

NORTH WEST SUTHERLAND DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

LAIRG COMMUNITY CENTRE
Wednesday, 7 November 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Pieter Bakker (PB)	<i>Vice-Chair – Altnaharra</i>	Thomas MacDonell (TM)	<i>Wildland Ltd</i>
Annette Parrott (AP)	<i>West Shinness</i>	David Allison (DA)	<i>Reay Forest</i>
Sophie Clark (SC)	<i>RISM – Gualin</i>	Duncan Shaw (DS)	<i>Gualin</i>
Roddy Watt (RW)	<i>Merkland</i>	Derick Sutherland (DS)	<i>Shinness</i>
Iain Robertson (IR)	<i>(MOD/D10)</i>	Richard Osborne (RO)	<i>Rhiconich</i>
John Osborne (JO)	<i>Rhiconich</i>	Stephen March (SM)	<i>Gobernuisgach</i>

In Attendance:

Tom Chetwynd (TC)	<i>Chair – ADMG</i>	Kirsty MacLeod (KM)	<i>Secretary</i>
Victor Clements (VC)	<i>DMP Author</i>	Valerie Wilson (VW)	<i>SNH</i>
Graham Wild (GW)	<i>Kinlochbervie C. Council</i>		

1. Chairman's Welcome

TC introduced himself as the new Chair of the group, following the Steering Group Meeting on 16th October when George Woods stood down as Chairman, and conveyed a note of thanks to George in his absence for all he did for the DMG whilst juggling with considerable professional commitments in the South. TC will act as Interim Chair for a period of 12 months, with a suitable Chair to be identified to take the group forward. There is already one nomination for that position [*Drew MacFarlane Slack*] and members were encouraged to consider who they would like to take that position on. It was proposed that an election would be undertaken at the DMG meeting in autumn 2019, if not before, and that the new Chair will take on the role with immediate effect following appointment. PB will be standing down as Vice Chair over the same period, and a replacement will need to be identified and nominated for that position also. Pieter has done a great job at a local level so it will be up to the group as a whole to decide on who should take them forward with effect from autumn 2019.

TC also suggested to the group that the Secretary takes on a more executive role in the running of the DMG and this can be supported by ADMG if required. The importance of the data that KM is collecting on behalf of the group cannot be underestimated, particularly in the current climate we are all operating in and it is imperative that all members supply that data when requested.

Victor Clements is playing an important role in supporting the DMG and it was proposed that his role continues, at least to carry the DMG through the 2019 Assessment if not beyond.

ACTION 1: Members to agree new Chair by autumn 2019, and Vice Chair by spring 2019.

2. Apologies

Ross Peters	<i>Achnabourin</i>	Charles Worsley	<i>Fiag</i>
Ian MacDonald	<i>Hope</i>	George Woods	<i>Merkland</i>
David Horsburgh	<i>North Loch Naver</i>	David Elliot	<i>Rhigolter</i>
Christopher Fletcher	<i>Shinness</i>	Don O'Driscoll	<i>JMT – Sandwood</i>
John Sutherland	<i>Durness Grazings</i>	Barbara Sutherland	<i>Durness Grazings</i>
Lawrence Macleod	<i>Achriesgill Grazings</i>	Holly Deary	<i>SNH</i>

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2018

The minutes were approved with no changes - proposed by DA, seconded by AP. Matters Arising are dealt with in the agenda.

4. Matters Arising

TC invited discussion on the proposal for a new Chair and Vice Chair, staggered over the next two meetings to allow a smooth change over. Options to be considered: someone from within the area on a voluntary basis, or a professional chair. Roles should be clearly defined, and potential costs will be advised for consideration. Wildland Ltd would be willing to contribute to/fund a professional chair for a period of time. Reay Forest might also be able to contribute.

ACTION 2: TC to produce paper for Options and Roles/Duties of Committee for consideration

5. ADMG Health Check / Report from 16th October Steering Group Meeting with SNH

VC reported on the Health Check. Outcomes were good, but function had gone backwards in recent years and this needed to be addressed to prevent the outcomes slipping. The purpose of the Health Check was to identify and address priorities.

A Meeting of the Steering Group was held in Golspie by SNH after a request from GW as Chair of NWSDMG. SNH had circulated a note on the meeting to the Steering Group, which will now be circulated to the wider membership clearly marked as draft as some SG members had not yet commented.

ACTION 3: KM to circulate with minutes

Main points to note from meeting:

- 1) DMG members need to agree common ground and maintain transparency and collaboration
- 2) Members need to maintain mutual respect in sharing common interest.
- 3) DMG requires a population model for planning purposes

SNH agreed to look at Socio-Economic Impact, with a Scoping Report to be issued by the end of November 2018.

VW highlighted that NWSDMG will be in the spotlight for the Spring 2019 Assessment, mainly due to its operation rather than public interest concerns. A case has been made by VW and HD for SNH to support a count in the spring, but budgets are strict.

TC offered to take on the role of Chair of the Steering Group as well as the DMG for a period of 12 months, allowing DA to step down. This was agreed.

6. 2018/19 Season

Cull table was circulated, including hind targets included where available [copy attached]

a) Stag Review

Members present gave a brief summary of the season so far. A common theme was a reduction in stags on the ground, with targets not met for many. TM outlined Wildland Ltd policy and how targets are set and adjusted if required. Discussion followed.

It was agreed to circulate results of the February Count undertaken by Wildand and Reay.

ACTION 4: DA/TM to send Count Report to KM for circulation

Members were urged to submit mortality numbers this year, and recruitment counts next spring.

ACTION 5: KM to request and collate data for circulation ahead of next meeting.

b) Hind targets

Most were proposing a selective cull focussing on welfare. Wildland targets were shared with the group, these may be adjusted as the season progresses.

ACTION 6: TM agreed to share any revisions of targets.

7. Deer Management Plan

VC has re-written the DMP and updated maps since the last meeting, except for the population model for next year. Exercising caution in respect of the 2018/19 hind cull is the right thing to do.

• Habitat Monitoring

VC had also undertaken an assessment of Habitat Monitoring (HIA) across the group. Maps were circulated to the meeting, showing those areas that were carrying out HIA. Some info was not yet available, and the map will be updated accordingly. Overall picture is quite good.

ACTION 7: VC to complete report and pass to group.

• Designated Sites

Map circulated to the meeting. Discussions should be reinstated around Foinaven. SNH monitoring shows some areas had slipped back and others doing better. The purpose of monitoring is to see where areas need looked at. It should be borne in mind that herbivore impact includes sheep. Trampling was also an issue. Last monitoring (by SNH) was in 2015. Recovery can take 3-5-7 years or longer.

Majority of designated sites in the group area are recovering and will show as orange/green rather than red going forward.

It would be better if estates used the same basis and time-scale, which could also save time and money. There will always be gaps on the periphery; number of actual plots could be reduced.

Woodland map was circulated – mainly around Loch Hope and Tongue. The amount of regeneration is building, Wildland areas should return to green in due course. Change over the next 5 years is important.

VW gave a brief summary on designated sites. It was noted that map colours can change, if there is a fire for example.

• Kinlochbervie Road Accidents

GW attended for KLB CC, and there was discussion regarding increasing deer numbers in populated areas, with accidents and near misses on the stretch of fast road at Rhiconich. Info on Deer Vehicle

Collisions (DVCs) and near misses had been requested by the CC but limited feedback. KM had included crofting groups and community councils in the invitations for this meeting. It was agreed to try to record DVCs in the group area.

ACTION 8: KM to request reporting of DVCs

ACTION 9: KM to contact Police Wildlife Liaison Officer.

GW/RO/JO left the meeting.

• **Update of DMP**

VC had updated the plan where possible, and would liaise with the Steering Group to gather missing information.

ACTION 10: VC to update DMP and send to KM for circulation / upload to website

8. Training

Levels of training were relatively good in in the group.

ACTION 11: VC to check what levels new people involved were at re. DSC1 and DSC2 via email.

Re. Habitat Monitoring, it was agreed that most had been on a course so a training event not required at this point.

9. SNH

Main headlines were discussed earlier. VW felt this meeting was a big improvement in terms of operation and VC's reports will make a lot of difference in respect of outcomes/public interest.

10. ADMG

- Deer Working Group preparing to report to Ministers, at the same time as the SNH Spring Review.
 - Sporting Rates – there should be no reliance on small business relief. Appeal still the best course of action.
 - SQWV still offering free larder assessments
 - ADMG Sporting Rates survey still ongoing, members encouraged to take part if they have not already done so
 - ADMG Regional Meeting 21st November – people urged to attend, DMG Health Check results will be discussed.
 - Morden Institute Deer Health Project still ongoing
- Above all detailed in recent issues of SCOPE

11. Accounts

A summary of Accounts was circulated with year to date figures for the current year and a statement of the cash position [copy attached]. There were no questions.

12. AOCB

VW mentioned, assuming Spring 2019 deer count goes ahead, that volunteers might be needed to chase deer out of woodland on the day of the count.

ACTION 11: VW to liaise with DMG.

DA reported that Reay Forest Estate had applied for a Venison processing licence in order to produce and sell venison products locally.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 15th May 2019 at 10:30am, Lairg Community Centre

Meeting ended at 12:45pm

Attachments:

Detail	Version
SNH Report on Steering Group Meeting	16 October 2018
Cull Table	As at 7 November 2018
Habitat Monitoring Map	2018
Designated Areas Status Map	2018
Woodland Map	2018
Accounts Summary	2018-19

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Action Points agreed: 7 November 2018

<u>Ref:</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Action</u>
AP 1	Members to select new Chair by Autumn 2019 and new Vice-Chair by Spring 2019	All
AP 2	TC to produce paper re: Role and Duties of Committee	TC
AP 3	DA / TM to deliver Reay / Wildland count report to KM for circulation	DA / TM / KM
AP 4	Members to supply / KM to collect and collate mortality and recruitment data for circulation before next meeting	All / KM
AP 5	TM to share any revisions of Wildland hind cull targets	TM
AP 6	VC to finalise HIA report and pass to group	VC
AP 7	Members to supply / KM to request and collate DVCs	All / KM
AP 8	KM to contact Police Wildlife Liaison Officer	KM
AP 9	VC to update DMP and send to KM for circulation / upload to website	VC / KM
AP 10	VC to check on training requirements of group	VC
AP 11	VW to liaise with DMG ahead of Spring Count 2019 for assistance to move deer from woodland on day of count	VW