

**ARDNAMURCHAN DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP**  
**Kilchoan meeting, 3 December 2018**

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the deer population west of the fence marking the western boundary of Ardnamurchan Estate, which currently stands at approximately 200 head (2017 count) and which provides both some income for those who shoot deer commercially and costs for those who have woodland and crofting agriculture. All members of the public were welcome to attend, with a number of informal notices passed around amongst the community.

**Present (according to sign-in sheets):**

Bert Cameron	Nan MacLachlan
Alayne Cameron	Alasdair MacLachlan
Jacqui Chapple	May Angus
Pat MacPhail	Sue Cameron
H MacLachlan	Jonny Alcock
I PacPhail	M Khan
Innes Ferguson	Janice Rodger
Geoffrey Campbell	Sine Ferguson
Niall Rowantree	Brendan O'Hanrahan
Cathy Mayne	Steven Grant
William Kelly	Rosie Curtis
Davie Ferguson	A S Cameron
Niall Campbell	P Crerar
Graham Murray	G Smith

**Chair** – Geoffrey Campbell (Community Council Chair) agreed to chair the meeting after being suggested to those present as an option and approved by them.

**Ownership map** – a large map of the western end of the peninsula was provided by Ardnamurchan Estates and boundaries checked and adjusted where necessary. For each land parcel an owner and those entitled to shoot deer were established.

**Summary of legislation** – a brief summary of the relevant legislation in the Deer Act was given to clarify the situation regarding who is entitled to take deer and under what circumstances, including the General Authorisations.

**Debate** – an ensuing debate established the following points:

- There is a need to find a solution through the DMG (which is the appropriate body) to manage and address the conflicting aspirations for deer numbers in western Ardnamurchan.
- Cull returns are needed for this area, to address SNH's concerns about the relatively unmanaged situation among crofters and other deer managers here.
- The deer fence going up now along the Ardnamurchan Estate march is for a forestry grant scheme and has been attempted for the past 10 years, only just recently approved. Maintaining the integrity of this fence to limit/manage the deer west of here is a responsibility for landowners on both sides.
- Ardnamurchan Estate has silage parks west of the fence and wishes to see deer managed in the immediate vicinity to limit damage to crop.
- The value of the Achnaha ground is based on the number of stags it produces and therefore, in order to maintain its capital value, it would be an aspiration to maintain higher numbers of deer. In other parts of the world, wildlife has been managed for the benefit of local people by involving them actively. There are benefits in terms of the value of venison, sporting clients, capital value and eco-tourism as well as indirect benefits to accommodation providers etc.

- Description, from Georgina (Smith), of high levels of damage by deer in gardens in Sanna over the past 3 years, whereas they were never previously bothered. Recognition that deer will also seek shelter in gardens during poor weather and there is a clear need for more shelter.
- Negative impacts on silage fields and crofting activity now apparent to Davie F with the already low margins being lost; he would like to see the numbers from the 1990s restored. The woodland grant scheme put up in the 1990s with stock fencing, because deer numbers were very low, has been severely damaged by deer. So while there are benefits for some crofters, others are experiencing costs from deer. This needs to be captured accurately in the DMG Deer Management Plan, which currently fails to do this.
- Other crofters manage deer impacts on silage parks etc, feel that this is manageable and do not wish to see deer eradicated in this area as they are a part of the crofting landscape.
- RTAs are not a significant factor in this area and therefore there are no obvious other public health issues.
- In order to accurately manage the deer population, good data is needed for a population model. Counting will require permission from landowners, which the DMG will seek. The population model is driven by aspirations so the DMG needs to understand exactly what aspirations are, including taking account of the impact of deer on agricultural land.
- Contributions from landowners in terms of support for the DMG would be welcome since its work is currently paid for by relatively few large estates. All landowners and land managers need to accept responsibility and support the DMG both financially and through participation.

A show of hands for who felt deer numbers were too high showed 6 voting to reduce the deer population while the remainder (the majority) wished to maintain the status quo or increase deer numbers. Written submission from Graeme Crerar was not shared at the meeting but backed the status quo.

### **Actions ensuing.**

DMG Sec to work with Davie F in the first instance to try to find a solution for adverse impacts on silage parks and woodlands.

All to consider how the area might provide better shelter for deer through woodland creation.

All to consider how to support an effective deer count in spring 2019 – landowner permission is required. The DMG will be writing to all landowners asking for permission to count.

On the back of the count, aspirations for deer need to be captured by the DMG and both benefits and costs taken into account when agreeing future culls. All with an active interest to maintain dialogue with the DMG and attend meetings.

Cathy Mayne  
Ardnamurchan Deer Management Group Secretary  
13 December 2018