Grampian Group had now split into 5 groups and all were making good progress with their own DMPs and setting themselves up.</p>	
8.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Drew McFarlane-Slack commented that the Monadhliaths DMG were participating in a non-lead ammunition project and would update ADMG as and when information became available.</p> <p>The Chairman closed the meeting by paying tribute to Sarah Holman who had very sadly passed away recently. Sarah had been the Chair of the Ardnamurchan DMG for many years and was an original and founding member of ADMG. Sarah was acknowledged as an expert within the sector and was both well-known and well-loved and will be sadly missed.</p>	