

Minutes of the ADMG Regional Meeting

On: Monday 14 April 2014
At: The Huntingtower Hotel, Perth

Present: Richard Cooke (RC) Chairman
Andrew Gordon (ADG) Vice Chairman
Finlay Clark (FC) Secretary
David Allison (DA) – Area 1
Randal Wilson (RW) – Area 2
Jamie Williamson (JW) – Area 3
Lynda Campbell (LC) – Area 5
James Duncan Millar (JDM) – Area 6
William Fraser (WF)
Willy Inglis (WI)

Coopted members:

John Bruce (JB) - BDS
Victor Clements (VC) - SRDP
John Morison (JM) – SVP

Ex Officio:

Linzi Seivwright (LS) SNH
Donald Fraser (DF) SNH
Bruce Sewell (BS) FES
Dick Playfair (DP) – PR/Political Adviser

In attendance:

Bill Bewsher (HFOB)
Ewen Macpherson (EMacP)
Leo Barclay - Innerhadden
Hugh Rose - Glenartney
Mark Nicolson - EGDMG
Mike Cottam - CSDMG
Rhuaridh Campbell - Glenelg
Alistair Gibson –Glenfinnan, West Lochaber
Iain Hope, SNH

Apologies: Julian Clarke Executive Committee
Stephen Gibbs Executive Committee
Glen Heggs Executive Committee
Robbie Kernahan Executive Committee
George Macdonald Executive Committee
Doug McAdam Executive Committee
Colin McClean Executive Committee
Maitland Rankin Executive Committee
Bruce Sewell Executive Committee

Richard Barclay Breadalbane DMG
Ken Bowlt West Ross DMG
Jim Corbett Mull DMG
Timothy Laing Mull DMG
A Macpherson-Fletcher Balavil Estate

J Macpherson-Fletcher	Monadhliath and Glen Elg DMG
Hamish McCorquodale	Mid West DMG
Alistair Riddell	Chesthill Estate
Frank Spencer-Nairn	Glen Strathfarrar DMG

Donald Cameron	Associate Member
Peter Keyser	Associate Member
Kenny MacLeod	Associate Member
Joe Mallinson	Associate Member
Derek Stead	Associate Member
Anthony Waterson	Associate Member

1.	<p>Introduction</p> <p>1.1 RC explained the new format to ADMG meetings, with the Regional Meetings following an Executive Committee session in private. This was primarily to avoid the Committee having to go through everything twice.</p> <p>1.2 RC said that he had been impressed by the content of the reports of those DMGs that had attended the previous meeting in Inverness. Clearly many DMGs have got the ‘message’ and are making progress with DMPs etc. A record of these local reports is on the website.</p>
2.	<p>Review of AGM</p> <p>RC said that there had been a record attendance. 220 chairs had been put out and all were taken – he felt this was a reflection of all activity taking place in the deer sector at present and it was encouraging to see such membership interest and recognition of the expectations now placed upon the deer sector. He thanked Victor Clements and Pete Selman for their presentations.</p>
3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>JDM said that there had been some confusion over the proposal for the SVP levy to increase to 2p/kilo and for this possibly to be collected through DMGs so that everyone would bear the cost equally. RC said that this had been reconsidered and the way forward would be that the approved SVP 2p/kilo levy would continue to be collected by the three SQWV assured dealers although in theory all game dealers should be collecting it.</p>
4.	<p>Chairman’s report</p> <p>4.1 RC reported that through a busy period he had attended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 meetings of SCSTG • Several meetings with SNH on Collaborative Deer Management • SQWV Board meeting • Meeting with the Chief Executive of Forest Enterprise Scotland • Meeting with Bob McIntosh of Scottish Government • Meeting with Randal Wilson and N Ross DMG which was currently without a Chairman (although RW now acting as interim Chair) • Meetings with 2 Groups on Deer Management Planning • Meeting with the MOD re subscriptions to ADMG

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the new Deputy Director of FCS, Jo O’Hara • 2 DMG meetings • Deer Stalking Fair at Kelso • Meeting to discuss the future of Heading for the Scottish Hills (HFTSH). <p>4.2 On HFTSH, RC said that whilst both land managers and the access organisations were keen to see HFTSH continue to develop, there was no SNH money available after 2014 or to roll it out further. A possible alternative approach would be to switch to the ADMG website, make it map based, and link to individual estate websites for individual information. There was a general wish to keep HFTSH going in some form and discussions will continue.</p> <p>4.3 RC said that he had attended a meeting of the Native Woodland Survey Scotland Task Group, where the headline from the launch of the NWSS report had highlighted deer as the single biggest threat to native woodland, albeit only one third of the area is affected by herbivore impacts. RC said he was pleased to have been invited to represent ADMG so as to put deer impacts in perspective along with other herbivores. The Task Group had been set up for FCS to address what happens following publication of the report.</p>
5.	<p>Financial report</p> <p>5.1 FC said that ADMG’s financial year ran from 1 July to 30 June, and as at 31 March there was a £91,500 income against a budget of just under £97,000.</p> <p>5.2 To date there had been actual expenditure of just under £59,000 against a budgeted figure of £71,300 – a positive variance of around £12,000.</p> <p>5.3 There had been over-runs on a number of items such as non-reclaimable VAT, AGM costs, Newsletter and Chairman’s travel.</p> <p>5.4 FC said that the year-end position will be very much as per the budget.</p>
6.	<p>Political report</p> <p>6.1 DP gave his political report referencing the initial report of the Scottish Affairs Committee, the imminent report of the Scottish Government’s Land Reform Review Group, and the Community Empowerment Bill.</p>
7.	<p>Work programme for DMGs</p> <p>7.1 <u>Benchmark</u></p> <p>7.1.1 RC said that this had been launched as a Consultation Draft at the AGM. There had been a number of constructive responses and the document needs refinement in tone, content and detail. The revised draft would be finalised by the ADMG Executive Committee following the DMG Office Bearers’ seminar on 19 May, and launched as a final document in July.</p>

	<p>7.1.2 RC sought views from those attending on the draft.</p> <p>7.1.3 HFOB said he thought it was important that the Benchmark should carry a covering letter or introduction that captured the direction of political travel as, unless those to whom it applied were aware of the background, they might not 'buy into' it.</p> <p>7.1.4 RC said that setting the context was important and, whilst most DMGs were already in the process, there were a few that have yet to get started.</p> <p>7.1.5 Mike Cottam said he did not regard the Benchmark as too onerous, but there were challenges as to resources: time, skills and finance. One or two DMGs should test the system to see what was available by way of financial support. In response, RC said that the Scottish Government had made an additional £200,000 available for the next 2 years for DMGs for deer management planning and that an equitable system was being developed for its allocation.</p> <p>7.2 Collaborative Deer Management Project (CDMP)</p> <p>7.2.1 LS (SNH) said the CDMP was the 'wrapper' that embraced what DMGs would need to do in response to the RACCE inquiry and the Minister's response. Part of the project at the outset was to define what an 'effective' DMG is so that there is a start-point from which progress can then be assessed in 2016. LS said that 'effective' Groups would be delivering the 'public interest' as spelt out in the Code, but there needed to be better articulation of what this meant to DMGs on the ground.</p> <p>7.2.2 The workshop at Birnam on 19 May was designed to help Groups to get up to speed.</p>
8.	<p>PACEC</p> <p>8.1 RC said that the previous PACEC report dated from 2006, and had provided very useful financial and employment data but only in relation to the sporting stalking side of deer management and had been part of a wider report on all field sports in the UK.</p> <p>8.2 This time, a separate questionnaire had been developed specific to Scotland and covering the whole deer management sector, upland and low ground – it is an important piece of work to identify deer management's economic and employment contribution.</p> <p>8.3 The questionnaire was relatively complex as it is not just about financial data and, whilst it includes stalking, covers all other aspects of deer management too.</p> <p>8.4 It was a significant financial investment for ADMG. Once finalised the questionnaires would be distributed electronically, and via E Scope and on the ADMG and LDNS websites. All should please complete them when they become available through ADMG.</p>

9.

Committee Reports

9.1 Scottish Venison Partnership

9.1.1 JM said that the Deer Farm Demonstration Project was underway with the first day oversubscribed and taking place at Culquoich in Aberdeenshire.

9.1.2 The research project being undertaken by the James Hutton Research Institute and the University of Aberdeen on *Barriers to deer farming* was also now underway and would initially run in parallel with the demonstration project.

9.1.3 Other plans included an education day for butchers, and 3 food media visits working with each of the SQWV assured game dealers and individual stalking estates to deliver these.

9.1.5 JM said that as ever SVP survived on a very tight budget and, whilst an alternative had been suggested at the ADMG AGM, for now the situation would remain that the SVP levy would be collected by the 3 SQWV accredited dealers/processors until others were recruited into the scheme. However, it was inequitable that there were some 135 deer processors in Scotland (although many of these are estates selling direct) of which only three were supporting SVP although the producers from whom they collected had pledged to do so.

9.1.6 The next tier of processors would now be approached to increase the volume of venison that had the levy attached to it – estimated currently at 75 per cent.

9.2 SCSTG

RC drew attention to the *Stalking to let* facility on the SCSTG website and also advised that a replacement was being sought for Victoria Brooks who had been a very effective project manager but was now moving on.

9.3 National Access Forum

RC, in Robert Balfour's absence, said that there was nothing of direct relevance to report.

9.4 Deer Management Round Table

RC said that DMRT met twice yearly, and is an effective mechanism for all involved with wild deer to get together. Next meeting was happening on 15 May. The Review of *Wild Deer: A National Approach* was an important part of the current DMRT agenda.

9.5 Competence

JB said that 2014 marked the start of the Competence review, and no end date had been set as yet. The DMG survey had demonstrated that 98 per cent of DMG stalkers were already engaged in Competence; BDS had also done a survey (including sporting visitors), as had SGA, and SL&E. The BASC survey had also shown good uptake. There was to be a further meeting of the Group on 1 July, and a further push to reach crofters, farmers and private foresters.

	<p>9.6 <u>Best Practice</u> DF said that there was now no SNH Best Practice Officer, but there were ongoing discussions as to where to go with deer elements as well as with other wildlife. There was little money for this at present. BP Guidance continued to be developed and reviewed. The BP Group is due to meet on 16 May.</p>
10.	<p>SNH Update</p> <p>10.1 DF said that following the RACCE inquiry, Deer Officers had been focusing mainly on Designated Sites, and there was increased emphasis on working with DMGs and delivering the ‘public interest’. There had been a change of resource in working with DMGs and more Deer Officer time would be dedicated to this, as well as most of Linzi Seivwright’s time.</p> <p>10.2 DF said that SNH still had its regulatory functions to deliver, and that the WDNA review was ongoing but would slip back to Autumn for completion.</p> <p>10.3 As previously reported, there was funding available to assist DMGs with DMPs and a format to deliver this was being developed with ADMG.</p> <p>10.4 Ian Ross is the new SNH Chairman.</p>
11.	<p>Local issues</p> <p>11.1 <u>West Ross (Randal Wilson)</u> All stalkers met in February re habitat management. DMP progressing, and count done in early April. There was an issue with FC gates being left open letting deer into forestry. Habitat management refresher day planned.</p> <p>11.2 <u>North Ross (Randal Wilson – Interim Chair)</u></p> <p>11.2.1 DMP would be produced by the end of the year. Count has been done. Forestry, woodland and farming interests have been invited join the Group at a reduced rate. Two habitat management training days are planned.</p> <p>11.2.2 RC said that there was a good relationship with FCS who were Scotland’s single biggest deer manager and who made a major contribution to the sector. However, ADMG needs to understand why local difficulties are happening, particularly when contractors are involved. FCS has agreed that a local DMG might be able to tender for FC deer management contracts in some circumstances and is to develop training on the application process for Groups considering this.</p> <p>11.2.3 WF (NTS) said that the bounty system was encouraging such practices, that there was a major issue over control and monitoring of contractors, and felt that there was not enough supervision in this area.</p>

11.2.4 DA reported an incident where a deer that had been struck on the road had had its tail removed, presumably to support a bounty claim. RW said that contractors were paid on the tail where a beast was emaciated and not destined for the larder.

11.3 (Affric/Kintail DMG) Willie Fraser

WF said that in his area things were improving, although there were issues even though his was a small Group. The Constitution was being reviewed and being reworded to include the Principles of Collaboration. There was still a question over how to get resolution under the voluntary system when dialogue broke down. There were some suspicions within the Group about change.

11.4 Lochalsh DMG (Ewan Macpherson)

The Group consisted of just 2.5 members with the same objectives and now needed to get up to speed and 'tick some boxes'.

11.5 North West Sutherland (David Allison)

The funding for the DMP had been agreed with SNH providing part. Its programme and timescale still to be finalised. Victor Clements has been appointed to produce the plan.

11.6 West Sutherland DMG (David Allison)

Behind in terms of progress – however a steering group now formed for DMP and more funding to be sought from SNH.

11.7 Northern Group (David Allison?)

DMP done by Rory Putman. Self-risk assessment also being done and everything coming together well.

11.8 South Perthshire (James Duncan Miller)

Group split into 3 sub-groups, two of which have either drafted or reviewed their DMP. However the eastern sub-group is fairly dysfunctional, and needs a new Chair. All 3 sub groups report, and determine their own cull targets. There are significant grouse and sheep interests and the movement of deer is being increasingly limited. There are windfarm interests also.

11.9 West Grampian (Andrew Gordon)

Meeting to be held at end April. There is a draft DMP – however the Group requires more engagement from owners, and there are some who just don't or won't get involved.

11.10 Mull (Bill Bewsher)

11.10.1 DMP is at draft stage and will be completed by October. There is an issue of absence of some owners at meetings. Former issues with FE are now sorted. Some large blocks of forestry have been sold off and bought by the community, and a new road put in. Some 'free' shooting is taking place with no concern over welfare, age or sex of deer. Also problems with farmers and contract culling being undertaken under the General Authorisation and damage being done to the deer herd. HFOB has raised this with SNH (RK) and asked

whether the General Authorisation could be tightened.

11.10.2 ADG asked whether SNH advised the relevant DMG when a General License was being issued, or whether it was the responsibility of the owner or the applicant to advise neighbouring properties.

11.11 Glenmoriston (Lynda Campbell)

LC said that the Group was getting up to speed, that the Community Council had attended the last DMG meeting, and that relations with FC were improving. A helicopter count had been 'half done' and habitat monitoring was underway but currently on hold (due to illness).

11.12 Knoydart (Lynda Campbell)

Struggling to get a good, coordinated count. Both Knoydart Groups needed a thorough count. An external assessor was being used to do Habitat Impact Assessment, and the DMP was being reviewed/revised.

11.13 Monadhliaths DMG (Jamie Williamson)

Group has engaged Strath Caulaidh Ltd, and a 157 page first draft DMP produced – with a meeting imminent to review. Some issues to be resolved.

11.14 Breadalbane (Victor Clements)

Group on target with Section 7 – collaborative effort with SNH and one more year to run, at which point it could be reduced or taken away altogether. Benefit has been that under the S7, SNH has done helicopter counts – however when the S7 ends the Group will have to do its own counts and an increase in subscriptions is of concern. Have had discussions regarding *Heading for the Scottish Hills*, and a contribution to it from Ramblers and MCofS. Group constitution is being amended to include the Principles of Collaboration, and some 'tweaking' to accommodate the 'public interest'. From a deer welfare perspective it has been a difficult season with high winter mortality likely.

11.15 East Grampian DMG (Mark Nicolson)

Group split in 5 sub-groups of which 4 work reasonably well. There are two Section 7s in the Group – the Mar Lodge one is working extremely well. No full DMG count has been done as there is too much snow on the high ground.

11.16 Islay and Jura (Willy Inglis)

A count has been done on the east half, mortality low, and calving at around 33 per cent. The west side is much smaller and working with SNH to develop workable group to cover Rhinns Of Islay. Jura no change.

11.17 Cairngorm and Speyside DMG (Mike Cottam)

Meeting on 7 May to go through draft Benchmark on a 'tick box' basis, thereafter making moves to meet failings.

	<p>May be in a situation where the Group will not have a single landowner with a 'sporting' cull as the majority now favour trees or grouse. Benchmark seen as a good concept, and the DMG already has a good website to put information into the public domain.</p> <p><u>11.18 West Lochaber (Alistair Gibson)</u> Working towards habitat monitoring. Have had abysmal weather and high mortality is expected. Poaching has returned with one high profile case. One member who has not attended a DMG meeting for many years has been spoken to. Wild boar have been shot recently near Locheil. Community Council is engaged.</p> <p><u>11.19 Glenelg (Ruaraidh Campbell)</u> Plan is with SNH and will be approved in next 2 – 3 weeks.</p> <p><u>11.20 Blackmount (Finlay Clark)</u> DMP done. Habitat monitoring training day coming up. Some big estates are committed to habitat monitoring. On Glencoe SAC there are issues to resolve as it is in unfavourable condition. Winter mortality expected to be high.</p> <p><u>11.21 Mid West (Finlay Clark)</u> DMP signed off at last AGM. Group has a less coordinated approach to habitat monitoring. There are 2 Designated Sites and significant progress being made with these.</p> <p><u>11.22</u> In summing up, RC said that this reflected 21 busy groups reporting. DF also said that this showed a good basis from which to be working.</p>
12.	<p>Dates of next meetings 30 July – Lairg 3 December - Inverness</p>