

# Minutes of the East Loch Sheil DMG summer meeting held at Conaglen House on 17th July 2018

*Minutes amended post 02/11/2018 meeting.*

*Amendments in red.*

## **Present:**

Steve Fox, Carnoch (Chairman) & MDMG  
Ewen Maclean, Ardgour/Glenscaddie (Secretary)  
David Mosgrove, Conaglen  
David Mckenzie, Conaglen  
Shaun Corrigan, Ardgour  
Peter Sinclair, Resipole  
Lynda Campbell, ADMG  
Graeme Taylor, SNH  
Andrew MacMaster, SNH

## **Apologies:**

John MacDonald  
Ross Maclean ,Conaglen  
John Jackson, FCS  
Rory Sinclair, Resipole  
Harvey Philip, Inversanda  
Robin Maclean, Ardgour

Revised minutes with Action column added and with actions/revisions and additions post meeting below in italics.

## **Matters Arising:**

SF welcomed the group to the meeting and apologies were given.	ACTION
Andrew MacMaster was introduced to the group as the SNH replacement for Cathy Mayne. Andrew was previously with FES.	

The minutes from the November meeting were approved by all and SF signed the copy, with an addendum and a small clarification (attached). <i>Minutes to be published on ADMG website.</i>	Secretary
<b>Hinds</b>	
Cull returns were submitted and members still to give cull numbers will be chased by DMos, Inversanda , FES etc, GT confirmed that he would provide numbers from the SNH database for members who haven't replied to communications from DMos.	DM. GT
GT confirmed the Claish Moss cull target for the following season of 5 stags, 10 hinds + followers.	
<b>Condition Mortality &amp; Recruitment</b>	
All members agreed that the hinds in general were in a poor condition at the end of the long winter.	
The group agreed to use the SNH standard of 2% stags, 2% hinds and 6% calves for late winter mortality. Recruitment prior to late winter mortality estimated at 30%. <i>Pending further information required post meeting.</i>	SF
<b>Deer Density</b>	
The deer density at the last helicopter count in 2016 was 10.2 per km over the counted area.	
<b>Proposed Stag Culls</b>	
Carnoch North 7 - 9 stags	SF
Conaglen 40 - 45 stags	DM
Glenscaddle 25 stags	DM
Ardgour – 10 stags	EM
Resipole – 8 - 10 stags plus any re-gen break ins.	PS
FES not reported but it was felt likely that they would cull all they could find.	JJ
All members present agreed that the stag culls would likely remain at the same levels as last season, dependent on deer condition and numbers on the hill. <i>Population model and targets to be completed when all information in.</i>	SF
<b>Poaching report</b>	

Poaching last season did not seem to be a big issue for the group, DMos, SF and SC agreed that regular road patrols would continue to take place and that all gates leading off public roads would remain locked where possible.	DM SF SC Members
<b>DMP</b>	
DMos presented to the group, parts of the updated DMP that will be included in the next (9th) edition of the DMP.	DM
The ADMG 'Health Check' pre SNH review of the ELSDMG will take place in mid September with Victor Clements which should demonstrate the progress we have made and highlight where more work may be needed prior to the 2019 review.	SF DM EM VC
Estate Audits have been sent round the group and so far replies have been received for Ardgour, Glenscaddle, Carnoch, Conaglen, Resipole Woodlands, FES X 6 and Clash Moss. <i>Outstanding audits to be chased.</i>	SF
DMos stated that the group needed more information about the areas marked red on the SNH maps, with woodlands that have been fenced for 20 years now being marked as unfavourable, and herbivore impact stated even when no deer are present. <b>GT is asked to provide full detail to support the unfavourable condition classification.</b>	GT
Concern was expressed over the accuracy of plans supplied by SNH and DM had been trying to get corrected information from them. E.G. A large part of the water body of Loch Shiel is marked down as herbivore impact. GT agrees DM is correct that parts of Loch Shiel are shown as mixed condition designated site. Some deer fenced woodland areas are marked as high impacts and some deer fenced crofting areas with sheep present also marked as high. GT defends herbivore impacts as not necessarily deer.	
Peter Sinclair (PS) stated that some areas which are marked as red have been subject to grazing plans for a number of years and have been heavily surveyed with no concerns in the past.	
Graeme Taylor (GT) stated that if the group had concerns about certain areas being incorrectly assessed then it was up to members of the group to provide SNH with solid information as to why the SNH assessments are incorrect and it will be taken into account. GT The onus is on the group to survey these areas and make the argument. GT goes on to say SNH will rely on existing data and it is up to the group to re-assess then SNH may visit to confirm.	

DMS asked GT if it would be possible to exclude certain areas from the map that the group knows are free from deer. GT stated that with evidence and information that SNH would take this into account.	
GT explained to the group that during the spring of 2018, a large scale survey of the designated sites had taken place with SNH carrying out field surveys, that the data is in now and the report will be available mid August for all members to view. <b>GT to supply the group with the detailed survey results as soon as they become available.</b>	GT SNH
DMS stressed how important it was for each member to identify areas which are identified as high herbivore impact and ensure that if that impact is not due to deer, to highlight this.	Members
GT explained that 60% of the national survey needs to show low/moderate impact on designated sites, the rankings are assigned as a whole, not any one part of each designated site. Therefore if part of a designated site is marked down the whole of that area is.	
PS asked whether the goalposts have moved between what was unfavourable in the past and what is unfavourable now, GT confirmed that the methodology was the same.	
<b>ADMG pre assessment review - the 'Health Check'</b>	
This will take place in mid September with Victor Clements, Steve Fox, David Mosgrove and Ewen Maclean attending, this will ensure the DMG is ready for SNH 2019 assessment.	SF DM EM VC
SF stated that the league tables surrounding deer groups are unhelpful and serve no purpose other than to de-motivate groups toward the bottom.	
GT stated that he was resistant to publishing the league tables for that reason, but had been encouraged by some of the progress made by different groups.	
GT also stated that SNH are looking at the league table system and are looking to change the criteria and introduce a new system. <b>GT will resist the use of a league table by SNH.</b>	GT
EM asked whether it was possible to remove areas within the group which provide no information and do not participate in any group related activities, given that the main reason ELSDMG has any issues is due	

to non participating members, therefore the entire process is skewed due to the non actions of certain members.	
GT stated that SNH are always looking to bring members together and can assist with facilitating sharing of information and lack of attendance. The DMG has had no success with getting non engaging members to participate with the group. The group requests that GT – SNH use their influence to encourage participation from all landholdings with deer within the group boundaries.	GT
The group as a whole felt that this option had been tried and tested but to no avail.	
<b>Section 7</b>	
A wide ranging discussion took place around section 7's and the process surrounding their application;	
GT explained that the political directives from up the ladder were clear, SNH has these powers and have been instructed to use them, it became clear that ELSDMG is a target for a section 7.	
SF asked GT a candid question about whether a section 7 was going to be used on ELSDMG, GT responded by explaining that he reported to a board, and the final decision would rest with the board, he then explained the 6 month process of negotiations which would then take place if a section 7 were to be applied.	
EM asked whether the group had any form of representation through the process, GT explained that the Land Court could act as arbitrators on behalf of the group if the group disagreed with any part of the process.	
DMos asked whether the unfavourable condition of one designated site within the whole group is sufficient to merit the triggering of a section 7, GT responded in the affirmative.	
DMos confirmed that Conaglen would carry out an independent audit using qualified ecologists of survey's undertaken by SNH.	DM
EM asked GT if there was a governmental target of the number of section 7's, GT confirmed that there was no target number.	
SF: So, despite refuting at our last DMG meeting that we were under consideration for a section 7 and your explanation that you have many	

tools in your box to use before section 7 would be considered we are now to be considered for one? GT: Yes a risk assessment is to be carried out prior to consideration for the 'Section 7'.	
DMos proposed removing Sunart Oakwoods from the group as a number of issues within the group stem from this area and it is securely fenced from deer, this was met with approval from all the land managers present, but the idea was not endorsed by GT.	
SC asked whether a fencing map for the whole group showing areas which are securely deer fenced and or stock free would be of assistance, GT confirmed that this would be useful. <i>GT had previously said SNH would produce the map if the DMG would provide the information. Decision to progress required at next meeting.</i>	Members
SC asked about sheep numbers within the group, DMos was able to inform the group that there are now 13,000 less sheep within the group area than there were 25 years ago, it was felt that this would have a massive positive impact on the herbivore grazing statistics, and that this wasn't taken into account by SNH.	
GT then gave the group a timeline of implementing a section 7, stating that he will report to senior management in mid August, from there a final decision will be made. SF: Asks that (SNH) defer anything re Section 7 until the SNH survey is presented to us and we have chance to respond?	SF GT
<b>HIA's</b>	
A discussion was held around HIA surveys and how the group was progressing;	
It was confirmed that the following had taken place;	
Carnoch North - 20 plots	SF
Conaglen-all peatland and blanket bog assessments taken place	DM
Ardgour- 30-40 plots by independent ecologists, results to follow.	EM
Resipole- 20 plots woodland.	PS
Claish Moss SNH would be surveying in 2019.	GT
SF felt the BPG woodland HIA methods nor really suitable for Carnoch. PS and GT refer to Woodland Grazing Toolbox.	SF GT
Refer also to the minutes above re the SNH survey etc.	
The group confirmed as a whole that there is a desire and a commitment to carry on performing HIA plots going forward.	Members

<b>BPG videos</b>	
SF will circulate an email with links to ensure that all members were aware of the latest best practice guide videos on Gralloching and Deer Larder Work, and encouraged all members to watch the videos. Links also to the Chronic Wasting Disease leaflet and the latest NHS Scotland leaflet for Ticks and Lyme Disease will be included on the mail.	SF
<b>AOB</b>	
SF raised on behalf of the group a strong objection to the granting of a night shooting license to a crofter in Ardgour.	SF
He also asked that SNH provide a copy of the licence in full to the group so the group is able to view the conditions attached and that a formal letter to SNH will follow.	GT SF
GT confirmed that SNH will provide the group with a copy of the license.	GT
<b>ADMG</b>	
LC encouraged members to fill out the latest survey in relation to stalking rents available on the escope magazine website. Here is the link <a href="http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Stalking-rents-survey.pdf">http://www.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Stalking-rents-survey.pdf</a>	Members

The next Regional Meeting of the ADMG will be held on 13th of August at Balloch.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

Early November, late October, TBC