

ADMG Zoom Meeting 20 January 2021

Richard Cooke, Chairman, ADMG

Just by way of introduction this meeting is intended to update on the progress of the cull and Donald Fraser will report on that from the NatureScot perspective. We would look for some feedback on any difficulties the renewed lockdown situation may be causing.

Donald will also tell us about the NatureScot helicopter deer count programme for this year. We also have a late addition, Jamie Hammond of NatureScot will update us on the work on alternative deer count method possibilities, a consultancy project by CivTech.

Then Dick Playfair will bring us up to date on the venison market situation which is of course heavily affected by Covid anyway but is now additionally constrained by the second lockdown situation which could affect the remainder of the hind season.

Some of you attended our last Zoom meeting on 18 November. This was our second attempt at a large virtual meeting, attended by 101 members in total, and we thought it would be helpful to put round a survey afterwards as to how useful and user-friendly attendees found it. We were pleased to receive 35 responses and to note that the general response was positive and favourable. I do not want to take time to go through the survey in detail just now, but we will put it on the website for anyone who may be interested to access.

I would just draw out one particular aspect. There was a stated preference for a mix of actual and virtual meetings in the future, once the present Covid situation has receded. Certainly, the high level of attendance, rather more than we would normally expect to come to our regional meetings in Inverness and Perth, does suggest that the shorter time required and the lack of necessity to travel long distances allows more people to join us, people we would not normally expect to see. On the other hand, of course, there is no substitute for an actual meeting where we can have normal audience participation in Q and A and a round-the-room of DMG reports. Our intention therefore would be to take up this helpful suggestion and, when relative normality resumes, to run a mixed programme of actual and virtual meetings which hopefully will increase ADMG's accessibility to those not normally able to attend physically.

Having said all the above, we are taking the view that, like last year, we will not be able to organise a physical AGM at the usual time of late February/early March, but we will hope to do so in the early summer, date to be advised in due course. We will however have a full Zoom meeting at about normal AGM time, now in the diary for 3 March. The agenda and sign on details will be circulated in due course. At that meeting we will go beyond the mechanics of culls and counts and Covid to be covered today, but will also cover the broader issues such as the Deer Sector review, climate change agenda implications, forthcoming Scottish elections etc.

One other topic briefly and I have mentioned this before. Beware of social media. Very useful when used wisely to share fine photography but liable to

misrepresentation when not. There are many things we do, and do well, which do not necessarily look good to those unfamiliar with our world. The everyday sight of dead deer is commonplace to us but before sharing an image of an Argo full of hinds, or even a fine grassed stag, over the world wide web it is as well to think how this appears to others, particularly those with an axe to grind.

As at previous meetings we will welcome comments and questions as the forthcoming presentations progress. With the number involved we can't easily bring you in to ask a questions verbally as you are all on mute. However, we will take questions through the "chat" function on your screens. So please submit comments and questions during the coming presentations and in the question session at the end of the meeting Tom Turnbull will attempt to pick from these and direct them to the speakers as appropriate.

Before handing over to Donald can I mention two recent sad losses to the deer sector. Firstly, Robin Fleming of Black Mount who died last year and, ten days ago, Patrick Gordon-Duff-Pennington. Both notable figures and great supporters of deer and those associated with them. Patrick in particular was a giant of his time – Chairman of the RDC before it became DCS following the 1996 Deer Act, member of the first ADMG Committee, later Chairman of the BDS, SLF and a friend of every farmer, crofter and countryman in Scotland and the North of England.