

Minutes of the East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group

Meeting held at the Conaglen House on 14 December 2022

Present:

Steve Fox (Chairman)(Carnoch)
David Mosgrove (Vice-Chair)(Conaglen)
Ewen Maclean (Secretary)(Ardgour & Glenscaddle)
Ross Maclean (Conaglen)
David Mackenzie (Conaglen – Glenscaddle & Gour)
John Jackson (FLS – Glenhurich etc)

Lyndsey Sharpe (FLS – Glenhurich etc)
Rory Sinclair (Resipole)
Jim Jackson (Resipole)
Ross Dunsmore (SGRPID - Sunart Estate)
Harvey Phillips (Inversanda)
Sinclair Coghill (NS - Claish Moss)

Apologies:

Robin Maclean (Ardgour)

Shaun Corrigan (Ardgour)

The meeting was asked and agreed with a voice recording being made to help with the preparation of the minutes only and not for distribution.

1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies

- Steve Fox welcomed the group to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Chairman's opening remarks

- SF thanked the members for attending and handed out agendas for the meeting.
- He confirmed that a representative from ADMG had been invited, but no-one was available to attend and reminded all parties to regularly view the online Scope Magazine.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- Minutes from the meeting held on 19 April 2022 were accepted as being a true representation of the meeting and no additional matters were raised from the attendees in relation to questioning those minutes.

4. Estate Reports

a. 2022/23 season cull.

	Stags Culled	Others	Proposed Hinds & Calves
Carnoch (North)	TBC		
Claish Moss	TBC		
Conaglen	50		80 & Calves
Glenscaddle (BPL Lease)	25		30-35 & Calves
Glen Gour (BPL Lease)	10		
Glen Gour (Maclean)	6		
Inversanda	TBC		
Resipole	8		15 & Calves
Sunart Estate	11		
Achanellan (FLS)	12		
Arderly (FLS)	7		
Doire Morie (FLS)	2		
Drimarbain (FLS)	6		
Glen hurich (FLS)	97	1 Sika Stag	
Salen (FLS)	1	1 Sika Stag	

- JJ(FLS) reported that he had e-mailed the FLS cull figures to the Chairman, but also reported the above figures at the meeting.
- EMacL reported one wild boar had been culled near Ardgour Village by SC.
- SC confirmed that Wild Pigs/Boar Range is expanding North in particular e.g. Glen Garry area
 - Suggested trapping seems to work better on large groups, rather than shooting one in group which splits the group, but this is a time consuming & expensive process at perhaps £500+ to set up trap.

- b. Condition reports.
- Round robin reporting on condition of deer culled and observed to date in the season took place.
 - Generally, all parties felt the stags had been in good condition and as it was early in the hind season they were also felt to be in good condition at present, but with most of the winter period still to come.
- c. Changes in land management objectives.
- No significant changes in Land Management Objectives were reported by members.
 - JJ confirmed that FLS would be circulating a Land Management Plan (LMP) for Glen Hurich shortly and that a Drimnatorran Area LMP has already been released for consultation.
 - JJ also confirmed that FLS in the wider Lochaber context would be considering options on reinstating some areas of designated sites from woodland to peatland, including possibly native woodland sites which were originally peatland.
 - DM confirmed that the Duisky Woodland Block extending to about 600ha is currently being closed/fenced this year in order to prepare the area for restocking. This will be a significant change to the central north part of the Conaglen deer range and culling will take place over the next 18-24 months both inside and outside the fence to remove deer from the fenced area and to rebalance if/as required outside the fence.
- d. HIA, shelter and forage availability.
- SF confirmed that the current HIA log is published on the ADMG website.
 - JJ confirmed that FLS had March fence repairs on going in lots of locations and he was aware of issues known at Doire Mhor, Glen Hurich & RE Scammadale.
- e. Poaching and DVC's.
- No party reported any observed or suspected poaching activities during the previous period.
 - Resipole reported that one DVC had been notified to them.
 - Conaglen reported two DVCs had taken place that they were aware of.
- f. Game Dealers
- It was reported that Highland Game were collecting from the majority of the DMG area but that Ardgay Game were also offering a collection service in the area and were working with Resipole already, which leaves two options for DMG members to consider for the next season.
 - It was commented that Highland Game's maximum possible carcass storage numbers were very small, so this would explain why some parties found collections in Oct 2022 very slow.
- g. Non-Toxic/Non-Lead Munition
- A discussion took place on this subject regarding: -
 - Accuracy of copper bullets not grouping well
 - Significant differences were being found between some munition rounds/manufacturers and some gun makes/calibres not being found suited to each other.
 - Sinclair Coghill Commented RE Ammo Research
 - Research for .243 Rifles bullets over 90 grains finding not stable with copper heads.
 - Also, currently a new study/trial is being completed using much lower grain bullets e.g. 80/85 grain.
 - Also, that there was some talk occurring about recommending to legalise lighter bullets in the Fire Arm Orders to allow them to be used for culling of deer.
 - RMaCL confirmed that HG and some other game dealers were still accepting lead shot animals and that another possible future option for replacing lead bullets would be to use Tin munitions as some copper bullets wont suit.

h. Designated sites.

- DM provided a summary on the creation of new woodland enclosures within the Ardgour Pinewoods & Doire Donn designated sites on Conaglen.
 - i. DM confirmed that Conaglen remain focused on woodland expansion and will continue to utilise the system of rotational fencing.
 - ii. Of the six new proposed enclosures in SSSIs totalling approximately 166ha (410 acres), to date four have been fenced between Jan and Dec 2022.
 - iii. The remaining two will be fenced before End March 2023.
 - iv. Three new enclosures are located in the Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI/SAC
 1. A total area of about 48ha has been mounded for planting in Spring 2023, with a remaining area of about 53ha enclosed for natural regeneration.
 2. Two old/existing enclosures will be opened in Pinewoods Area in 2023.
 - v. Three new enclosures are located in the Doire Donn SSSI
 1. 10ha has been hand mounded for planting and the remaining area of about 55ha enclosed for natural regeneration.
 2. One old/existing enclosure will be opened in the Doire Donn SSSI.
 - vi. The required 58ha of woodland planting is scheduled to take place in Feb/March 2023 and a large portion of the remaining 108ha is expected to benefit from natural regeneration along with providing protection of existing woodland areas inside the enclosures.
 - vii. DM confirmed that Conaglen will continue to review a rolling plan of planting and natural regeneration sites during future periods which FCS and NS have previously reviewed as part of the ELS Cooperation Woodland Feasibility Application which was completed in 2020/21.

5. Recruitment and mortality counts

- SF reminded members that they should report Recruitment and Mortality figures to SF for adoption into the population model.

6. Update Training Log.

- SF asked if there were any identified training needs, none were suggested.
- SF asked for members to let him know of any required additions/alterations to be incorporate into the ELSDMD's training record.

7. Update from Nature Scotland.

- SC provided an update on topics from NS
 - NS are focused on climate emergency and suggested NS currently has a 25% Protected Land and Sea Target which would be increasing to a 30% Protected Land and Sea target in the future.
 - NS board will be focusing on pretention of biodiversity losses by 2030 and targeting delivering substantial biodiversity improvements & landscape scale restoration in Scotland by 2045.
- Deer Working Group Report
 - ELS DMG is at or around the 10/km² number
 - SC's advice is to aim to have the habitat and deer numbers/km² aligned and to ignore the 10/km² targeted number.
 - There should be more targeting of both Peatland and Woodland Expansion & Restoration to stop biodiversity loss in upland areas and more efforts made to keep herbivores both wild and farmed in line with habitat capabilities.
 - SC mentioned a Report had been issued RE Thermal & Night Shooting which confirmed thermal usage had significant limitations and safety concerns, which are not currently addressed by the available thermal and night vision technology, so at present no change in legislation is advised.
- Scot Gov. has now set-up 'Strategic Deer Group' with members from all Government agencies working together to deliver on deer group working report.
- SC confirmed the Land reform and Net Zero Nation consultation is now closed.
- SC suggested that all Landowners over 3,000ha will be required to complete a land management plan which consults with the community and focuses on Net Zero and Climate Change.
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 – Published Dec 2022 – Suggested Reading.
-

8. Discussion on Agricultural Reform Programme

- a. RD indicated that at present discussions on future agricultural policy are at too high a level but the key policy directions are Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Food Production. There is little in the way of detail as to what this means for Agri businesses on the ground and there is a concern within the industry/sector about this, particularly as changes are due to start from 1st January 2025.
- b. The group is concerned that for this change to work Agri business must remain viable if a new environmentally more concerned direction is required, but at present the Gov. have said to deliver high level management standards and reduce grazing pressure without confirming how this will be funded or rolled out; with further information to come in a following secondary consultation.
- c. The question, open to debate must be, “is this the end of commercially viable sheep farming in North & West Highlands?”

9. Stakeholders and Public comments.

- No other stakeholders or public comments were received either in advance of or during the meeting.

10. AOB.

- Next meeting suggested to take place in Spring/ Summer 2023.
- No other business.

Signed as an approved minute of the meeting.

S Fox.
ELSDMG Chair.

02/04/2024