



## ASSOCIATION OF DEER MANAGEMENT GROUPS

### Regional Meeting

At Kingsmills Hotel, Culcabock Road, Inverness, IV2 3LP  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017

#### MINUTES

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##### Present:

Richard Cooke (RC)  
Finlay Clark (FCC)  
Col. Bewsher  
John Bruce  
Willie Fraser  
Alistair Gibson  
Andrew Gordon  
Willie Lamont  
Ewen Macpherson  
Colin McClean  
John Morison  
Dick Playfair  
Linzi Seivwright  
Frank Spencer-Nairn  
Tom Turnbull

Chairman  
Secretary  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
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Executive Committee

Rod Andean  
Ewan Archer  
James Baillie  
Peter Baker  
David Campbell  
Tom Chetwynd  
Patrick Creasey  
Richard Curzon  
Sinclair Coghill  
Mike Cottam  
Roddie Feilden

Bidwells  
Kinveachy  
Glen Shiel  
Achlain / Bidwells  
East Ross / North Ross DMGs  
East Sutherland DMG  
North Ross DMG  
Tulich Estate  
SNH  
CNPA, SDNADMG CSDMG  
Mid West DMG

Donald Fraser

SNH

Martin Girvan  
John Hays  
Helen MacIntyre  
Seamus MacNally  
Joanna Macpherson  
Drew McFarlane Slack  
Ian McMynn  
Gordon Robertson  
Robbie Rowantree  
Thomas Watson  
Beth Wells  
Angus Davidson

Glenmoriston DMG  
Affric & Kintail DMG  
I&TDMG  
Gairloch Conservation Unit  
Lochalsh DMG  
SLE / MDMG  
SSE  
Easter Ross DMG / West Sutherland DMG  
ESDMG  
Attadale Estate  
Moredun  
Angus Davidson Ltd

**Apologies:**

Lynda Campbell  
Julian Clarke  
Victor Clements  
James Duncan Millar  
Karen Ramoo  
Randal Wilson

Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee

Nicola Colquhoun  
Edward Crookes  
Holly Deary  
Eric Delwart  
J Fenning Welstead  
William Kelly  
Raynout Kwint  
Mike Luti  
Angus Macpherson  
Hugh A Nicol

Balquhidder DMG  
Englefield Estate  
SNH  
Kilchoan Estate / Knoydart DMG  
John Clegg & Co  
Ardnamurchan Estates  
Wester Guisachan Estate  
Balquhidder DMG  
Biallid  
Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG

James Govan  
Peter Keyser  
Kirsty Macdonald  
Michael McDaid  
Col. RD Nicholas  
Christian Nissen  
Alexander Roy  
Gilmour Strang  
Sandy Walker  
Ben Weatherall

Associate Member  
Associate Member  
Highland Game  
Associate Member  
Associate Member  
Highland Game  
Associate Member  
Associate Member  
Associate Member  
Associate Member  
Corporate Member

1.	<p><b>Apologies</b> Noted above.</p>	
2.	<p><b>The Minute of 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017</b> was confirmed as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by Robbie Rowantree and seconded by Andrew Gordon it was duly adopted. There were no outstanding matters arising.</p>	
	<p><b>Stephen Gibbs</b> The sad news of Stephen Gibbs passing and his outstanding contribution to deer management was noted.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Chairman's Report</b> RC reported to the Executive Committee that DMGs were very much in the spotlight and it was critical that the momentum of improvement continued through to the next reviews of the Deer Code and deer sector in 2019. Simon Pepper, Chair of the Deer Working Group will attend the Deer Management Round Table. Close working with SNH was critical although the 2016 Report continued to be cited as a grievance within the deer sector and trust had been eroded. It is critical that the sector is aware of what is required from them in 2019. The Cabinet Secretary in her response to the ECCLR recommendations had indicated that there were no plans for additional legislation at this stage and had not taken forward ECCLR recommendations. However, a Deer Working Group had been set up to review the system of management and structure of the sector. A Lowland Deer Panel was also to be set up and an announcement was expected before Christmas 2017. <b>Deer Working Group</b> Two meetings had taken place so far. Members included: Simon Pepper (Chair), Andrew Barbour, Jayne Glass (UHI Perth), and Robin Callander. Jayne Glass should be invited to visit an Estate or DMG. RC acts as an external advisor, along with Malcolm Combe (Legal Advisor), both of whom can be called upon by the DWG. It was likely that there would be recommendations for change and it was expected that DWG would report around the time of the SNH review of the Deer Code in 2019. SNH's focus going forward will be directed at DMGs that need most support particularly those within Section 7s. SNH see Habitat Assessment as being crucial and will need to be carried out over all Groups. Complete coverage will be challenging and baseline coverage is required as a benchmark, therefore SNH will need to recognise the art of the possible. ADMG had written to the SNH Chair around 3 weeks previously seeking an introductory meeting. No date had yet been offered. RC reported that most Groups were making very good progress. A number of new Groups were close to forming, including Cowal, East Loch Lomond</p>	

	<p>(where a meeting had been attended by Michael Shelby of FES who had been very supportive), Jura and mid Donside. ADMG would support and provide guidance to the Groups going forward. There was also a need for a DMG at Cabrach and Glenfiddich where issues include economic damage to agriculture. Progress with these and other areas where no DMG currently exists are very important.</p> <p>Fifty percent of Scotland sits outwith the DMG structure and the formation of Groups is a real challenge in the lowlands. A parliamentary event at Holyrood was planned for November 2017 and Linda Fabiani MSP who is sponsoring the event had been very supportive of LDNS.</p> <p>One outcome of the DWG Report may be full and effective implementation of the statutory cull return which could be a positive step forward. Good quality information on deer culls is important. Compulsory carcass tagging could also be considered.</p> <p>The DWG's focus should be outwith the upland DMG area.</p> <p>Robbie Rowantree reiterated Steve Albon's observation that HIAs will not have been through sufficient cycles to reflect change. This needs to be highlighted to SNH, as well as issues surrounding consistency of counts. Helicopter counts are more accurate than ground counts which will typically be 15% lower than helicopter counts.</p> <p>The annual cull is now 22% of the deer population which generally keeps the deer numbers static. The average density of deer in woodlands is 10-12 / sq km which is similar to open hill areas.</p> <p>Stage 1 Forestry and Land Management Bill. SWT is proposing statutory cull targets within woodlands. JB is liaising with SWT on cull policy.</p> <p>SNH will make it clear to DMGs where additional support is required and what actions are likely to be taken. Poorer performing DMGs had been highlighted on graphs in the SNH Report.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Administrative Report / Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017</b></p> <p>FC stated that audited accounts from 2016 to 2017 would be presented at the AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> February. FC reported receipts of £30.6k against a budget of £41.3k due to timing of invoicing. Expenditure of £19.3k against a budget of £33k was a positive variance of £13.7k. Again, this was due to timing and offsets the shortfall in income. There was a positive variance of £3.1k overall and there was no reason to believe that the variance was due to anything other than running slightly behind on timing. Cash in bank was £99.4k.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Current matters</b></p> <p><b>Sporting Rates</b></p> <p>Valuation Notices were now being circulated and Phase 1 with 10,700 assessments issued, was complete with two more phases of Assessments to follow. There may be as many as 50,000 holdings altogether although it is</p>	

	<p>not known if a lower size limit will be used. Many of the properties already assessed were incorrect and this should be taken up immediately with local Assessors. Assessments could be appealed within six months of issue, ie in this case, Appeals must be lodged by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2018. It is understood that only around 700 subjects are above the SBBS threshold and that FCS is faced with the single highest assessment. Indeed the forestry sector as a whole is facing some very high assessments being in the highest value band of £5 per hectare.</p> <p>RC advised that members should assess valuation notices and decide whether to appeal before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. The sector will continue to circulate information and communication between ratepayers is important to ensure that settlements are fair and comparable. ADMG is working with SLE and others in direct communication with the Assessors Association.</p> <p><b>Linzi Seivwright Update</b></p> <p>DMGs should be focused on delivery of DMPs with particular priority for setting up HIAs throughout DMG areas. SNH's next round of reassessments would take place in 2019 and this left DMGs one season in which to introduce HIAs.</p> <p><b>Workshops</b></p> <p>LS advised that a workshop would be held at Birnam and possibly a joint "Drumossie" conference with SNH. SNH need to ensure DMGs know what is required for reassessment in 2019 and ADMG is pressing for clarity and is currently developing a list of questions for SNH. LS confirmed that information and support was available from ADMG.</p> <p><b>Best Practice</b> Guides were being reviewed to ensure guidance has been updated appropriately.</p> <p><b>HIA</b> On-line tutorials would be available in the Spring of 2018. The timing should coincide with the availability of SNH funding and enable Groups to progress.</p> <p><b>SWARD</b> SNH were to provide an update however LS highlighted that the absence of SWARD did not preclude Groups from analysing data and progressing DMPs. Progress of SWARD was currently with SNH.</p> <p><b>Accreditation Programme</b> An accreditation programme was being considered and industry led initiatives would be important going forward.</p>	
6.	<p><b>SNH Update</b></p> <p>Donald Fraser advised that the new Chair of SNH is Mike Cantlay and the new CEO is Francesca Osowska. Sally Thomas is the Head of the Countryside Team, Landscape &amp; Habitats Division.</p> <p>SNH had written to all DMGs advising of a more assertive approach and enclosing diagrams of the 2016 Assessment "league table" showing the relative positions of all DMGs at that time. Going forward SNH would commit most resources to those Groups requiring most help.</p>	

Section 7 Agreements are all being reviewed and attention will also be focused on areas within the red deer range where there are no current DMGs but where there is a need for collaborative deer management.

### **SNH Investment**

There was no further news regarding ECAF and the future of the scheme was uncertain. However, SNH were looking to support the deer industry in ways which ECAF was intended to deliver. Funding of £1,800 per DMG was available by way of a contribution towards implementation of HIAs and DMGs were highly recommended to apply through their WMOs as soon as possible before the funding deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> March. A good take up rate was expected.

**SWARD** - Currently with SNH for technical testing.

**Best Practice** - A contract has been set up to review the HIA guides to help progress DMPs.

**Deer reduction programmes** - SNH had been involved with helicopter assisted culls with North Ross, Affric and Kintail and Monadhliath DMGs

**Count Programme** – the helicopter count programme for 2017/8 will cover 600,000 ha.

**Deer Management Round Table** – at the recent meeting there had been three excellent presentations from Affric/Kintail, Inveraray/Tyndrum and East Sutherland DMGs which had been very well received.

**Cull Returns** There had been a poor response with returns from 400 properties outstanding. This is much higher than usual.

**2019 Assessments** SNH acknowledged that it was extremely important that the scope and remit of the reassessments be confirmed as soon as possible in view of the shortage of time and a clear set of criteria provided as to how progress would be judged.

### **Questions:**

SNH was asked about the locations of the count programme. Donald Fraser confirmed that counts were planned for West Ross, West Lochaber, Strathtay, East Grampian Caenlochan, Uists, South Perthshire and Monadhliaths.

SNH was asked about the disparity between helicopter and foot counts. DF responded that the accuracy of both was comparable.

Drew McFarlane Slack indicated that Monadhliaths DMG would be prepared to meet with Simon Pepper as Chair of the DMRT if appropriate. DF thanked DMS for the offer and encouraged further support from DMGs.

As reports and observations were now indicating a decreasing deer population, SNH was asked whether increased culling explained the cessation of population growth. It was noted that this is the conclusion of the

recently published JHI report for SNH. It was commented that sheep often had a higher impact on habitat.

It was agreed that a clear indication was needed from Government about what is expected from DMGs and it was felt that the focus should be on impacts rather than numbers.

#### **Beth Wells: Deer Health Project**

BW gave an update on the Scottish Wild Deer Health Survey. The objective of which is to assess the prevalence of E. coli O157, Cryptosporidium and Chronic Wasting Disease in the Scottish wild deer population. Good progress had been made and BW commended the deer sector for their assistance. 500 samples had so far been returned and were being processed to test for E. coli O157, etc. Approximately 12-1300 testing packs were in circulation. BW confirmed that there was a good geographical spread of returned samples so far, but that there were gaps in the north Highlands and outer Hebrides and in parts of the lowlands.

Current findings suggested very low prevalence of E. coli O157 in wild deer as had been anticipated, but the project was still at an early stage. The second phase of the project would involve carcass testing. It was anticipated that public statements on the project findings would be available in August 2018 and information would also be fed back to estates.

BW encouraged as many Groups as possible to become involved with the hind season now ongoing. Instructions on how to collect samples are contained within testing packs that had been distributed to DMGs and are also available on the ADMG website [www.deer-management.co.uk/links](http://www.deer-management.co.uk/links) Further details were available from Tom McNeilly, ([Tom.McNeilly@moredun.ac.uk](mailto:Tom.McNeilly@moredun.ac.uk)) or Beth Wells ([beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk](mailto:beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk)) tel 0131 445 6157 both of the Moredun Foundation.

#### **7. DMG reports and local issues**

**Inveraray/Tyndrum** - HM confirmed that HIAs were ongoing, part funded by LLTNP. The Group intended to make a claim for £1,800 towards HIA from SNH. A new Executive Committee had been formed for the DMG. The DMG was liaising with JHI in order to correct discrepancies in the 2016 report by SNH in relation to deer densities in the area.

**Affric & Kintail** - WF reported that HIAs were ongoing across all properties. The stag cull target had been achieved and the hind cull was underway. Peatland restoration was being discussed. An educational event was being organised in the Cannich area. The DMG intended to apply for SNH funding of £1,800 for HIA.

**North Ross** - PC confirmed that population modelling was on-going. HIA was inconsistent across the DMG and a standardised approach was to be adopted. S7 Agreements were drawing to a close. The SSSI had been found to be in poor condition and a new S7 Agreement is likely to encompass more of the DMG area. A resurvey of Ben Dearg should demonstrate much

improved data and impacts. The DMG had worked with Chris Donald at SNH to set targets and the Group would apply for SNH funding for HIA.

**Glenelg** - The DMG's population model had been updated, and an application had been made for a peatland restoration feasibility study. The Group planned to apply for SNH funding for HIA.

**Skye** - WL reported that South Skye DMG as distinct from Sleat DMG is in the process of forming. The DMG area comprised 10 townships, conservation areas, woodland and private estates. A promotional event was planned for 2018. A HIA training day had been held. The Group would apply for SNH funding for HIA.

**East Ross** - GR confirmed that the Group comprised 7 members and the DMP was being progressed. The Group also planned to apply to SNH for HIA funding.

**West Sutherland** - GR reported that the Group encompassed a wide variety of interests but that debate surrounding a Section 7 Agreement had led to a positive outcome and the Group was moving forward. 50% of funding had been granted by SNH for the DMP.

**Glenmoriston** - MG confirmed that HIAs were to commence in 2018 and that the Group would apply for SNH funding. FES and Achlantraive had joined the DMG and this was welcomed as a big step forward. There was a positive feeling amongst the Group with forest expansion planned and culls were on target.

**Gairloch Conservation Unit** - SM reported that the HIA were ongoing. A recent helicopter count had confirmed population numbers were static. The Group would apply for funding for further HIA.

**SW Ross** Richard Curzon reported that the DMG had met during the previous week

**Monadhliaths** - HIAs were ongoing. Peatland Action funding had been secured and contractors were on-site with £500k of peatland restoration work being carried out. The hind cull was already ahead of target and better than last year. Ownership changes within the Group had settled in well. A helicopter count was planned for the Spring of 2018 with support from SNH. Glenshero Estate was to host a training day in 2018, and the Group planned to apply for SNH funding for HIA.

**Cairngorms/Speyside** - MC reported that HIA had very good coverage and that SNH were content with deer impacts although 16,000 ha of woodlands at low level were not in overall favourable condition and SNH funding for HIA had been applied for.

**South Deeside/North Angus** - MC said that this was a newly formed DMG with 8 members. A DMP was being drafted and culls would be based on a population model. Of the 8 members, 6 already had HIA in place and the other 2 members were keen to participate. The DMG was working towards full coverage of SQWV in future.



**Mid West** - RF reported that a helicopter count had taken place in the Spring of 2017 and that population modelling had been used to determine culls. Graeme Taylor of SNH had been very supportive of the DMG. The DMG would apply for SNH funding for HIA. All members of the DMG were on board and working well together. The next meeting was scheduled for February 2018 and a public engagement event was planned.

**East Sutherland** - RR reported that the Group had received positive support from SNH. Progress was being made over a number of SSSIs and the DMG was generally moving in a positive direction. There was support for a community buy-out at Garavalt. The Community Council was engaging with the DMG. The DMG's resource issues remained challenging. HIA was being carried out and the Group had applied for SNH funding. 70% of the DMG's estates had been represented at HIA training. The Group was carrying out ongoing work to increase standards. RR reiterated the need for clarity on upland policy from Scottish Government.

**West Lochaber** - AHG reported that the DMG encompassed popular landscapes. The Group had participated in the Wild Deer Health Project. A helicopter count was due to take place. The Group had engaged with the community and Lundavra Primary School. The AGM was planned for 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017. The Group intended to apply for SNH funding for HIA.

**Lochalsh** - EM confirmed that three members of the Group had completed HIAs and a record of the cycle was emerging. Population modelling was on-going. The Group was to meet with South Ross DMG to discuss deer migration and agree culling policy.

**Glenstrathfarrar** - FSN reported that the Group was in year 2 of their DMP and an increased cull following an increased count in the Spring of 2015. Good progress on culls had been made and HIA was on-going. A further training day was planned. Later ruts were being noted by the Group. Major forestry development was taking place within the DMG area. This would require monitoring to check wintering impacts on population. The Group intended to apply for SNH funding for HIA.

**Mull DMG** - BB reported that RC had attended the DMG's AGM held in October. Challenges included absentee owners albeit progress was being made. There had been 21 days of rain in October with 17 inches of rain. This had impacted on culls which had been difficult to increase. HIA was on-going and the Group would be applying for SNH funding.

**Black Mount** - FC reported that the Group was happy to participate in the Wild Deer Health Project. Good progress had been made on HIA, SNH happy with cull levels and group progress. The whole Group meets twice yearly and the Designated Sites Group meets on additional occasions as required. A Spring meeting is planned to review the DMP.

8.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>JB confirmed that Norway had reported 1 reindeer and 2 moose infected with Chronic Wasting Disease but that fortunately CWD had not been reported in the UK so far.</p> <p>JM confirmed that free pre-assessments were on offer for those considering joining SQWV and he encouraged DMGs to make enquiries.</p> <p>DP spoke about data protection. Information would be available on e-Scope.</p> <p>DF highlighted the importance of information on websites being kept up-to-date and asked that all DMGs monitored and kept websites updated.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>AGM Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Macdonald Aviemore Highland Resort.</p>	
	<p>There being no further business RC thanked all for their attendance and for their support and the meeting was closed at 13:00.</p>	