



The Association of Deer Management Groups
 Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016
 The Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie

1.	Present	
	Richard Cooke Finlay Clark Helen Polley James Adamson Col. Bewsher Victor Clements Andrew Gordon Bob McKintosh Dick Playfair	Chairman Secretary Secretarial Support Executive Committee Executive Committee Executive Committee Executive Committee Executive Committee Executive Committee
	Michael Aldridge James Allan David Allison Peter Allison Karen Anderson Nick Baikie Pieter Bakker Jean Balfour Leo Barclay Richard Barclay Craig Barnett James Barrie Duncan Bentley Bruce Blackley Rita Botto Ken Bowltt Will Boyd-Wallis Donald Broad John Bruce Lynda Campbell Katrina Candy Jane Cheape Sinclair Coghill James Corbett Patience Corbett Julian Clarke Nicki Cory-Wright	Glenartney / South Perthshire DMGs Bidwells Reay Forest Estate, WS/NWS DMGs Corrour Estate SSE Renewables Ben Alder Estate Altnaharra Estate, NWSDMG Scourie Estate Innerhadden Innerhadden Ben Alder Pitcastle and Glen Lochay Achentoul Estate Remony Food Standards Scotland West Ross DMG CNPA Pitcastle and Glen Lochay BDS / ADMG Executive Committee Kingie / ADMG Executive Committee Bidwells Glenattadale SNH Lochbuie, Mull DMG Lochbuie, Mull DMG Atholl / WGDGMG Auchessan Estate

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



Mike Cottam	CSDMG
Bill Cowie	Isle of Rona
Hamish Cruikshank	Dunmaglass Estate
Richard Curzon	Tulloch / SWRDMG
Nick Dalgety	Glen Mhor
Lord Dalhousie	Invermark
Holly Deary	SNH
Ian Dingwall	Auchlyne and Suie
Chris Donald	SNH
George Eveleigh	Highland Deer & Habitat Solutions Ltd
Roddie Feilden	Ardverikie
Alasdair Findlay	Ralia
Steve Fox	Carnoch Estate, ELSDMG
Donald Fraser	Glen Cannich
Donald Fraser	SNH
Peter Fraser	SGA
Willie Fraser	Affric & Kintail DMG
Falcon Frost	Glenfalloch Estate, BDMG
Alistair Gibson	Glenfinnan Estate, WLDMG
Martin Girvan	Glenmoriston DMG
Robert Gordon	Barrisdale
Kenny Graham	Coignafearn Estate
Kevin Grant	North Chesthill
Sir Patrick Grant	Knoydart
Jordan Hagan	Fannich Estate
David Harris	Remony
John Hay	Mullardoch Estate
Scott Hay	Scottish Fire Rescue Service
Raymond Henderson	Bidwells
Bruce Hendry	Glenshero
Sarah Holman	Shielbridge
Justin Irvine	James Hutton Institute
Susan Jones	Lochalsh DMG
Robbie Kernahan	SNH
Dougie Langlands	Ardverikie Estate
Roddy Legge	Letterewe Estate
Ian Leith	Glenfinnan Estate
David Lowes	Glenfalloch Estate, ITDMG
Brian Lyall	Badenoch Estate, ESDMG
Iain Macaskill	Glen Moidart
Roddy MacAskill	Highland Deer & Habitat Solutions Ltd
Alex MacDonald	Achnacarry Sporting / Knoydart DMG
Barbara MacDonald	Letterewe Estate
Douglas MacDonald	Shielbridge
Fraser MacDonald	Glenshero
Johnnie MacDonald	Borrobol Estate
Kirsty MacDonald	Highland Game Ltd
Neil MacKay	Loch Choire Estate
William MacKay	Kildermorie Estate
Philip Mackenzie	Farr Estate
Danny Mackie	Ledgowan Estate
Pete MacLaren	Inverailort
Colin Maclean	Glen Tanar Estate
Duncan MacLean	Kinlochmoidart Estate
Robin MacLean	Ardgour Estate

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



Garry MacLennan	Invermark
Allan MacLeod	Corrou Estate
Lea MacNally	Glenquoich
Seamus MacNally	Gairloch Conservation Unit
Ewen Macpherson	Lochalsh DMG
Joanna Macpherson	Lochalsh DMG
Ruari Matheson	Fannich
Pete Mayhew	Cairngorm, Speyside DMG
Douglas McAdam	SLE / ADMG Executive Committee
Hamish McCorquodale	Dunan
Mary McCorquodale	Dunan
Jacqui McElhiney	Food Standards Scotland
Neil McKay	SSE Renewables
Gordon McQuade	Scottish Fire Rescue Service
Iain McMyn	SSE
Ian McWatt	Food Standards Scotland
Pete Moore	SNH
Ran Morgan	Knight Frank
John Morison	Scottish Quality Wild Venison
John Morrison	Achnacarry Sporting / South Forest
David Mosgrove	Conaglen Estate
Dominic Murdoch Bernard	Atholl, Glen Bruar
Christian Nissen	Highland Game
Hans Nissen	Highland Game
Brendan O'Hanrahan	Assynt Foundation
David Olds	North Highland College UHI
Emma Paterson	Auchlyne and Suie
Gillian Pattinson	Lochcarron
Mark Pattinson	South West Ross DMG
Calum Proctor	Black Mount
Alastair Riddell	N Chesthill
Martin Robb	South Perthshire DMG
Gordon Robertson	Assynt Foundation
Niall Robertson	Dunalastair Estate
Ewan Ross	Achnacarry Sporting
Ronnie Ross	Lochrosque / Kinlochewe
Donald Rowantree	Corrou Estate
Robbie Rowantree	ESDMG
Claudia Rowse	SNH
Richard Seaman	CKD Galbraith LLP
Linzi Seivwright	Caorann / ADMG
Raymond Simpson	Mullardoch Estate
Michael Skelly	FCS
James Smith	Ardverikie
Ron Smith	Dunira Woodlands
Andrew Souter	Dunira Woodlands
Frank Spencer-Nairn	Culligran Estate / Glen Strathfarrar DMG
Jamie Stewart	Lochluichart
Simon Stewart	Coulin Estate
Rory Stormonth Darling	Balvarran
Gavin Strathdee	Properties / East Glenquoich
Andrew Sutherland	Glencalvie Estate
Graeme Taylor	SNH
Andrew Thomson	Achnacarry Sporting
Iain Thornber	Morvern, Argyll

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>Sarah Troughton Tom Turnbull Richard Vernon Steven Wade Jan Wallwork-Clarke Jonathan Whitehead Rob Whitson Michael Wigan Jamie Williamson Nathan Windle Iain Wotherspoon Neil Wright</p> <p>Peter Keyser Gilmour Strang A Walker Kirsty Fernie</p>	<p>SCSTG and Atholl Strone Estate, ITDMG Glendoe Woodmill Shootings Ltd Sleat DMG SQWV Ardverikie Borrobol Estate Alvie Estate Ardverikie Glenlyon Estate CKD Galbraith</p> <p>Associate Member Associate Member Associate Member</p>
2.	Apologies for Absence	
	<p>James Duncan Millar Stephen Gibbs Willy Inglis</p> <p>Jan Jacob Baak Tim Baynes Crispian Cook Prof. Roger Crofts Duncan Gordon William Jackson Shaun Macdonald Jane Maclay Malcolm Macphail Angus Macpherson Mark Nicolson Hugh O'Donnell Julian Richmond-Watson Bruce Sewell Les Waugh Ben Weatherall Bill Whyte Megan Whyte George Woods Donald Cameron Martin Murphy Col. R Nicholas John Parsons Hugh Rose Derek Stead</p>	<p>Executive Committee Executive Committee Executive Committee</p> <p>Great Glen Game SL&E Moorland Group North Ross DMG RSGS Glenelg DMG Strathtay DMG South West Ross DMG Gruinard Estate Harris & Lewis DMG Biallid East Grampian DMG Wyvis Estate Glenelg DMG FES Ardgay Game Yorkshire Game Gruinard Estate Gruinard Estate North West Sutherland DMG Associate Member Associate Member Associate Member Associate Member Associate Member Associate Member</p>
3.	<p>Minutes of the previous AGM held 4th March 2015 The Minutes of the AGM held on 4th March 2015 were presented by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting. They were proposed by John Bruce and seconded by Jim</p>	

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>Corbett. Matters arising were carried forward to today's Agenda and would be covered during the meeting.</p>
4.	<p>Chairman's Report A copy of the Chairman's Report is attached, or can be downloaded from the ADMG website: http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ADMG-Chairmans-report-26.2.16.pdf</p> <p>Or click on this link: Chairman's Report</p>
	<p>Questions: The Chairman was asked what he thought the landscape would look like for deer management in 12 months' time. He responded that although it was difficult to predict with certainty, he felt that the progress made by DMGs should reflect well on the deer sector at this year's Review. However, there is work to do in trying to communicate with people at political level who hold strong critical views. The transcript of the last Rural Affairs Committee debate gives the impression that some Committee members have made up their minds already and if that remains the case post- election, the Review could go against us. There remains a great deal for ADMG and other bodies to do in getting the case across to ensure that the decision is made objectively, based on evidence, as promised by the Minister. The Chairman was also confident that the SNH reassessments of the DMGs in the spring would demonstrate the very considerable progress made. Hopefully in 12 months, the management of deer will remain under the voluntary principle without further unnecessary legislation, however, there are no guarantees.</p>
5.	<p>Financial Report: Finlay Clark Finlay Clark thanked all those involved in the administration of DMGs acknowledging the amount of work involved and the extra demands made in the preceding year for all those in the deer sector. FC commented on the good exchange of information between Secretaries, Chairs and those involved with administration of DMGs and thanked all for their efforts.</p> <p>Audited Accounts to year ending 30th June 2015 FC highlighted some of the main points from the Accounts and drew attention to areas where there was significant variance from 2014.</p> <p>As predicted, subscription levels to the ADMG have fallen from c. £96k to c. £85k as deer numbers fell. The subscription levy was substantially raised 4 years ago anticipating falling cull numbers, and rolling five year averages, upon which levies are calculated, are indeed now beginning to fall. The total income for 2015 was £92,655 versus the previous year of £98,706. FC was pleased to confirm that Associate membership continues to grow and attracting new Associate Members needs to be a target for the future.</p> <p>Regarding expenditure, many of the costs were similar to 2014 with the exception of project officer costs and deer group expenses. Project officer costs related largely to Linzi Seivwright and others who have provided extremely valuable support in the past year in response to the additional challenges faced. Linzi's additional support to the ADMG has been excellent.</p> <p>With respect to deer group expenses, whereas previously, DMGs could recover from ADMG the cost of subscriptions that they would have received directly from FES, FES</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>now pay directly to DMGs so this figure has reduced from the previous year and should reduce to zero in 2016.</p> <p>The Annual Accounts had been audited by Johnson Carmichael. Col. Bewsher proposed the Accounts and these were seconded by Randal Wilson and were signed by the Chairman.</p> <p>Management Accounts to 31st January 2016</p> <p>These accounts provide a snapshot of the management accounts for the year to date and a picture of where the ADMG sits in terms of budget and cash reserves held. The budget is a "break even" budget, with a budgeted surplus at the end of the year of £87. Income was budgeted at £104,132, comprised primarily of forecast subscriptions of £90,000. "Expenses recovered" relate to the PACEC report. LDNS and SGA have both committed to provide funding on completion of the report. For the year to date, the ADMG has recovered / invoiced £94,576 of subscription income to date against £70,017 budgeted to February, giving a current positive variance of £24,559.</p> <p>The ADMG had budgeted to receive £5,520 of direct financial support from SNH under "miscellaneous income", but due to the financial impact of cuts to SNH this funding is no longer expected. The funding related to various projects, seminars and presentations.</p> <p>With regard to expenditure, FC highlighted areas where there was a variance against budget. The Chairman had reported on the commitment made by ADMG to provide webpages to DMGs, effectively free of charge to start up. This is reflected in the excess of expenditure of £1,410 against I.T. and website maintenance. ADMG has largely kept to budget despite SNH not having been able to commit to certain projects. ADMG felt that this was such an important year for the deer management sector that it was right to ensure that Linzi Seivwright is available to provide support to DMGs. This commitment will affect cash reserves but the ADMG must remain committed to providing DMGs with as much support as possible.</p> <p>FC made a request to DMGs who do not submit data on "other species" of deer –which is a sizeable potential income stream. If a DMG had taken the decision not to include "other species", then FC asked that this decision be reviewed.</p> <p>Going forward, sponsorship opportunities would be reviewed. ADMG holds events and has publications that could be used to raise revenue. ADMG had made an application to ECAF for funding and will continue to look to SNH and Scottish Government for support.</p> <p>In terms of cash reserves, there was a healthy balance of just over £50k in the bank, but this will deplete in the coming months.</p> <p>FC requested that Secretaries let Helen Polley know how many copies of SCOPE they require for their DMGs. In the past SCOPE was sent out routinely, but now some DMGs circulate these to members electronically.</p>
	<p>Questions:</p> <p>The Secretary was asked whether the 11% fall in revenue represented an 11% drop in culls over the membership period.</p> <p>FC responded that it is difficult to provide precise figures due to the 5 year rolling average but the average appeared to be falling and this was manifest in subscription figures. Robbie Kernahan commented that SNH had actually seen a rise in cull figures in the last two years</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups
Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



<p>6.</p>	<p>Vice Chairman & Executive Committee Elections: Richard Cooke Vice Chairman: Andrew Gordon had been Vice Chairman for 4 years and now wished to step down. The Chairman thanked AG and commented that he very much appreciated his help. Randal Wilson had agreed to stand for election as Vice Chairman at this AGM on the basis that this would be for a period of 2 years only. There were no nominations for an alternative candidate. RC formally proposed RW as the new Vice Chairman; seconded by Lynda Campbell and this was carried.</p> <p>Andrew Gordon addressed the meeting. AG had first become involved in deer management as Secretary to the West Grampian DMG in 1978 and commented that he doubted whether deer had ever been the focus of so much public scrutiny before. Deer are wonderful, resourceful animals that have adapted from living in woodland to very poor grazings; they have traditionally underpinned the value of large tracts of Scotland and so they should be looked after. AG thanked everyone for their support whilst he was Vice Chairman</p> <p>Regional Representative Elections: Richard Cooke Area 2: Area Rep: Randal Wilson and Deputy: Willie Fraser; Area 4: Area Rep: Colin Maclean and Deputy: Julian Clarke; Area 6: Currently: Area Rep: James Duncan Millar and Deputy: Victor Clements Proposed: Area Rep: Tom Turnbull and Deputy: Victor Clements</p> <p>James Duncan Millar was not present at the AGM but the Chairman commented that he had been an outstanding Executive Committee member and Regional Representative. JDM had six DMGs in his area and rarely missed a meeting. His feedback and reporting were second to none. JDM has been involved with the Executive Committee for at least 10 years and was the longest serving member of the Deer Commission Board, serving 3 and 1/2 terms. He has contributed an enormous amount to the deer sector. All involved with the ADMG owe a huge thanks to JDM and RC expressed his gratitude for JDM's help and support.</p> <p>James Duncan Millar will now stand down and Tom Turnbull had agreed to take over Area 6. Victor Clements will continue to act as his Deputy.</p> <p>Area 8: Area Rep: Willy Inglis and Deputy: David Gillies</p> <p>The Chairman made an en-bloc proposal to re-elect or elect Randal Wilson and Willie Fraser; Colin Maclean and Julian Clarke; Tom Turnbull and Victor Clements; and Willy Inglis and David Gillies for Areas 2, 4, 6 and 8 respectively. Proposed by David Lowes and seconded by Lord Dalhousie.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>DMG Work Programme: Linzi Seivwright The Chairman invited Linzi Seivwright to the platform. He commented that LS had been working one day per week for the ADMG but spends far more time than that and he thanked LS for her efforts.</p> <p>Linzi Seivwright commented that much work had been carried out over the preceding year. Over the previous 12 months, much had been done to help DMGs through the planning process, including Birnam workshops and website development. LS commented</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



that DMG Chairs and Secretaries had also been working incredibly hard to assist in the development of plans and support the planning process. For planning consultants, it has been an extremely busy time, grappling with the “public interest” and all the information that DMPs are now expected to cover, and pulling final drafts together in order that DMGs can meet the March deadline. LS took the opportunity personally and on behalf of fellow consultants, to thank SNH for their assistance and support throughout the planning process, in particular the Wildlife Management Officers. LS also acknowledged the huge amount of work the ADMG Executive Committee have been doing behind the scenes and in particular the Chairman, who has been largely firefighting on behalf of the ADMG to counter criticism that continues to be aimed at deer management even before the official assessments have taken place.

ADMG will continue to support DMGs through the next phase - the assessment process to take place during April and May. ADMG will assist with getting websites up and running and Birnam Seminars aimed at supporting Chairs and Secretaries will continue. LS invited suggestions for topics to be covered at these events; feedback is welcome and helps ADMG to target what DMGs need.

Unfortunately funding for SWARD development ran out at a crucial time in 2015. ADMG will try to find a way to move this important project forward. SWARD is a database tool to enable statistics to be drawn together, including habitat data, count data and cull data. It is a map based approach to enable production of reports that will help inform the planning process, making it easier for DMGs to manage information needed for DMPs.

LS pointed out that the planning deadline of March for completion of DMPs does not mark the end of the process, but is the beginning of the next phase where the onus will be completely with DMGs. The real test of the voluntary system will be in the delivery of the Plans and will mean continued hard work for DMGs. From her experience of being at the "coal face" of the deer management planning process this year, LS summarised some points for DMGs to consider: Firstly, if DMGs are able they should have a dry run of the assessment process before the formal assessment takes place. LS had found this to be really useful in identifying areas that may need further work. If any DMGs have written their own DMPs and would like help with this process, then ADMG could assist.

Secondly, with regard to the DMP consultation process, the extent to which DMGs do this will be proportionate to local circumstances and objectives. But LS urged that DMGs upload DMPs to their website/web page and if appropriate hold a public meeting with the local community. Local meetings had proved valuable and appeared to be appreciated and welcomed by those who attend. Local meetings also inform DMGs of how the local community view deer management in their area. DMGs should not be afraid to deal with burning issues head on. Lastly, DMGs need to recognise that there is much work to do in facilitating and managing DMPs by way of meetings, data analysis and reporting, and delivering the Actions identified in their DMPs.

Timing for applications for the ECAF Fund has come at a bad time for those already heavily involved in the planning process, but LS recommended that DMGs consider making an application next year should funding still be available. ADMG is waiting to hear if the few applications submitted this year have been successful: notifications are likely to be made in May. ADMG will keep DMGs updated as to the position with regard to funding for next year. Given that only a handful of applications were made this year, it would be helpful to get an indication of interest for next year so that the Scottish Government would not infer that lack of applications this year was due to lack of interest. If ADMG can confirm that there are DMGs who wish to apply in the future, then the it can make the case to Scottish Government to continue the scheme.

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups
Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



<p>8.</p>	<p>Committee Reports: Richard Cooke For a summary of the Industry Committees on which ADMG serves please refer to Chairman's Report. (See item 4 above)</p> <p>Progress with the website project: Dick Playfair DP confirmed that ADMG had had a very encouraging response from DMGs in getting websites up and running. Twenty-eight sites were now active: 14 sites are linked through the ADMG portal or can be accessed directly through Google. The remainder of DMGs still have pages on the ADMG website. DP encouraged any DMGs that had not become involved yet, to contact him so that the ADMG can assist in getting DMG websites activated within the next couple of weeks. DP commented that it was crucial to put DMPs in the public domain and there were some good examples of sites that have gone live. Overall, the project was moving in the right direction and response was encouraging in terms of delivering greater transparency for DMGs. DP thanked all those who had engaged with the project so far. The Chairman commented that there were still a number of DMGs (approximately 17) that had not yet activated their websites and encouraged these DMGs to contact DP to make progress as soon as possible.</p> <p>PACEC Economic Study: Finlay Clark (PACEC Report and Summary are both available to download from the ADMG website).</p> <p>FC referred those present to the summary of the PACEC Report. The process was started in 2014 and this is the year on which PACEC have reported. The previous PACEC Report for ADMG in 2006 provided valuable evidence regarding the economic importance of and provision of employment by the deer industry. ADMG requires good and robust up-to-date evidence to assist in discussions with Scottish Government going forward and in 2014 ADMG felt that it was the right time to update the information from 2006. FC thanked those who had spent time completing the questionnaire which was complex due to the need to gather wider information about the deer sector. The aim was to focus not just on the economy and employment but also on environmental contribution and to encompass the more scientific approach now integral to deer management.</p> <p>FC highlighted some of the key findings from the Report. He stressed the importance of communication and encouraged all to use the findings to emphasise the contribution to the Scottish economy from the deer sector.</p> <p>In terms of coverage, there were almost 3 times the number of respondents in the 2014 Report and this captured data for almost 25% of the land mass of Scotland (1.8M hectares). The reasons for carrying out deer management have changed since 2006 where the principal objective had still been sporting. Now the principal objective for those carrying out deer management relates to ensuring that the deer population is in balance with the habitat; that it does not exceed carrying capacity; and it is used to protect woodland and habitat. There is now a very different mind-set. The report shows that the majority are undertaking some form of habitat monitoring or have some form of DMP in place (though not all DMPs may yet be fully compliant with SNH expectations). In terms of economic importance to local suppliers, almost 90% of suppliers of equipment are based in Scotland demonstrating that the deer sector delivers benefit into local economies which are often rural and fragile.</p> <p>The most significant aspect of the 2014 PACEC Report relates to employment and to the financial contribution that the deer sector makes. 2,500 jobs are supported through the deer industry and £140M feeds into the Scottish economy. Scottish Government should recognise the importance of both the employment and the economic contributions</p>
-----------	---

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>FC thanked LDNS and SGA who had both contributed financially to the PACEC Report; also those who had spent time pulling together data and information.</p> <p>The Executive Summary can be accessed via: PACEC Executive Summary</p> <p>Or at: http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Summary-25-Feb-2016.pdf</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>A question was asked as to whether it would be possible to extract data from the completed PACEC Report to provide statistics for specific DMG areas?</p> <p>FC answered that it had been hoped that regional financial information could be drawn out of the Report and attributed to individual DMGs, but the reality was that respondents to questionnaires made up just a small proportion of landholdings in many DMG areas, an insufficient sample. Therefore, data taken from PACEC would most likely not be representative of individual DMG areas in most cases.</p> <p>The Chairman said that he would be sending a copy of the PACEC Report to John Swinney and Aileen MacLeod. The Report had been completed at a very useful time in terms of the Minister's briefing of the Rural Affairs Committee about Part 6 of the Bill dealing with Sporting rates.</p>
	<p>Questions</p> <p>Linzi Seivwright was asked what stage the SWARD project had reached, and what would be the cost to complete it? She answered that the project needed to complete the critical testing phase before it can be relied upon and released for wider use. She estimated that the cost would be in the region of £4-5k. The Chairman commented that ADMG would, if necessary, try to meet this cost in the absence of continuing SNH funding as SWARD forms a vital part of what the ADMG is trying to demonstrate: that it can process information in a standardised way and use that information to deliver DMPs. The ADMG would try to reactivate the project, if not this year, then as soon as possible.</p> <p>Assurance was sought by Sarah Troughton, Chair of SCSTG, that when the PACEC report was sent to Aileen MacLeod, ADMG will emphasise that it sits alongside the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group report on the tourism sector which had been funded by Scottish Enterprise and Visit Scotland and therefore a public sector supported report. The Chairman responded that there were a number of reports in circulation which to some extent overlapped, for example BASC and other countryside organisations' report carried out last year that covered the whole of the UK. The BASC report was also produced by PACEC and some information had been integrated into the 2014 Report; whereas the SCSTG Report had not been taken into account. However, the SCSTG Report provides important information and was supported by Scottish Government and this should be recognised.</p> <p>The Chairman was asked what criticism was still being made at Scottish Government level bearing in mind that DMGs were doing what had been asked in providing DMPs, etc. He responded that it was frustrating that the bar is constantly being raised. The assessment system was an example. When it was devised in conjunction with SNH it was understood to be a self-assessment system for DMG purposes, but it was now being used as a stick to beat DMGs with if they do not measure up to a standard that had not been outlined. The language in the Rural Affairs Committee is sometimes hostile to deer management and ADMG evidence is often ignored. The ground rules have changed significantly and it is not clear what the Scottish Government expects of DMGs. RC felt that the deer management planning process being undertaken at present is exceptional and pulls</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>together different land uses in a way that should act as an example to shape land management in future. Unfortunately, deer are very political and are being used as a proxy for Land Reform. Those with an agenda to see the status quo changed will be reluctant to accept arguments that do not suit their objectives.</p> <p>SNH had been supportive and apparently favours the voluntary principle, giving managers the freedom to manage without unreasonable interference. There is already legislation in place giving SNH powers to intervene (but mostly unused to date); there is the "Wild Deer – A National Approach" 20 year rolling policy document; the Code of Practice for Deer Management; Wild Deer Best Practice; the ADMG Benchmark and Principles of Collaboration and now there is the Assessment process. These are all markers of a regulated industry, but if the deer sector does not retain a degree of freedom to manage, essential flexibility will be lost at a local level to reflect local circumstances. ADMG needs to demonstrate that the system as it is now, is working well and the aim is to persuade Scottish Government of this over the next 6 to 12 months.</p> <p>A comment was made from the floor that despite the work of ADMG, this would not prevent further land reform which is ultimately concerned with land ownership.</p> <p>RC replied that deer management is just one piece of the jigsaw. It is iniquitous that deer are the target for a much wider agenda, but on the other hand, if we can demonstrate how well deer can be managed, this would be a strong argument, in terms of land management generally being in the public interest.</p> <p>There was a question as to whether ADMG had presented deer management as a "farming industry" as it might then be perceived differently and considered a legitimate rural industry.</p> <p>RC agreed that there is no fundamental difference between deer management and livestock husbandry. Both involved management of resources on land. He acknowledged that terminology was important and farmers appear to be below the political horizon; stigma is associated by some with the word "estate". Management processes however are fundamentally the same. RC confirmed that ADMG had raised this with Scottish Government and has argued that deer husbandry should be treated in the same way as domestic livestock/sheep husbandry.</p> <p>The SLE representative commented that deer and the deer sector have not been singled out alone by Scottish Government for Land Reform which is also targeting rural housing; farming, tenant farmers; and fisheries, etc. It is not a single focus agenda but is much wider and many of these elements will appear in the Land Reform Bill which is why demonstrating the contribution that the deer sector makes will be important.</p> <p>There was reference to SNH's earlier statement regarding the increased cull figures over the past two seasons. Was ADMG able to confirm where that increase was taking place, i.e. open hill or woodland? The increased cull should be reflected in the Government's estimated deer numbers?</p>
	<p>SNH Response and Report, Robbie Kernahan</p> <p>RK said that in his opinion, many of the provisions within the Land Reform Bill strengthen the sector and the current Deer Scotland Act. Current discussion at the Rural Affairs Committee does not necessarily reflect all the evidence being presented. He stressed the importance of distinguishing between the Rural Affairs Committee which is a group of cross-party MSPs and the Government's position which has been that deer should not be</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



debated in terms of land reform because a commitment has already been given to undertake a review in 2016. The forthcoming review brings into sharp focus the importance of DMPs. Collectively they will demonstrate the “step change” referred to at the time of the 2014 Review and should form the core of the SNH report to the Minister. RK felt that the Minister had been firm in rebutting pressure from various MSPs to try and bring more deer provisions into the Land Reform Bill and had been strong in confirming the Government's commitment to undertake a review. In 2014 it was agreed by ADMG and SNH that it would be beneficial to take an honest look at how DMGs were performing and the review should reflect an objective assessment of how much progress has been made. ADMG and SNH are on the same page and would be able to confirm how much progress has been made.

The assessment process was not designed to be a stick to beat DMGs with. It was meant to be a joint process to demonstrate progress and RK firmly believed that that will be the case.

There is pressure on SNH's budget. The public sector is having to make difficult decisions about spending in the current financial year and probably for the next three as well. This will impact on SNH and in turn on the deer sector. SNH are making difficult spending decisions bringing into sharp focus where priorities lie. Deer continue to be a priority but SNH will be unable to spend the same amount of time and money as had been possible previously. On average, in the past 5 years SNH had probably spent about 3,000 staff days and £500,000 - 600,000 in supporting DMGs. This would be difficult to sustain going forward. In response to some of the financial challenges, SNH had undertaken restructuring and vacant posts are not being filled. As a result, SNH would need to consider how best they can provide support for DMGs. SNH has a good core of Wildlife Management Officers but they are going to be working in a revised structure. It will be useful for SNH to get feedback if this does not work as well as DMGs might like.

Authorisations are an issue which surfaces from time to time SNH had appointed an independent panel to look at how SNH deal with night shooting and out of season authorisations. The Panel had met for the first time 2 weeks ago.

Robbie Rowantree, a Panel member, commented that the focus will be on the authorisation process. The intention was to take evidence from associated relevant bodies, look at the science and socio-economic pressures and make recommendations to the Minister who will provide guidance to the agencies which deliver the authorisation process. Comments are invited.

RK commented that SNH understood the concerns about night and out of season shooting and the impact these have. The Panel will provide an independent and robust analysis of what those concerns are and whether SNH need to do anything differently. Hopefully this process is something all can engage in.

SNH are continuing to count deer across DMGs this year. So far counts have been undertaken in East Grampian, Ardnamurchan, Moidart and West Sutherland with plans for South Ross, Islay and Jura. The count programme is designed to help DMGs make informed decisions about what goes into DMPs. Over the last year or two SNH has seen an increase in red deer culls as well as other species. RK was intrigued to try and understand why that was. Is it in response to political pressure? Can any meaningful conclusions be drawn? This is something SNH will be looking at in relation to the Review. However, it does reinforce that the planning process is not just a tick box exercise, but is designed to help DMGs make informed decisions at local level.

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>Over the next 12 months, SNH will focus on ensuring that the Review is as informed as it can be, based on the best information available. If Ministers, under pressure from the Rural Affairs Committee or others, have an appetite for suggesting that the current system is not delivering, then it will be up to SNH to think about what a regulated landscape might look like. However, the focus is presently on drawing together all of the good work that has been done and gathering evidence that there has been a step change.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked RK for his update and encouraged DMGs to make representations to the Authorisations Panel.</p>
9.	<p>Ian McWatt, Director of Operations, Food Standards Scotland Venison and E-coli O157</p> <p>IM wished to impress on the meeting that what has gone before in terms of standards, systems of work, and involvement as part of the food supply chain has to change because a new risk had been identified. Until last year, E.coli O157 had not been associated with the game sector in Scotland and there had not been any food borne disease outbreak associated with the consumption of venison. This has now changed and requires a new way of thinking in terms of managing risk to the consumer by the industry. It was “fortunate” that the particular strain of E. coli that was involved in the outbreak was such that it did not lead to fatalities. E.coli O157 can kill.</p> <p>The key message that IM wished to leave with the meeting was that the working practices that the deer sector currently use cannot continue if the deer sector is to remain viable and within the food chain environment because the risks are so great. IM commented that this was not a presentation that he wanted to have to deliver, but it is important that the risks are signalled to the deer sector, just as they are being highlighted to the consumer.</p> <p>Please refer to the ADMG website to access a copy of Ian McWatt’s full presentation by clicking on the link: Ian McWatt - Presentation</p> <p>Or go to: http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1.-Presentation-Venison-suppliers-Venison-and-VTEC-Ian-Mcwatt-26-Feb2016.pdf</p>
	<p>The Chairman commented on the gravity of the risk of losing the ability to sell venison, which would be devastating for the industry and undermine the ability to take a sustainable deer cull. The issue was of relevance to everybody involved in hunting or processing venison and RC urged that those present report back to all those absent from the meeting. A working group is currently formulating recommendations for practical application that will probably have a significant effect on some established carcass handling practices.</p> <p>The Chairman then introduced Scott Hay, the Local Senior Officer (Highlands) for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, responsible for 62 depots throughout the Highlands</p>
10.	<p>Scott Hay, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Scottish Wildfire Forum</p> <p>Scott Hay thanked ADMG for the opportunity to speak at the AGM. Mindful of the crossover between the work carried out in the deer sector and the function / role of the SFRS, it is crucial that relationships are built and that there is open communication.</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>SFRS are leading on work towards the creation and population of an Assets' Register. This will catalogue SFRS equipment but equally importantly, other equipment that may be managed by farmers and land managers who can be notified and would be willing to bring assets for use at incidents in partnership with SFRS.</p> <p>Central to managing wildfire incidents is wider partnership engagement and supporting Wildfire Groups. Local Senior Officers across Scotland should now have started to make contact with deer managers with a view to building a network of communication to identify areas of risk, draft fire plans and populate asset registers.</p> <p>The Scottish Wildfire Forum senior group invites all of the relevant agencies to collaborate on strategic action plans. Beyond the SFRS and other agencies, it is vital that relationships are built and maintained with land managers, who are the experts on local knowledge. It is therefore imperative to maintain a high level of partnership engagement to build up knowledge, and to expand the network of communication.</p> <p>Please see the ADMG website for a copy of Scott Hay's presentation by clicking on: Scott Hay - SFRS</p> <p>Or go to: http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2.-Wildfire-Presentation-ADMG-AGM-2016-copy.compressed.pdf</p>
	<p>The Chairman thanked SH for his presentation and reiterated that DMGs can help the SFRS and that there are no other organisations better placed to do so. DMGs provide almost total coverage of the Highlands. RC urged Chairs and Secretaries to make contact with SH to assist with providing local knowledge, contact details and information regarding assets that could be valuable to them. Again, this is a clear practical demonstration of how DMGs deliver the public interest.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Raymond Henderson Bidwells Head of Forestry, Board Member of Confor, Chair of the Mid Scotland Forest Industry Cluster Group</p> <p>RH commented that land management has had to adapt to increasingly complex concerns and to take into account the views of others. Single issue, or single objective management is generally no longer considered to be acceptable. The key to all modern management is understanding others' points of view which involves consultation, and compromise.</p> <p>RH reported that he had recently visited a SSSI site, an upland oakwood on the Cowal Peninsular in Argyll, which apparently is in unfavourable condition. The site survey had noted that red deer were present. Therefore, the answer, according to some of the agencies, was to impose a heavy deer cull. RH could see no regeneration of native woodland but this was certainly not down to the presence of red deer. RH commented that at times there seems to be a basic misunderstanding of what can and cannot be achieved through culling alone. RH remains convinced that in an extensive deer range where there are relatively small areas of high conservation interest, the answer to any overgrazing problem, if it exists, and if it is harming that conservation interest, is well-planned fencing, though some culling may also be required.</p> <p>RH commented that it is not only the conservation lobby that is applying pressure on deer managers. For example, there are grouse moor owners who have decided that to pursue their main objective they need to remove or exclude deer. Managers should ask whether their culls are actually sustainable for their size of estate, with their particular habitats and</p>

Minutes

**The Association of Deer Management Groups
Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016**



	<p>their particular deer carrying capacity. Can the habitat be improved to ensure it is suitable and attractive for deer? A big part of any problem resolution process has to be open discussion amongst interested parties and a recognition that compromises have to be made by everyone including single objective conservation bodies. The agencies may need to recognise, that compromise may require them to alter what the ideal position is. The key to this process has to be the DMG system and part of any habitat enhancement may just involve more woodland creation and management. Far from being a threat to red deer RH believes that forestry can be part of the long-term solution.</p> <p>Please see the ADMG website for a copy of Raymond Henderson's presentation by clicking on: Raymond Henderson - Presentation</p> <p>Or go to: http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/3.-RH-ADMG-AGM-26.2.16-final-copy.pdf</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Questions</p> <p>Ian McWatt was asked whether, as it would never be possible to completely eradicate the risk of E.coli O157, there should be increased onus on the consumer to cook meat properly.</p> <p>IM answered that it would be impossible to legislate for consumers' proper handling of venison but the FSS provides advice to consumers on their website. Similarly, it is impossible to deliver entirely sterile products. However, all involved must act with due diligence and demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable precautions. All involved need to up their game, and there are a number of initiatives that could be put in place, for example in the use of drag bags which are easily cleanable and can prevent cross-contamination. Much research needs to be done, but the industry could not withstand a major outbreak, or fatality.</p> <p>There was a second question as to whether research had established that the outbreak had arisen from deer or from an outside source?</p> <p>IM answered that 12 people from across the country had all consumed a similar range of products. Scientifically recognised epidemiological evidence was applied to establish the source of the outbreak, and the evidence was irrefutable that the outbreak could be traced back to venison in this particular case. E. coli O157 lives at the end of the intestinal tract. There is evidence that gut-shot animals are getting into the food chain. It would be impossible to confirm whether the source was stomach contents, cross-contamination or bad handling. The key is improved assurance and traceability.</p> <p>It was pointed out that this was the first outbreak following tens of thousands of carcasses having been through the food chain and, as confirmed by IM it is impossible to eradicate the risk, but the statistical risk is low. Hunter Declarations and SQAV tickets already contained signatures indicating where venison has come from and this traceability needs to follow throughout the process.</p> <p>IM pointed out that there had been one outbreak of a low-pathogen strain, but that the Government could not afford to wait until there was a further outbreak or a fatality before steps are taken to improve practice. Practices up until now have not taken into account the risk of E. coli O157 but this now must change.</p> <p>It was pointed out that supermarket burgers contained other animal products including pork fat.</p>

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



IM confirmed again that due to the range of products that were affected, he was confident that venison was the source.

It was also put to him that if the estimate of 10% prevalence of E-coli in the deer population alongside supershedding was accurate, there in fact would have been far more outbreaks, and E-coli can result from multiple sources.

IM responded that there was under-reporting of outbreaks, and that there needed to be a number of cases before tracing an outbreak back to a particular source

There was a further question as to whether any form of carcass swabbing or investigations had been carried out to demonstrate that E. coli O157 was present in 10% of the deer population?

Jacqui McElhiney, Head of Science Team at FSS, said that there was a lack of data for the prevalence of E. coli O157 in deer in Scotland. The 10% figure comes from sampling of deer faeces in the environment and was collated from a number of studies undertaken over some years. More research needs to be carried out on shedding and prevalence in the environment needs to be compared with other ruminants which are a key source of E. coli O157; also to look more closely at how much is getting into the food chain. There is not a legal requirement to swab for E. coli O157. Other indicator organisms are tested for, but not specifically E. coli O157.

JM was asked that data and reports be circulated to DMGs so that DMGs can understand the science.

John Morison (ADMG/SVP) took the opportunity to promote the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme. The Scheme was set up following the BSE epidemic, and there is an opportunity for many to join the SQWV Scheme. Ian McWatt had said that regulations were inevitable and that local authorities will become involved, but they have limited resources. However, if the deer sector was making improvements on their own initiative, this would be viewed positively. John Morison confirmed that we have assurance and traceability but only 70% of the venison throughput of the UK is in the Scheme, including less than 100 Estates, the Forestry Commission and only 3 processors. JM urged all to join the SQWV Scheme to improve the industry and urged processors to become more involved which would result in improved consumer confidence.

There was a repeated question as to whether it could be disputed that venison burgers were the source of the outbreak.

The Chairman emphasised that the outbreak had happened; the issue was now a focus of the FSS, and that the FSS has the power to close the deer industry down. Whilst an outbreak of E. coli O157 from venison in Scotland had not happened before, and it would be easy to say that it is a small risk, nonetheless if there is another outbreak, the industry would lose a major stream of income, and the issue could not be brushed aside. It must be taken seriously. Although all of the risks cannot be eradicated, what can be done is to mitigate them and show due diligence so that if something does go wrong, there is a system in place that shows how it went wrong. This situation has been thoroughly investigated and showed that the venison was not infected during processing, but that the source was wild deer. There is now a proven risk in venison and we are in control of the venison supply chain. The deer sector's engagement is critical.

Ian McWatt confirmed that the FSS is willing to assist the industry and work - collaboratively to provide safe working practices, however the onus is on the deer sector

Minutes

The Association of Deer Management Groups Annual General Meeting – 26th February 2016



	<p>and industry to provide a safe product for consumers and to protect the industry's reputation.</p> <p>David Allison commented that many in the room took a great pride in the carcasses they produce as do the food processors. He felt that the industry should accept constructive criticism and sharpen up where practices can be improved upon.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that Best Practice sets out how processes should be performed, but that this may need to be revisited. For example, gut-shot deer being used in the food chain. There may be processes that need to be added to / improved and the deer sector should be open to them.</p> <p>Ian McWatt commented that he had been involved with the recent horsemeat scandal. The immediate loss of confidence in the industry resulted in a drop of £800M in the value of Tesco shares in one day. Following the Elliott review into the integrity and assurance of food supply, the Scottish Food Crime Unit was created. Food crime, e.g. adulterated food or food that has been misrepresented, costs the UK around £1.2 billion per annum. As part of the Scottish Food Crime Unit, a "safe space" has been set up where poor practice can be reported. The food industry is only as strong as its weakest link and should improve and self-police, following the example of NZ and Australia, where there is a good culture of self-improvement. The industry acts for its self-interest and responds robustly to bad practice. An ex-detective chief inspector has been appointed to head up the Scottish Food Crime Unit and the safe space provides an opportunity to report rogue elements that can be investigated.</p> <p>A representative of Highland Game commented that venison production had been disadvantaged by the outbreak. Highland Game had taken precautionary measures, and these had helped the business going forward. Their good practice was also of benefit to the industry in Scotland which had withstood this recent scare but could not tolerate another outbreak.</p> <p>On a separate AOB matter it was reported that the police had raised an issue with deer numbers on roads in the North of Scotland which was a health and safety risk to the public. The estate pointed out to the police that there had also been a number of collisions involving sheep. Authorisation was given for out of season shooting and deer were being shot.</p> <p>Richard Cooke responded that the risk of deer on the road, especially in more remote areas, is difficult to eradicate but that the health and safety of the public was paramount. RC suggested that this could be raised with the Police Scotland Wildlife Section who deal with the realities of deer and their impact on public interests.</p>
	<p>There being no further questions or matters arising, the Chairman brought the meeting to a close with thanks for all for attending and in particular grateful thanks to the three speakers.</p>