

# Minutes of the ELSDMG meeting held at Conaglen House on 2nd November 2017

## **Present:**

*Steve Fox, Carnoch (chairman)*  
*Ewen Maclean, Ardgour (secretary)*  
*David Mosgrove, Conaglen*  
*Graeme Taylor, SNH*  
*Lynda Campbell, ADMG*  
*John Jackson, FES*

## **Apologies;**

*Shaun Corrigan*  
*Robin MacLean*  
*Rory Sinclair*  
*Peter Sinclair*  
*Ross MacLean*  
*David Mackenzie*  
*John Macdonald*

## **Matters Arising;**

The minutes from the previous meeting were read and SF signed the copy to confirm they were a true record of events.

## **Stag Reports**

Conaglen: good condition, J MacDonald: good condition, plenty of fat, running off towards the end of the season.

FES: good condition, Carnoch: good condition but a noticeably fewer deer on hill.

## **Cull Returns Submitted**

DM to chase Peter Sinclair, Harvey Phillip, Miller Harris for this years stag numbers.

## **Projected Hind Culls**

Members submitted projected hind culls, to be included on Cull return forms separately.

## **DMP**

Members worked through the action points on the DMP, with GT adding comments where necessary.

Comments: action point 12, change wording from 2.5% to 'a minimum', 12.2 change wording to 'discussed'.

EM to liaise with Dick Playfair regarding putting minutes from meetings online.

It was agreed to remove any references to Colin Lavin from DMP.

Other action points include 15.2- ensuring members who are planning woodland expansions do let the rest of the group know so that the DMP can be updated accordingly.

EM confirmed DMP is now available online through the ADMG website, fulfilling another criteria which the group had previously been marked down upon.

DM expressed his frustration that the SNH audit process which placed the group near the bottom of the league table was based upon a DMP which had not been updated, and the fact that the group is now meeting nearly all objectives set out in the updated DMP will not be reflected until the next audit process in 2019.

GT explained that the audit process was done to a set timescale and that if the group is now meeting our objectives then this will be reflected in the next audit.

DM to circulate plan to members of the public in accordance with objectives, and EM and DM to ensure the the public are aware of the dates and times of DMG meetings.

## **HIA**

A discussion took place on the ongoing lack of HIA surveys undertaken by the group, with exception to a few members.

GT advised group of £1800 of funding being made available to groups for the purposes of assisting with data HIA collation and interpretation.

GT advised group of intended surveys of designated sites within the group, timescale will involve surveys in the spring of 2018, with the circulated reports being available by Autumn 2018.

DM asked GT what the SNH would consider an acceptable number of plots per property, GT stated that around 60 plots would be acceptable, consisting of 3 different habitats, with 20 plots on each.

It was agreed that due to the willingness of other groups to adhere to the guidelines set out by the authorities and the lack of resistance from ADMG to

these imposed guidelines that the group would make an effort to attempt some HIA monitoring, so as not to become one of the only groups not undertaking the surveys.

GT to provide excel spreadsheets to group members in order to assist collation of results.

It was agreed to ask members to provide details of planned woodland expansions and any surveys undertaken in conjunction with woodland expansions to ensure all data collected is included.

## **Fencing Maps**

SF raised the idea of having a comprehensive map of deer fencing within the group, with a colour coded system designating the state of repair of the fences. GT indicated that if members of the group were able to provide him with the information he would collate the results and input into a mapping program. EM to ask group members for further information to begin the process.

## **ADMG Fees**

SF explained that he had been in contact with Helen Polley regarding instituting a new system for paying the ADMG fees, SF to circulate separately a summary of the proposed system.

## **AOB**

GT informed the group of the application of a local crofter in Ardgour for a night shooting licence, members expressed their concern at the lack of safe shooting spaces on the crofts of Ardgour, with public roads bordering the northern and southern boundaries and housing to the east and west.

GT to take into consideration members comments and inform the group of the decision shortly.

HFTSH- GT encouraged members to input information onto the website, ensuring visiting outdoor enthusiasts are fully briefed on the routes which can be taken on individual properties to avoid potential conflicts and inconvenience.

Sporting Rates- Members discussed the proposed levels of rates and the simple fact that the rates are a thinly disguised land tax, DM encouraged all members to appeal the decisions, which each landowner has six months in which to do. Simple terminology is urged, a belief that the rate set is unjust is sufficient.

LC of ADMG was asked what their position was on the proposed rates and how the organisation was lobbying the govt to ensure that members voices are heard and real pressure is applied. LC stated that individual landowners are responsible for appeals. A certain amount of surprise was shown that ADMG are not actively engaging the govt on this issue on behalf of all members, LC will pass on comments to ADMG management.

SQWV- GT informed members that pre-accreditation for membership of the SQWV scheme is free until March 2018 (worth £160 plus VAT) and encouraged members to participate in the scheme. DM asked whether the council audits of deer larders and SQWV audit could be rolled into one as the audit process is nearly identical and the same processes applied. GT to follow up.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING; TBC

Addendum to minutes from Steve Fox notes;

Minutes for:- Targets and Actions discussed at the ELSDMG meeting held on 2nd November 2017 at Conaglen. Whilst all Targets and Actions (copy attached) were discussed the following minutes merit noting.

Action point 1.3:- A letter to be sent to CC's, Crofting groups, neighbouring DMG's etc. advising of ELSDMP and minutes online and invitation to meetings.

Action point 2.1:- Count and cull data is considered group wide. Formal HIA information is insufficient. Extra commitment from the members is required. SNH offered some time constrained support for data analysis/training.

Action point 4.1:- GT advises SNH will be carrying out a survey of Sunart Oakwoods designated sites April to June 2018 with results and actions published December 2018.

Target 5:- It has previously been discussed and agreed that due to the remoteness of much of the DMG area that the only viable count method for the whole of the group area is via helicopter counting. Our last count was in 2016.

Target 6:- GT offered to prepare a fencing map for the group if the members would provide him with the detail.

Target 7:- It is noted in the minutes AOB that an Ardgour crofter had applied to SNH for a night shooting licence. This is against principles of collaboration as well as H&S issues and the group requests this be refused. (Licence subsequently granted). A member even offered to install a deer fence on the open side of the affected property to prevent marauding deer incursion.

Action point 9.2:- Members are encouraged to follow BPG and to attain DSC level 1 as a minimum and to attain SQWV approval. Ardgour estate has provided ???? samples to ???? for analysis.

Action point 9.3:- Members are to be encouraged to provide information to the public via the Heading for the Scottish Hills portal.

Target 12:- Target to be altered to 'Members aim to keep mortality to a minimum'.

Action point 12.2:- Action to be altered to ‘Natural mortality information will be discussed at the ELSDMG meeting’.

Action point 14.2:- SNH offered some time constrained support for HIA analysis/training.

Action point 15.2:- Members who are planning woodland expansion are encouraged to make the DMG aware so that the DMP can be updated accordingly. GT at this time raised the issue of peatland restoration for further consideration.

General minute:- A pro-forma Estate Audit questionnaire will be sent out to members periodically to assist with information gathering for the DMG.

## 11 Targets and Actions

The members of The East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group have set the following deer management targets.

The initial actions required to achieve these targets has been identified and has been set out below each target. Members agree to progress actions in relation to each target during the next 2-3 stalking seasons to achieve a process of delivery for each target.

<b>Target 1</b>	<b>Members of The ELSDMG aim to integrate the management of deer and their range with other land use interests.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 1.1	The ELSDMG will continue to hold two annual meetings for owners and stalkers at a convenient time and location.	Chairman	Yes
Action 1.2	At meetings, members will report, consider and resolve any differences in deer management objectives within the ELSDMG area.	Members	Yes
Action 1.3	Representatives from relevant organisations will be invited to attend ELSDMG meetings.	Chairman	Yes

<b>Target 2</b>	<b>Members aim to increase awareness and understanding of deer management issues within the DMG area and aim to co-operate on the decision-making process.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 2.1	The ELSDMG will collect count, cull and HIA range assessment information where it is available from members and will calculate recruitment and required cull numbers.	Members	Yes
Action 2.2	The information will be collated by the ELSDMG and made available to members for discussion.	Secretary	Yes
Action 2.3	Members will identify and plan the development or training of staff involved in deer management.	Members	Ongoing

<b>Target 3</b>	<b>Members aim to set appropriate cull targets before culling begins; and then to achieve the set targets but if necessary reviewing targets for the purpose of natural mortality and weather conditions in any season</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 3.1	Decide cull numbers based on the undernoted: a) the information set out in this plan b) the findings of the most recent deer census c) count results and cull targets from neighbouring DMGs d) the results of any range assessments e) the seasonal weather and mortality implications	Members	Yes

Action 3.2	Discuss and agree cull targets for each estate.	Members	Yes
Action 3.3	Stalkers will continue culling, using selective and discriminate methods, until cull targets are met.	Members	Yes

<b>Target 4</b>	<b>Members aim to deliver designated features in Favourable Condition.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 4.1	Identify designated features and the reported condition of designated sites in the DMG area.	Members	Yes
Action 4.2	If relevant identify and agree actions to manage herbivore impacts affecting the favourable condition of designated features.	Members	Ongoing
Action 4.3	Monitor progress and review actions to manage herbivore impacts of designated features.	Members	Ongoing

<b>Target 5</b>	<b>Members aim to complete at least one co-ordinated and systematic census of the whole ELSDMG area approximately every five years.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 5.1	Discuss and agree on the count method and timing.	Sub Group	Yes
Action 5.2	Nominate and select members who will co-ordinate counting.	Sub Group	Yes
Action 5.3	Carry out the count when weather conditions are suitable.	Sub Group	Yes
Action 5.4	Collate and circulate count information to ELSDMG members, ideally in the form of a count map.	D.Mosgrove	Yes

<b>Target 6</b>	<b>Members aim to improve knowledge of deer living in, or making use of woodlands within the ELSDMG area.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 6.1	Members will inspect and report on the condition of deer fences within the ELSDMG area, particularly march fences.	Members	Yes
Action 6.2	Ongoing repairs and replacement of march and other priority fence will be completed as soon as possible by responsible members for said fences.	Members	Ongoing

<b>Target 7</b>	<b>Members' aim, as far as is practical to reduce out of season agricultural and forest protection culls and night culling, but will recognise the value of these methods where they are appropriate.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 7.1	Cull efforts will be concentrated during in-season periods.	Members	Yes
Action 7.2	Cull targets will be set taking agricultural and woodland interests into account.	Members	Yes
Action 7.3	Full consideration will be given to ways of preventing deer migrating on to agricultural or forest land.	Members	Yes

With reference to Target 7, FES will continue to reserve the right to employ both Section (6) and Section 18(2) authorised cull as they deem necessary.

<b>Target 8</b>	<b>The ELSDMG aims to collate all cull data and present it for discussion at ELSDMG meetings.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 8.1	Stalkers will record data from all animals culled.	Members	Yes
Action 8.2	Cull data information will be collated and discussed at ELSDMG meetings.	D.Mosgrove	Yes

Action 8.3	Members will analyse cull data in order to: a) objectively assess deer recruitment performance b) identify changes in deer numbers over time c) assess the effectiveness of the cull selection policy	Members	Yes
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<b>Target 9</b>	<b>The DMG aims to identify and promote opportunities contributing to public health and wellbeing.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 9.1	Identify public safety issues associated with deer within the DMG area e.g. Vehicle Collisions etc.	Members	Yes
Action 9.2	Identify and take actions as necessary to reduce the incidence of E-coli O157 contamination in relation to the sale of wild venison.	Members	Yes
Action 9.3	Identify main access and recreational activity within the DMG area.	Members	Yes

### 11.1 Economic Considerations

<b>Target 10</b>	<b>Members to take actions to maximise economic benefits associated with deer.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 10.1	Identify and quantify deer related employment.	Members	Yes
Action 10.2	Identify opportunities to improve economic prospects throughout the DMG.	Members	Ongoing

### 11.2 Deer Performance and Welfare

<b>Target 11</b>	<b>Members aim to maintain or improve deer performance wherever possible and to reduce or mitigate the risk of establishment of invasive non-native species.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 11.1	Control invasive non-native species (i.e. muntjac, sika or fallow) to prevent their establishment and spread.	Members	Yes
Action 11.2	Agree on local management of other species which may be utilised as a resource e.g. goats and wild boar to reduce their spread and impacts.	Members	Yes
Action 11.3	Agree, collate and review data available within the DMG which might be used as a proxy for deer health/welfare i.e. recruitment, winter mortality etc.	Members	Yes
Action 11.4	Follow BPG and take reasonable actions to ensure that deer culling operations safeguard welfare; for culled and surviving animals.	Members	Yes
Action 11.5	Take reasonable actions to ensure that the welfare of surviving populations is safeguarded e.g. provision/access to food and shelter and maintaining an appropriate deer density.	Members	Yes
Action 11.6	Periodically review information on actions to safeguard welfare, identify and implement changes as required.	Members	Yes

<b>Target 12</b>	<b>Members aim to keep natural mortality levels below 2.5% of the total population.</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Action Achieved</b>
Action 12.1	Stalkers will record all observed cases of natural mortality, making note of sex, approximate age and possible cause of death.	Members	Yes
Action 12.2	Natural mortality information will be collated and presented for discussion at the ELSDMG meeting.	Members	Yes