



**ASSOCIATION OF DEER MANAGEMENT GROUPS**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie  
Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017: 10:30 to 13:00**

## MINUTES

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**In Attendance:**

Richard Cooke  
Finlay Clark  
James Adamson  
Col. Bewsher  
Lynda Campbell  
Alistair Gibson  
Bob McIntosh  
Dick Playfair  
Linzi Seivwright

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

Andrew Adamson  
James Allan  
Michael Alldridge  
David Allison  
Peter Allison  
Rod Andean  
Ewan Archer  
Alan Balfour  
Jean Balfour  
James Barrie  
Troels Bavnhøj  
Richard Barclay  
James Bewsher  
Edward Bewsher  
Simon Boulton  
Will Boyd-Wallis  
Scott Bremner  
Dave Brennan  
John Cameron  
Angus Cheape  
Tom Chetwynd  
Ian Christie

CKD Galbraith  
Bidwells  
Glenartney DMG & South Perthshire DMG  
Reay Forest / W Sutherland & NW Sutherland DMGs  
Corrour  
Bidwells  
Kinveachy  
Scourie Estate  
Scourie Estate  
Pitcastle and Glenlochry Estate  
Strathconon Estate  
Breadalbane DMG  
Mull DMG  
EPLSG  
Ardtornish  
CNPA  
Culachy Estate  
Lochailort  
Kingie  
Mull DMG  
East Sutherland DMG  
Glenshero

Julian Clarke	Atholl / West Grampian DMG
Sinclair Coghill	SNH
Crispian Cook	North Ross DMG
Jim Corbett	Mull DMG
Patience Corbett	Lochbuie / Mull DMG
Mike Cottam	CNPA / Cairngorms & Speyside DMG
Patrick Creasey	North Ross DMG
Richard Curzon	Tullich Estate
Fiona Dargie	Acoura
Andrew Dempster	Coignafearn
Chris Donald	SNH
Lord Dulverton	Eilean-Riach
James Duncan Millar	Remony / South Perthshire DMG
George Eveleigh	Mid West DMG
Roddie Feilden	Ardverikie
Stephen Fox	East Loch Shiel / Moidart DMGs
P Fraser	SGA
Willie Fraser	Affric & Kintail DMG
Stephen Gibbs	Arran DMG
Martin Girvan	Glenmoriston DMG
Kenny Graham	Coignafearn
Sir Patrick Grant	Glen Dessary and Knoydart
Suzy Grant	Balavil Estate
Edward Greenhalgh	Glenshero
David Greer	Seafield & Strathspey
Marcella Hamilton	CKD Galbraith
Nicolle Hamilton	BASC
John Hay	Mullardoch
Bruce Hendry	Glenshero
Colin Hendry	Strathconon
Jamie Hendry	Killiechonate
Sarah Holman	Shielbridge
Romy Jackson	East Loch Ericht DMG
Sean Jackson	Acoura
Colin Johnston	Dunira Forest
William Kelly	Ardnamurchan Estate
Roddy Legge	Letterewe
Alex MacDonald	Achnacarry Sporting
Barbara MacDonald	Letterewe
Douglas MacDonald	Shielbridge Estate
Graeme Macdonald	Alvie Estate
Sean MacDonald	New Kelso SWRDMG
Richard MacGregor	Corrievarkie
Andrew MacKay	Dalnessie
Pete MacLaren	Inverailort
Duncan MacLean	Kinlochmoidart Estate
Robin Maclean	Ardgour
Allan MacLeod	Corroul
Lea MacNally	Glen Quoich
Seamus MacNally	Gairloch Conservation Unit
Angus MacPherson	Craig Dhu & Belial

Vincent Mason  
Drew McFarlane-Slack  
Colin McClean  
Iain McMyn  
John Morison  
Mark Nicolson  
Christian Nissen  
David Olds  
Andrew Oliver  
Mark Pattinson  
Helen Polley  
Calum Proctor  
Mary Reid  
Alastair Riddell  
Gordon Robertson  
Niall Robertson  
Glyn Robson  
Ewan Ross  
Niall Rowantree  
Luke Smith  
Ron Smith  
Frank Spencer-Nairn  
Callum Stewart  
Deirdre Stewart  
Ian Stewart  
Jamie Stewart  
Rory Stormont Darling  
Iain Sutherland  
Graeme Taylor  
Susanna Thomson  
Ian Thornber  
Tom Turnbull  
Richard Vernon  
Sue Walker  
Thomas Watson  
Rob Whitson  
Jonathan Whitehead  
Michael Wigan

Bradley Bournier  
Peter Keyser  
Dietrich Pannwitz  
Cara Richardson  
Hugh Rose  
Sam Thompson  
Sandy Walker

**Apologies:**

John Bruce  
Andrew Gordon  
George Macdonald  
Bruce Sewell

Balavil Estate  
MDMG / SLE  
Glen Tanar  
SSE  
SQWV  
East Grampian DMG / Mar  
Highland Game  
UHI  
Letterewe  
SWRDMG  
Bidwells  
Black Mount Estate  
West Sutherland DMG  
North Chesthill Estate  
Assynt Foundation  
Dunalastair Estate  
Lochluichart Estate  
Achnacarry Estate  
West Highland Hunting  
Strathconon Estate  
Dunira Forest  
Glen Strathfarrar DMG  
Strathconon Estate  
East Grampian DMG  
Braeroy  
Lochluichart  
Balvarran / West Grampian DMG  
Alvie Estate  
SNH  
Black Mount DMG  
Morvern DMG  
Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG  
Glendoe  
SNH  
Attadale Estate  
Badanloch  
SQWV / Acoura  
Borrobol

Professional Sporting Solutions  
Associate Member  
Sylvestrus Ltd  
Associate Member / International Big Game Hunting Ltd  
Associate Member  
Associate Member / Ardale Deer Management  
Associate Member

Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee  
Executive Committee

Pieter Bakker  
 Colin Buchan  
 Charles Butter  
 Mark de Ferranti  
 Sandra de Ferranti  
 Philip Dean  
 Paul Dorrian  
 John Forbes-Leith  
 David Gillies  
 Duncan Gordon  
 Timothy Laing  
 Willie Lamont  
 Mark Lazzeri  
 Ian Leith  
 David Lowes  
 Mike Luti  
 Allan Macdiarmid  
 Archie MacLellan  
 Ewen Macpherson  
 Joanna Macpherson  
 Andrew McKelvey  
 Malcolm McPhail  
 Jane Mitchell  
 Gillian Pattinson  
 Gavin Strathdee  
 George Vestey  
 George Woods  
 Iain Wotherspoon

North West Sutherland DMG  
 Garth  
 Strathtay DMG  
 Meoble Estate  
 Meoble Estate  
 Corroul  
 Glenfinnan  
 Dunachton Estate  
 Islay DMG  
 Lude  
 Mull DMG  
 Sleat DMG  
 Islay DMG  
 Glenfinnan  
 Glenfalloch  
 Balquhiddy DMG  
 Kiaer Estates  
 South West Ross DMG  
 Lochalsh DMG  
 Lochalsh DMG  
 Knockie Estate  
 Harris & Lewis DMG  
 Glenfinnan  
 South West Ross DMG  
 Strathdee Properties Ltd  
 West Sutherland DMG  
 NW Sutherland DMG  
 Glenlyon Estate

Andrew Crompton  
 William Galbraith  
 Martin Johnson  
 Mrs Lee Lander  
 Joe Mallinson  
 Col. Nicholas  
 Gilmour Strang

Associate Member  
 Associate Member  
 Associate Member  
 Associate Member  
 Associate Member  
 Associate Member  
 Associate Member

Llwyd Humphries  
 George Pirie

1.	<p><b>Apologies</b>          Recorded above.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes of AGM on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016</b>          Richard Curzon requested that the spelling of “Tullich” Estate be corrected. There were no further amendments and the Minutes were proposed and seconded as a true record of the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Chairman’s Report</b>          Richard Cooke, opened the meeting and welcomed all present, providing a summary of key events before delivering his report on ADMG activities since the 2016 AGM. In particular, the publication of the SNH Report following reassessments of DMGs in Spring 2016 had acknowledged progress. However, the Environment Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLR) were yet to be publish their findings following their review and the voluntary principle remains under scrutiny.</p>	

	<p>The Chairman's Report is available to view at: <a href="http://www.deer-management.co.uk/meetings/">http://www.deer-management.co.uk/meetings/</a></p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>The Chairman was asked about historic count data used in the SNH Report. RMJC commented that differences in count methodology and technological advances had been highlighted to the ECCLR Committee as a source of inconsistencies in the data.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Financial Report</b></p> <p>Finlay Clark (FCC), ADMG Secretary thanked everyone who played an active role and devoted time to support DMGs and provide information to ADMG, without which the ADMG could not function.</p> <p>FCC referred to the audited accounts of the ADMG to the year ending 30 June 2016. Income from subscriptions had increased to £102,482 as a result of an increase in numbers of deer culled; a wider reporting of other species, and a larger membership with a number of new DMGs. Income included PACEC expenses recovered which related to SGA and LDNS contributions. Expenditure included: Project Officer costs, mostly relating to Linzi Seivwright who provides invaluable technical and professional support to ADMG; PACEC; and "Deer Group expenses" which represented recovery of final payments made to FES who block funded ADMG centrally up until 2016. This should be the last adjustment payment to FES for these recoveries.</p> <p>Funds held at the end of June 2016 was £84,534 compared with £69,673 in 2015. The Secretary was pleased to report that the ADMG was in good health financially.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>FCC was asked about website costs which were significantly higher than previous years. FCC responded that this was due to investment in the ADMG's website and ADMG paying for the initial 12 months of website hosting for DMG webpages.</p> <p>The audited accounts were proposed by Lynda Campbell and seconded by Patrick Creasey.</p> <p><b>Management Accounts to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017</b></p> <p>Budgeted income to the end of the financial year 2017 was £116,544 and the current balance was £96,711 of which £35,100 related to project donations. FCC reiterated the Chairman's thanks to all those who had made generous donations to the fund.</p> <p>Membership subscriptions were running slightly behind budget which was a timing issue. FCC asked that all submit their cull return to Helen Polley, and endeavour to make subscription payments as soon as possible. In terms of expenses there was no significant variance against budget. The Association was largely on target to meet the budget to the end of the financial year and achieve a balance close to £4,000 at year end.</p> <p>FCC confirmed that subscription levels had been at their current level since 2011 although historically they had been reviewed on a tri-annual basis. The Chairman had written to DMG Chairs and Secretaries proposing that subscriptions be increased to £4 per stag, £2 for hinds and £1 for other species. Fifty percent of the resulting uplift in subscription income would be directed to the Project Fund to ensure that the DMG could deliver on recommendations made by the ECCLR Committee. The remaining fifty percent would be used to employ the best people available to act in DMGs' best interests and assist with representation.</p>	

	<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>FCC was asked about the mechanism of FES payments to ADMG. FCC confirmed that FES now report culls and pay directly to DMGs rather than ADMG.</p> <p>FCC was asked if the proposed details for use of the Project Fund in 2017 to 2018 could be circulated in advance. FCC confirmed that it would be possible to provide further details once ECCLR Committee had published their recommendations and it had been decided how best to target resources.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Chairman and Executive Committee Elections</b></p> <p>James Duncan Millar (JDM), in the absence of the vice-chairman, expressed thanks to Richard Cooke (RMJC) for his work particularly over the last two years in which RMJC has dealt with the intractable problems of the SNH Report, demands of the ECCLR Committee and other reviews. JDM commended RMJC's tireless work on behalf of the ADMG and commented on his leadership of a very effective Executive Committee. The Chairman had already outlined his prospectus for ongoing work of the ADMG (see Chairman's Report in 3. above). JDM asked whether any others would wish to be considered for the position.</p> <p>With no new nominations, JDM proposed that RMJC continue as ADMG Chairman for the next two years. This was seconded by Andrew Gordon and RMJC was duly re-elected.</p> <p><b>Regional Committee Representatives</b></p> <p>Seven Regional Representatives sit on the Executive Committee, with a two year rotation. Those appointed two years ago were:</p> <p><b>Area 1</b> North Highland: David Allison, Area Representative, Brian Lyall, Deputy;</p> <p><b>Area 3</b> Central Highlands: James Adamson (Area Rep) and Drew McFarlane Slack (Deputy); and</p> <p><b>Area 5</b> West Highlands: Lynda Campbell (Area Rep) – Alistair Gibson (Deputy).</p> <p>All had agreed to stand again and RMJC proposed that they be re-elected en-bloc in the absence of new nominations. This was seconded by Sir Patrick Grant.</p> <p>Areas re-elected last year (and for re-election in 2018) were:</p> <p>Area 2 Randal Wilson (Area Rep), Willie Fraser (Deputy);</p> <p>Area 4 Colin McClean (Area Rep), Julian Clark (Deputy);</p> <p>Area 6: Tom Turnbull (Area Rep), Victor Clements (Deputy); and</p> <p>Area 8: David Gillies (Area Rep); with Deputy position currently vacant</p> <p>RMJC confirmed that Frank Spencer Nairn (FSN) now represented ADMG on the National Access Forum. FSN has much experience with access issues and in particular, had helped make "Heading for the Scottish Hills" available on-line. The Chair thanked FSN and commented that ADMG would be well represented. FSN would also be co-opted as a Specialist member of Executive Committee.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Committees</b></p> <p>See Chairman's Report, item 3. above.</p> <p><b>Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP)</b></p> <p>The Chairman thanked Stephen Gibbs, for his long-association with and work for the SVP. RMJC then welcomed Col. Bewsher, who had recently been elected Chairman</p>	

	<p>to speak about the work of the SVP and Dick Playfair who would outline current projects and involvement with the deer sector.</p> <p>Col. Bewsher and Dick Playfair's presentation on the work of the SVP can be viewed at: <a href="http://www.deer-management.co.uk/meetings/">http://www.deer-management.co.uk/meetings/</a></p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>DP was asked about the ratio of farmed to wild venison in Scotland. DP confirmed that farmed venison represented 5% but that the SVP were working to promote farmed venison.</p> <p>It was noted that the venison market had historically been insecure and, in light of recent losses through the liquidation of Yorkshire Game, it was asked whether SVP or ADMG could carry out credit checks on Game Dealers.</p> <p>DP replied that SVP and ADMG would not be able to warrant game dealers' viability but that all producers should carry out due diligence into the position of firms that they intend to do business with. RMJC noted that this was a great concern for producers, but that in general, venison prices and dealers had been relatively more stable over recent years than historically</p> <p>With regard to venison prices, Jonathan Whitehead (SQWV) confirmed that the venison market continued to be strong and that it was the cost of production that impacted on current prices. The liquidation of Yorkshire Game was not good for the venison business. Prices had remained static, but dealers needed to strike a balance between paying producers higher prices for venison, production costs and sale prices.</p> <p><b>DMG Websites</b></p> <p>DP confirmed that the DMG websites had been a huge success story given the number of organisations involved and the tight deadline dictated by the SNH Report. There were 31 complete stand-alone websites, either accessed through the ADMG website or who have their own URLs. The ADMG website gave access to a further 4 DMG DMPs and a number of sub-groups had their own DMPs available on-line. In total, the public can now access 38 DMPs on-line and contact details, etc, were available for the majority of DMGs.</p> <p>There were 2 DMGs that DP would liaise with to progress their websites and a further 5 new DMGs that were not yet in a position to complete a website with DMPs. DP thanked all involved and welcomed enquiries or requests for assistance.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>It was noted that there was little on the ADMG website that visually showed DMGs' progress. DP acknowledged that this was a good point, and confirmed that DMGs could edit their websites to better represent their progress. If any DMGs needed help with uploading information or editing, DP would be happy to help.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>SNH Update</b></p> <p>The Chairman introduced Sue Walker (SW), Vice-chair of SNH who was shortly to take over from Ian Ross as interim Chair.</p> <p>SW welcomed the opportunity to attend the AGM to emphasise the value SNH placed on continuing collaboration and to acknowledge the work of the ADMG in promoting effective planning and collaboration. SW confirmed that SNH wanted to</p>	



move forward collectively with ADMG from the Review to improve deer management across Scotland including discussions surrounding how to deploy SNH staff, funding and legislative powers. The ECCLR Report was awaited as well as the Cabinet Secretary's response, but there would need to be an on-going commitment and expectation of DMGs to demonstrate deer management planning, and also the delivery of DMPs. Some DMPs required further development to better reflect public interest.

SW commented that the Report and Committee's deliberations had shifted the focus from upland open-hill red deer to recognise wider issues concerning different deer species across the country. SW felt the Report had acknowledged deer as being a huge asset to Scotland however the picture was mixed, with deer having an adverse impact on natural heritage in some parts of Scotland. SW stated that the Report was not a critique of the deer industry. Many DMGs were doing the right thing but there were areas of the deer sector that were not engaged or progressing.

SW acknowledged the discussion surrounding evidence put forward to the Committee but SNH had concluded that there was nothing substantially that would alter the evidence considered and the conclusion which reported a mixed picture was valid. The Report was required to meet a time-scale imposed by the previous RACCE Committee and then Minister. SW also acknowledged concerns that the Review focused on natural heritage. However, this had been the primary focus of the brief and SNH had tried also to include socio-economic issues.

SNH's support for DMGs going forward will evolve in response to the Committee's conclusions and the Cabinet Secretary's response but SW envisaged SNH's role going forward in 3 ways:

1. Provide support to established and more effective DMGs in monitoring progress and delivery of DMPs, particularly in areas where there were key environment elements of public interest. Statutory and regulatory powers will be utilised to support DMGs to ensure all their members are engaged with DMP reviews and management. SNH will support DMGs in using current incentives including SRDP, etc;
2. Support developing DMGs and poorly performing DMGs through collaboration but by using legislative powers where necessary;
3. Address areas where there are no collaborative arrangements in place. SNH will work with key partners to decide what collaboration or action would be appropriate and how collectively the public interest can be addressed;

SW confirmed that Scottish Government had withdrawn the SRDP Scheme due to problems with compliance with EU audit processes. SNH has some funds in lieu of the Scheme. DMGs who had successfully applied for ECAF would be considered first and contacted shortly by SNH. Further funding would be available to assist DMGs with DMP priorities and SNH will liaise with ADMG following the ECCLR's Report and recommendations.

SW confirmed that SNH had only been able to use the interim findings of the JHI's work on deer trends in the Review due to timing of the Report. JHI's work would be concluded shortly and the information should be published in May. It will be made widely available for discussion.

SW confirmed two events arranged to take place at Battleby. The first on deer management planning on 26<sup>th</sup> April and the second on public bodies and lowland deer management on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Information would be available on the SNH website.



	<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>SW was asked about SNH support for helicopter counts, DMG members had invested money in counts and DMGs were keen to help with providing staff time / assistance but SNH’s involvement appeared disjointed. DMGs were being forced to make cull decisions based on their own expertise rather than confirmed data.</p> <p>SW confirmed that the SNH budget was limited and priority was focussed on areas where deer numbers were particularly needed to apply cull targets to protect the public interest. Graeme Taylor of SNH could not comment on specifics of the two cases raised, but acknowledged the need for helicopter counts and confirmed that SNH were keen to support DMGs. Despite funding and weather conditions, SNH had completed 6 of 7 planned helicopter counts and were fully committed to continue to support helicopter counts.</p> <p>SW was asked about SNH funding from Scottish Government. SW confirmed that SNH’s funding had decreased over the previous 7 years and this was likely to continue. SNH was being forced to prioritise, but this provided an opportunity for SNH to collaborate with stakeholders to discuss priorities for SNH’s Corporate Plan for 2018 to 2032. Deer will be a priority but the SNH’s budget is limited and they would be looking to ADMG to inform them of priorities.</p>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b></p> <p><b>Andrew McBride (AM): Peatland restoration as a contribution to the Scottish Government climate change agenda</b></p> <p>The Chairman introduced AM who manages the Peatland Action Programme for SNH. RMJC confirmed that peatland restoration was a way of demonstrating public interest and action on environmental issues and that Government funding was available for those who participated.</p> <p>AM explained that the Peatland Restoration Project began in 2012 and was an investment priority for Scottish Government who have allocated an additional £8M to meet their target to restore 250,000ha of peatlands across Scotland before 2032. Peatlands impacted on water quality and quantity, biodiversity, etc, but the key driver for Scottish Government was to meet climate change targets to prevent further erosion and to reduce carbon emissions. Restoration of peatlands, woodlands and planting can impact carbon reduction relatively quickly. The Project aimed to take a balanced approach, accommodating multiple uses such as woodland, deer management, communities, landscape and economy. The Project had initially benefitted land managed by NGOs, but increasing numbers of private landowners were becoming involved.</p> <p>AM confirmed that the Project had £8M to allocate over the next financial year and they were very keen to assist with restoration projects. The application process which AM confirmed was straightforward, would open again in April. The Project adopted a flexible approach in working with landowners on the ground as each area had unique considerations. AM invited all interested parties to visit the website at: <a href="https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/taking-action/carbon-management/restoring-scotlands-peatlands/peatland-action-201718">https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/taking-action/carbon-management/restoring-scotlands-peatlands/peatland-action-201718</a></p> <p>Or for enquiries Peatland Action can be contacted at: <a href="mailto:Peatlandaction@snh.gov.uk">Peatlandaction@snh.gov.uk</a></p>	

**Linzi Seivwright (LS): Habitat impacts or deer numbers – why are we still having this argument?**

LS provided an outline of the background of deer cull data, and the need for a shift in focus to habitat monitoring and the effects of deer impact, rather than trying to establish a “magic” or ideal number for population density. LS also reinforced the need for adaptive management and the role that robust information and evidence plays in delivering DMPs.

LS expressed disappointment that the SNH Review and much of the evidence sessions for the ECCLR Committee had focussed on deer numbers. However, the wider public also have concerns surrounding deer numbers, and LS referred to recent video footage taken by a member of the Scottish Mountaineering Trust of a large deer herd near Glenshee. This was how deer numbers were perceived by many – as an epidemic. LS noted that the footage may have been taken out of context, and the overall density across the DMG may be low. LS advised that deer managers should not become complacent as deer movements and impacts change, but numbers should be considered in context.

LS spoke of the focus on deer numbers as being a retrograde step. It is impossible to accurately count the number of deer across Scotland at one time, rather the focus should be on localised impact and local experiences of deer management. DMPs are now in place but numbers of deer and movements change and DMPs should be adaptive.

Counts remain important to provide snapshots of the deer population, but more importantly to highlight trends in recruitment rates. It is also vital to consider deer densities, where they are concentrated and where they move to. The picture is not uniform across DMGs. Adaptive management is key. DMGs need to monitor and use the information in decision making, particularly when setting cull targets. Population modelling is also an important tool in implementing and developing DMPs. It is critical that habitat monitoring is an inherent part of DMPs. Data is useful to DMGs to indicate areas where deer management should be targeted.

Although the outcome of the ECCLR Review is awaited, LS highlighted the need to make progress with implementing DMPs.

LS's Power Point slides can be viewed at: at: <http://www.deer-management.co.uk/meetings/>

**James Adamson: Delivering a Deer Management Plan**

JA had been a DMG Secretary for 20 years and had been involved in writing 3 DMPs for the East Loch Ericht DMG. The most recent DMP was completed in 2016, and set objectives for 5 years in detail and the following 5 years in long-term planning terms. Over the past 12 months, various circumstances had impacted on implementing the plan, including lack of mature stags which had resulted in a decision to drop the deer cull target by 15%. There were fewer hinds in 2016 resulting in 39% less being culled than the set target. Weights were down, and number of pregnancies increased. Many of the assumptions written into the DMP in 2016 already appeared unrealistic. This demonstrated to JA that on the ground circumstances could win out over DMP objectives.

The DMG had priorities aside from deer management, as custodians of the land they manage including forestry. JA highlighted four areas that had been challenging: population density over the designated site in relation to the wider area; out of season authorisations and night shooting; change in management objectives (deer v

	<p>grouse and heather regeneration); and deer counting. The DMG had 26 sets of count data spanning the last 40 years. There had been a further count the day before the AGM, and the population was estimated between 4,000 and 4,500 deer. According to the DMP, the population should be nearer 4,900 deer. Despite the best efforts of the DMG, numbers are an estimate although DMPs are based on numbers and trends. Nonetheless, the DMG had established that there was a downward trajectory in numbers and that there were far more hinds than stags. Objectives set in the DMP will need to be adjusted to reflect conditions on the ground.</p> <p>The DMG will continue to monitor and review and will need to adapt the DMP, focusing on the overall objective to keep the land in favourable condition and to improve the habitat over the next ten years.</p> <p>RMJC thanked JA for his presentation and acknowledged the challenges faced by DMGs, even those diligently following instructions and endeavouring to deliver DMPs.</p>	
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><b>Peatland Restoration</b> Andy McBride was asked whether, considering use of fossil fuels, focus should be placed on planting additional trees rather than restoring peatland.</p> <p>AM confirmed there was not an “either / or” remedy. Forestry accumulated carbon more quickly than peatland, but the target was long-term and both approaches contributed to slowing climate change. Reducing use of fossil fuels through education and advances in technology was also an aim that would take time.</p> <p>AM was asked whether it was necessary to remove sheep from restored peatland areas. AM confirmed that peatland restoration did not preclude grazing. In fact conditions were improved for livestock . However excessive stock or deer numbers could cause damage and it is for deer managers to ensure that this does not happen to ensure that the investment would be secure.</p> <p><b>Public Interest</b></p> <p>It was noted that public interest may have different meanings to land managers, and there was concern that DMGs were assessed by different SNH officers subjectively, rather than against set criteria. It was asked whether SNH would provide a matrix of criteria by which public interest was measured.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that the assessment process had changed from a tool intended to assist DMGs to a means of judging DMGs. RMJC confirmed that the approach could be improved. For example, if there were no forest areas in a DMG area, this attracted an automatic red mark, whereas this should be left blank.</p> <p>RMJC confirmed that there would be further consultation with SNH before the next reassessment. Criteria would need to be refined to test how DMPs were being implemented and delivering public interest.</p> <p>Chris Donald (SNH) confirmed that the criteria had been made available prior to both assessments and suggested that queries be raised with the DMG’s Chair or Secretary. CD confirmed that the next round of reassessments would take place in 2018 and time was of the essence to demonstrate delivery of objectives set out in DMPs.</p>	

**11. AOB**

RMJC confirmed the importance placed on forestry expansion plans by Scottish Government. There had been a recent announcement by FCS (Briefing Note 9) of an increase in grants within the Highland region. Grants had been increased to £3,600 per Ha for planting of native Scots Pine; £2,790 per Ha for Birch; £3,600 per Ha for native broadleaves; and £1,170 per Ha for native low density broadleaves. There was a capital grant for deer fencing of £9 per metre. Scottish Government's target of 10,000 Ha per annum had been achieved for the first time in 2016 and the target was to increase to 15,000 Ha per annum from 2024/25. RMJC pointed out that some land for woodland expansion will be expected to come from DMG areas and this should be considered in DMPs, although such work is planned and executed by landholders not the DMGs to which they belong. In view of the grants available expansion projects should be achievable without too much net cost while contributing to DMPs and the public interest.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked the speakers for their presentations and all present for attending the meeting before closing the meeting.

DRAFT