

# NORTH WEST SUTHERLAND DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Note of Annual General Meeting held in Lairg Community Centre

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016

## Present:

George Woods (GW) – Chairman & Merkland

Pieter Bakker (PB) – Altnaharra & Vice-Chair

Annette Parrott (AP) – West Shinness

David Allison (DA) – Reay Forest

Derick Macaskill (DM) – FCS

Peter Voy (PV) - Sutherland Estates

Roddy Watt (RW) – Merkland

Thomas MacDonell (TM) – Wildland Ltd

Phil Ratcliffe (PR) – Wildland Ltd

Heather Gow (HG) - Strathmore

Jock Gow (JG) - Strathmore

Craig Rigby (CR) – Syre/North Loch Naver

Andrew Marsham (AM) – Rispond & Polla

Stephen March – Gobernuischa

Hugo Van Vredenburgh – Gobernuischa

Georgiana Woods - Merkland

## In attendance:

Holly Deary (HD) - SNH

Jessica Sandison (JS)- Secretary

Valerie Wilson (VW) – SNH

Victor Clements (VC) – DM Plan Author

## Apologies:

David Elliot - Rhigolter

Ross Peters - Achnabourin

Sebastian Green – Syre/North Lochnaver Estate

Duncan Shaw (DS) – Gualin Estate

Iain Robertson – MoD Cape Wrath

Don O'Driscoll – Sandwood (John Muir Trust)

David Campbell - Poole

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Richard Osborne – Rhiconich Estate

Iain Thompson, Rhigolter

## **1. Welcome**

Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM. Apologies were noted as shown above.

## **2. Previous Minutes**

The Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed, and were proposed by GW, seconded by Group.

## **3. Matters arising**

Matters arising were invited. DS emailed complaint GW read out email, and discussed with Group, they needed requirements (i.e. longer notice 5days + to sec or chair & more specific info/evidence)

## **4. DMG Finances**

VC provided a brief overview of the status of accounts and explained the income and expenditure of accounts (hand outs where given). Financial year will now start from 1<sup>st</sup> April/ 31<sup>st</sup> March. Accounts approved by group. Subscription to ADMG is over a 5 year period, future outgoings may be more than income, therefore VC recommends a review of subscription prices in the future.

Account statements/overviews were handed out, which showed an account balance of £5,778.40 at present, however invoices due shortly are Secretary Costs & Lairg village hall hire.

## **5. 2015 – 16 Season**

Syre lacked deer. Reay forest saw a noticeable turnaround, extremely healthy, hinds all in calf or with calf. Gober struggled for mature stags, and struggled to reach cull numbers for stags and hinds. Strathmore struggled for mature stags and ended up shooting young, deer were extremely wild, count was down, usually high stag count in winter but extremely low this winter passed. Hope did not achieve their hind target

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but was achieved on Loyal and Kinloch. Altnaharra achieved cull, shortage of middle aged and mature stags. Really good season for Merkland.

## 6. Deer Management Plan update (VC)

VC led discussion of DMP and will provide minutes for, however here are some notes from the Secretary:

VC asked that all members notify the secretary of any changes required via email, without delay, and that they review their details at every meeting.

GW would like it to be noted that if any member of the deer group decides to withdraw from a previously agreed upon deer count, could they be so kind as to inform the group, so as not to affect the obtained results. GW explained that those who can do a helicopter count please do, and for group members who are unable, don't worry, a foot count will suffice.

Issue of calves been bigger/healthier compared to last year was raised by RW, therefore calf counts are likely to be not as accurate due to it being more difficult to set them apart from the herd.

DA suggests that all group members should start budgeting for a helicopter count. SNH has a helicopter deer count for NWS schedule for 2018, HD explains maybe half will be paid by SNH however recommends discussing a group budget/system to be put in place to allow for future helicopter counts. GW mentions that this may not be possible for all members of the group, so should be discussed further. PV expresses that foot counts can be relied on and that the money that would be used for a helicopter count should be used for habitat management. HD emphasised the importance of having reliable count data which members had confidence in as the basis for population management. VC asks what/how deer counting will be done for the next 2 years until the SNH helicopter count. VC asks for group members to have a clear idea of what they will do in order to count deer for the next 2 years. TM informs group that Wildland Ltd will perform a helicopter count in August due to the foot count conducted in spring being unreliable in their own view.

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**ACTION 1.1:** Review of secretary wage if group activity is increased (i.e. ECAF funding application), or identify a member of the group who will voluntarily complete the needed work for said increased activity

## 7. SNH Comment

VW informs group of the results from their study of a site condition herbivore impact assessment on Foinhaven SSSI. 6 features monitored, 5 are unfavourable. An email has been sent out of the report previous to meeting; copies are available for anyone if required. VC recommends second meeting, VW asked for it to be before stag season and hopes for Gober, Reay Forest, Rhiconich Estate, Gulan, Rhigolter Farms, Polla, and Eriboll to attend said meeting.

NOTE: Guests from North America and Norway area are a possible risk for carrying CWD disease to NWS. Will hopefully have further information on steps to be taken to prevent spread of disease to UK available on the ADMG/NWSDMG website.

## 8. AOCB

GW thanked Pieter and Victor for their contributions to the board.

Don't forget about ECAF, four deer managements groups have applied and VC will update the group with the information on how those groups proceed with ECAF.

Hopefully get feedback by June to explain if process works or not.

GW thanked Pieter for all the work he's done for the group.

PB mentioned that Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) are currently carrying out a project entitled: **Meeting the challenge of wild deer research to support delivery of sustainable deer management in Scotland**. And that he will attend the meeting in Ullapool on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, on behalf of the group, DA will also be in attendance, and suggested if anyone else felt like attending to please get in touch.

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**NOTE:** A big Thank You to Annette Parrot for providing the tea and coffee, as well as a delicious lunch spread. A donation has been made to Lairg Hall on behalf of the NWSDMG to show our appreciation of Annette's hospitality.

## **9. Date of next Meeting**

Date set for 2pm on Wed 26 October in Lairg Community Centre

CLOSE 16:18