

**East Loch Sheil Deer Management Group
Meeting
29/04/2019
Held at Conaglen Estate**

Present:

Steve Fox- **Chairman**, (*Carnoch & MDMG*)

*Ewen Maclean of Ardgour- **Secretary**
(&Glenscaddle)*

David Mackenzie (Conaglen)

Ross Maclean (Conaglen)

*David Mosgrove- **Vice Chair** (Conaglen & Ariundle)*

John Jackson (FLS)

Kenneth Knott (FLS)

Peter Sinclair (Resipole)

Rory Sinclair (Resipole)

John MacDonald (WHV)

Shaun Corrigan (Ardgour)

Jamie Macintyre (NSWG)

Harvey Philips (Inversanda)

Kevin Swift (Police Scotland)

Apologies- Lynda Campbell, Robin Maclean, Ross
Dunsmore, Caroline Colbourne, Victor Clements, Iain
Collier, Malcolm Gillespie.

Approved final minutes. S Fox, 12/11/2019.

The meeting was advised a voice recording was being made.

Matters Arising:

10:45 am

Special Meeting: A meeting was held before the main DMG meeting involving landowners to decide matters surrounding the updated constitution, Vice-Chair formal appointment and Autumn meeting venues.

1. Constitution

Brief discussions were held over some minor detail in the Constitution, KN wanted to clarify discussions around public bodies such as if the public bodies changed the name, shared costs, &etc. SF clarified.

The final constitution was voted upon and passed with unanimous agreement.

2. The formal appointment of Vice Chair- SF proposed formally appointing D Mosgrove as Vice Chair, passed with unanimous agreement.

3. The proposal that future Autumn/ Winter meetings be held in a public place such as a village hall, passed with unanimous agreement.

11:00 am

Main Meeting

1. Chairman's welcome and apologies

2. New SNH WMO and attendees.

It was hoped that the group would be able to meet and introduce the new SNH WMO, Graeme Taylor having moved roles within SNH, however no reply or attendance from any SNH employees has been forthcoming, some discussion was had around who the relevant person might be, KK stated that the SNH office was undergoing personnel changes and was in a state of flux.

SF will continue to try to find out who our new WMO is. **ACTION SF & SNH**

3. Chairman's Opening Remarks

I have been trying to get more properties to engage with the DMG and have been asked; 'What are the benefits of membership?' Could SNH give me a quick summary, please? **ACTION POINT SNH.**

I can report contact with C Colbourne with a suggested meeting to include DMG matters. **ACTION POINT – SF, CC.**

4. Minutes of the previous Meeting – and matters arising.

The minutes from the previous meeting were discussed and approved, to be signed by the chairman. The outstanding **Action Points Summary April 2019** was worked through with all yellow highlighted items read out and answered where possible. ELS 48 Action Points Summary (Updated with responses 02/05/2019) attached. A number of SNH actions are outstanding from the previous meeting or other requests. **ACTION POINTS SNH.**

NSWG report

Jamie Macintyre from NSWG (a neighbour) explained how the group was run, Malcolm Gillespie has now contacted all members to try to reinvigorate the group, the group are looking to meet with FLS to access grant support.

It was explained that NSWG had issues with a lack of younger, dynamic people.

The Landmark Reports that SNH had commissioned 10 or 15 (Peterken, G.F. and Worrell, R.) (2005)) years ago were discussed, JM felt that SNH had perhaps overlooked these reports which had highlighted the fact that oak woodland in some ways was, in fact, an unnatural state for west coast forests and that the focus should be on regenerating the existing woodland in its natural state.

It was also highlighted that the changes in staffing within the govt bodies had led to many issues with progress being difficult.

KK stated that the agreement within NSWG is to keep the collaborative fencing going until 2021, JM stated that if the strategic fences came down there would be ramifications for the group as a whole. At present, the fences ensure that the interests of NSWG and ELSDMG do not collide.

5. Training and Certification Log

Members had a log sheet passed around for all to update to include new or unlisted skills, experience, knowledge, training and certification including membership of trade bodies &etc.

ACTION POINT SF to update file copy.

The officers of the Group have considered that our key priorities which need to be addressed at this meeting are as follows.

6. DMP Background Information Update Working Plan 1 and East-West Working Groups

SF advised that the Edition 1 Action Working Plan had been updated again during April, distributed and put online. Comments on the updated working plan are invited.

A discussion was had around the updated working plan, KK stated that FLS now have serious issues with their email servers, meaning that emails over two weeks old are automatically deleted unless uploaded to a cloud server, this has inhibited their ability to search for information.

Highlighted was information that KK had sent to CL, which would be essential to the DMP which now appears to have gone forever.

DM highlighted concerns around hectareage sizes which are wrong and the lack of essential stocking density information, JJ to follow up.

JJ to resend the data around to DM. **ACTION POINT JJ.**

A discussion was held surrounding fencing between Glenhurich, GlenScaddle and Conaglen. It was agreed a separate meeting between all relevant parties was necessary. **ACTION POINT KK DM EM**

KK confirmed that FLS would not commit to writing a DMP for the Western Working Group, DM stated that someone from Western Working Group needs to review and provide relevant information. **ACTION POINT KK.**

DM explained that the 101 criteria need to be met by both Working Groups, however the Western Working Group would not have to write DMP sections for the entire criteria as many of the DMP sections cover the whole Group, but specifics relevant to the Western Working Group will need to be provided to be included correctly in the ELS DMP. **ACTION POINT JJ KK.**

A discussion was held regarding FES population densities this season JJ advised that these will now be available 2020. **ACTION POINT JJ.**

GT stated that last BPG updates were last sent out by post in 2014 and will check for new updates. **ACTION POINT SNH.**

A discussion was held surrounding the meetings that GT held with various owners. The general feeling was that GT was trying to sell section 7.

SF explained SNH supplied map files are too large to upload to the ADMG website and was to request SNH send smaller files. **ACTION POINT SNH.**

7. Group, Western, and Eastern Working Groups Reports.

SF advised that Group, Western and Eastern working Group reports Parts 1, 2 and 3 had been prepared, distributed and put online. Comments, corrections or additions are invited.

8. Estate reports.

a. Cull returns: -

DM collected in the last of the cull returns which will be available in a separate attachment.

As always, no return from Drimnatorran hill.

EM to ask SNH for Drimnatorran and Clovullin croft cull return. **ACTION POINT EM, SNH.**

EM stated a major part of their hind cull this season was taken from lower ground to reduce deer numbers in this area as agreed at the last meeting.

b. Condition reports: -

All members reported generally lean hinds at the start of the season, but they got better as it went on.

c. Poaching: -

JM reported deer group laming in Moidart, JJ reported remains were found at Callop in January.

EM reported heads and legs found on foreshore off A861, KS to investigate.

d. HIA: -

Ardgour and Glenscaddle report 20 plots BB & DSH established this year. 10 plots BB & DSH to be established next year.

Carnoch 20 plots DSH to BPG already established. 10 of which to re-measure this year.

Conaglen reports 50 more plots BB & DSH to BPG established this year. 10 plots BB to BPG already established during 2018.

Inversanda committed to 10 DSH to BPG plots, 5 this year, 5 next.

Resipole 10 plots DSH to BPG established this year.

Sunart committed to 60 plots, 30 of BB & 30 of DSH to BPG this year (contractor being appointed).

All the above will be re-assessed on a three-year cycle.

FLS explained that their priority was to monitor their woodland condition. They have extensive woodland HIA data and results. Their view is that if the woodland condition impacts are satisfactory then adjacent open range by default should also be satisfactory. FLS are in dialogue with SNH to agree this is a reasonable way forward.

SNH commented in their draft assessment of 3rd and 8th April that our HIA targets are not specifically outlined other than a generic statement and therefore scored us down on a number of criteria. A request was made to SNH on the 15/04/2019 for guidance on impact targets in time to

prepare for consideration at today's meeting in order for members to agree today for inclusion in the DMP in time for this years population model update. An agenda item was for SNH WMO to provide clarity as to why our stated Habitat Impact Targets are not satisfactory in order that the group could consider and agree on suitable impact targets with stepping stones to achievement at today's meeting. **ACTION POINT SNH.**

SF Note post-meeting: - Excellent progress everyone. I will collect data from you in order to summarise the results which can be used to inform the population model &etc.

e. Shelter and Forage availability: -

No significant changes in the amount of shelter or forage were reported as imminently planned.

9. Deer counts

DM confirmed that we have a count map but with no clear definition between open range and enclosed range, besides that the count went well and was accurate, numbers are possibly down. RM stated that the numbers between deer on open range and forests should be correct.

DM Advises we require either alterations to be made to the plan layout and legend by SNH, or alternatively, we require a full set of GIS information to be sent to us (as shape files) so that we can complete a finalised copy of the plan ourselves. **ACTION POINT DM to request from SNH.**

SF stated we now have a good datum to work from.

SF confirmed, as agreed at the last meeting that the three larger open range areas will now carry out recruitment counts which were agreed and delegated to - **ACTION POINT RM, JM, EM**

Whilst in the past mortality was judged by experienced deer managers, discussed regularly and considered prior to agreeing culls we will now move toward formal counts for which there is some scepticism as to how effective these may be and how any count data may be turned into a useful statistic. Counters will record and report their findings. There is no detailed guidance in BPG on how to conduct mortality counts or interpret any data gathered. SNH may offer more guidance?

ACTION POINT SNH.

The FLS density report has been put back to next year. **ACTION POINT JJ.**

10. Population Modelling.

SF confirmed that once we have all the relevant figures and data in, population modelling will be undertaken, and updated by the end of August providing for adaptive management. **ACTION POINT SF, DM.**

11. Proposed stag cull,

Subject to adjustment post population model updates, providing for adaptive management, Members proposed provisional stag cull figures.

RM reported that the Conaglen open hill cull will be reduced by 25, PS Resipole by 2, JJ will continue at current levels, Inversanda propose to shoot 8, Carnoch 8.

All members intend to shoot a slightly lower amount reflecting the conditions, with many young stags on the hill and very few mature.

12. Collaborative woodland application

DM updated the group on the background of the collaborative woodland grant application.

Conaglen, Ardgour, Glenscaddle and Carnoch have applied for the grant and will be using Victor Clements as their consultant to look at new planting schemes and existing woodland to help ensure targets within the group are met. **ACTION POINT VC, SF, EM, DM.**

13. Other Designated Sites

DM updated the group on designated sites impact reports.

JM NSWG discussed the fact that previous SNH reports found that dominant oak was, in fact, an artificial creation and that had been reported by SNH on in previous years. SNH it seems have overlooked this. JM will forward the report to ELS. **ACTION POINT JM.**

14. Training and Certification

Members updated the group and log on any further qualifications achieved.

SF achieved DMQ 2, SQWV, sit astride and sit inside ATV certification and will renew First Aid this June.

JJ and JM (WHV) advised they are DMQ 2 accredited witness.

SF encouraged the group to try to attain their DMQ 2, and get SQWV certification as well. SF to forward contact details to any members looking to gain SQWV certification. **ACTION POINT SF.** SF asked if anyone had any training needs the group could or should help with?

15. Sporting rates.

DM updated the group that most rating values appealed have now been reduced and DM offered to help any members that need advice with appeals. **ACTION POINT DM, Members.**

16. SNH ELSDMG Assessment 2019

Is to be held on Wednesday the 8th of May. [Re-scheduled after the meeting to Tuesday the 7th at the SNH Torlundy office.] **ACTION POINT VC, SF & DM attending for ELSDMG.**

Today's DMG meeting was to be key to our final preparation for our Assessment next week and was reliant in part on input and responses from SNH, without which we now find ourselves at a disadvantage going into the Assessment.

UPDATES

No ADMG attendance. An apology was received. EM provided copies of the SCOPE magazine for all present.

FLS had already covered their points through the meeting.

Neighbour's, NSWG also had covered their points through the meeting.

No SNH attendance, no apology received. Throughout the meeting, there were a number of Actions outstanding from SNH which have not been reported on including; SNH WMO to provide clarity as to why our stated Habitat Impact Targets are not satisfactory. **(PI 5.2) Agree on group impact targets.** Further invitation to promote the ecological and local benefits of Peatland Restoration. **(PI 5.6)** Comment is also invited on the JNCC article on this link regarding re-wetting of peatlands. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5905>

Other Business taken throughout the meeting.

Police update.

PC KS informed the group of the issues that have been happening in the area with Wildcat Haven trapping cats and neutering them without the owner's permission, stressed that inquiries were ongoing but asked that the group as a whole watch out for the Wildcat Haven volunteers and report back to police if any suspicious activity is seen.

SF suggested the group writing a letter to Wildcat Haven stating that the group as a whole did not give permission to trap cats or access the ground for setting traps or cameras. **ACTION POINT SF.** KS also asked the group to report travellers parked illegally. **ACTION POINT all Members.**

Non-engaging properties,

The SNH WMO has previously suggested on a number of occasions he would encourage non-engaging properties to engage with the group. No reported action here. HP who was present at the meeting and who had previously been highlighted by SNH as a 'non-engaging' property confirmed no approach had been made to him. **ACTION POINT SNH.**

SNH WMO.

KK expressed concern at the unfortunate position the group are in with ELSDMG having no SNH WMO at this critical time. KK will speak to SNH to chase them and try to help the group. **ACTION POINT KK SNH.**

Meeting Notices.

Other than NSWG representation and Police Scotland no other Neighbour's, Stakeholders or members of the public attended. Meeting notices were posted on the ELSDMG section of the

ADMG website with email and postal notices sent to neighbours, and stakeholders including Grazing Clerks and Community Councils.

Neighbours, Stakeholders and Public comments.

Other than NSWG representation and Police Scotland no other Neighbour's, Stakeholders or members of the public made comment, concern or issues were received prior to or during the meeting.

Proposed Date of Next Meeting

Friday 1st November 2019. TBC.

Meeting ended 13:30

Chairs summary post-meeting.

A very good, productive meeting everyone. Thank you all for attending, for your input and all your hard work. The Eastern and Western Working Groups principle seems to be working well, allowing the two areas to concentrate on their specific management criteria for their respective, predominantly separate population sub-groups.

The resolution of the NSWG relationship with the ELSDMG is another positive step forward to the benefit of all.

The main negative from this meeting was the lack of attendance or input from SNH.

The SNH DMG Assessment next week will be very important for our group. Today's meeting was to be key to our final preparation for our Assessment next week and was reliant in part on input and responses from SNH, without which we now find ourselves at a disadvantage going into the Assessment. I have sought assurance from SNH that we are not scored down in areas where we were expecting SNH input.

I will keep you all informed of the outcome of our Assessment as soon as it is confirmed.

Thanks again, everyone.

Steve Fox.

Chair ELSDMG.

¹Peterken, G.F. and Worrell, R. (2005). Conservation management of the Sunart Oak Woodland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the potential for supporting rural development. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.091 (ROAME No. F00LD21).