

Approved Minutes of the East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group

Meeting held at the Conaglen House on 22 April 2024

Present:

Steve Fox (Chairman)(Carnoch)
David Mosgrove (Vice-Chair)(Conaglen)
Ross Maclean (Conaglen)
Scott Fulton (Conaglen)
Patrick Cook (Conaglen – Glenscaddle & Gour)

Shaun Corrigan (Ardgour)
John Jackson (FLS – Glenhurich etc)
Peter Sinclair (Resipole)
Jim Jackson (Resipole)
Ben McKeown_ (NatureScot)

Apologies:

Ewen Maclean (Secretary)(Ardgour & Glenscaddle)
Robin Maclean (Ardgour)
Rory Sinclair (Resipole)

Andrew MacMaster (SNH)
Harvey Phillips (Inversanda)
Ross Dunsmore (SGRPID - Sunart Estate)
John MacDonald (Sunart Estate Etc)

The 2023 Spring meeting had been postponed whilst awaiting appointment of a NatureScot WMO. The Autumn/Winter 2023 meeting was abandoned due to the unannounced closure of the A861 preventing most from attending.

The attendees were asked and agreed to a voice recording being made to help with the preparation of the minutes.

1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies

- Steve Fox welcomed all to the meeting; introductions were made, and apologies were recorded.

2. Chairman's opening remarks

- SF thanked the members for attending and handed out agendas for the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- Minutes from the previous meeting (14/12/2022) were accepted as being a true representation of that meeting and were approved.

4. Estate Reports

a. 2023/24 season cull.

	Stags Culled	Hinds	Calves	Others
Carnoch (North)	16	9	8	
Claish Moss	11	3	1	
Conaglen	36	96	22	2 Roe
Glenscaddle (BPL Lease)	19	12	6	
Glen Gour (BPL Lease)	6			
Glen Gour (Maclean)	26	11	2	
Inversanda				
Resipole	10 (Hill) 21 (Woodland)	11 (Hill) 4 (Woodland)	5 (Hill)	
Sunart Estate	11	17	12	
Achanellan (FLS)	19	4	3	
Ardery (FLS)	9	3	2	2 Roe Buck
Doire Mhor (FLS)	13	12	7	
Drimnatorran (FLS)	19	8	4	2 Roe Buck
Glen Hurich (FLS)	135	87	61	6 Roe Buck 2 Roe Doe
Salen (FLS)	1	4	0	

Ranachan Croft a NSWG member. (A neighbour, not part of ELSDMG or area)	Reports indicate that 122 deer were culled here recently. No split between Stags, Hinds, Calves, or Roe provided. Included for information and population model; It is thought many of these deer culled have migrated in from the ELSDMG area open range through the NSWG failing forestry fences.
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- All sporting members agreed that the following season's sporting cull, 2024/25 would likely be based on similar numbers to those culled in 2023/24; with some adjustments required in places to account for woodland creation/culling activities.
- b. Condition reports.
- Round robin reporting on the condition of deer culled and observed to date in the season took place.
 - Generally, all parties felt the stags had been in good condition, possibly slightly better than the hinds and calves which were generally thought to be in average condition for the time of year they were culled.
 - No one reported having to cull particularly many poor-condition animals during the season.
- c. Changes in land management objectives.
- DM confirmed that approximately 600ha of Duiskey has now been fenced and the process had been underway for some time to drive out as many deer from the woodland area on to the hill as possible and then any remaining will be culled before replanting of the commercial woodland block commences in Spring 2025. This will be a significant change to the central north part of the Conaglen deer range and culling will take place over the next 24 months both inside and outside the fence to rebalance stock as deemed required, when on-going numbers are assessed.
 - SC reported on behalf of EMacL that Ardgour had planted native woodland areas which was fenced and approximately 30ha; and it was considered it would have no significant impact on deer movements or numbers.
 - SF reported that C. Boyd is progressing with the fencing of his woodland area adjacent to North Carnoch in preparation to commence with commercial species restocking of the area. No negative impact on deer numbers or movements are expected and perhaps the new fencing would reduce the risk of DVCs in that location.
- 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 are ongoing in lots of locations and he was aware of issues known at Doire Mhor, Glen Hurich & Scammadale.
- e. Poaching and DVC's.
- RM reported 3 DVCs involving hinds at Conaglen that they were aware of, possibly as a result of increased traffic due to the Corran Ferry being out of service.
 - SC reported that he was aware of 3 DVC in the Ardgour and wider area (which could be those reported for Conaglen) and also 1 sika Stag which was hit at Inversanda.
 - RS reported 1 DVC at Resipole.
 - JJ reported no DVCs had been reported to FLS in their areas.
 - No party reported any observed or suspected poaching activities during the previous period.
- f. Non-Toxic/Non-Lead Munition
- DM confirmed that SQWV were making it a requirement of membership to not use lead ammunition whilst culling deer.
 - A general discussion took place on this subject and still people felt that the accuracy of copper bullets not grouping well could be a welfare issue, but there was no option now but to make the move or stop being SQWV members.

- Comments were again made that significant differences were being found between some munition rounds/manufacturers and some gun makes/calibres not being found suited to each other. FLS have no clear favourite and have various rounds and calibres being used for deer control.
 - Restricted availability of non-toxic ammunition remains an issue.
- g. Game Dealers
- It was reported that Highland Game was collecting from the majority of the DMG area, but that Ardgay Game was also offering a collection service in the area and was working with Resipole already, which leaves two options for DMG members to consider for the next season.
- h. Designated sites.
- DM provided an update summary on the 6 new woodland enclosures within the Ardour Pinewoods & Doire Donn designated sites on Conaglen which were fenced and planted where relevant in 2023.
 - DM confirmed that woodland monitoring surveys and reports would take place around May annually, to assess the success of the enclosures.
 - DM confirmed that Conaglen remains focused on woodland expansion and will continue to utilise the system of rotational fencing.
 - i. Three new enclosures are located in the Ardour Pinewoods SSSI/SAC
 - A total area of 48ha has been planted in Spring 2023, with a remaining area of about 53ha enclosed for natural regeneration.
 - ii. Three new enclosures are located in the Doire Donn SSSI
 - 10ha has been planted and the remaining area of about 55ha enclosed for natural regeneration.

5. Counts Recruitment and Mortality counts

- SF reminded members that they should report Recruitment and Mortality figures to SF for inclusion into the Population Model which will be updated including this information and maintained on the ELSDMG Deer Management section of the ADMG website.
- SF commented that, as the last group-wide deer count was completed in 2022, the next would need to be scheduled for 2027.

6. Update Training Log.

- SF asked if there were any identified training needs. None were suggested.
- SF asked members to let him know of any required additions/alterations to include in the ELSDMG training record.

7. Update from FLS

- The Sale of Longrigg to the local community is progressing.
- There recently have been requests for FLS to consider additional involvement in the North Sunart Woodland Group (NSWG) area to repair fences or assess deer numbers and impacts in that location.
 - This matter has been spurred on by the increased culling that has taken place at Ranachan Croft, part of NSWG, in recent months. It is understood that Bruce Taylor may be contacting landowners in the area including FLS to assess if there was sufficient interest to apply for a woodland feasibility study grant.

8. Update from NatureScot.

- SF and DM highlighted some concerns regarding the recent designation of the ELSDMG area as a Deer Management Priority area, as presented at the ADMG AGM. The lack of prior communication from those responsible has understandably caused unease, as there has been no explanation or contact regarding this designation. However, we have received reassurance from B McKeown of NatureScot that this designation is actually a recognition of the significant positive work already being done in habitat preservation and restoration within the ELSDMG area which forms part of an Atlantic Rainforest cluster, and this acknowledgement can be seen as a positive endorsement of our ongoing efforts.¹

- Following consultation, the Natural Environment Bill was being put forward during the next parliamentary period.
 - It will give more Flexible Powers to NS
 - It will allow for Deer Management Orders, enabling NS to push further to manage deer on a Landscape Scale.
 - It will provide increased Section 10 powers to protect agricultural land and try to reduce the number of DVCs.
 - It will provide increased Section 7 powers to allow NS to intervene and help private owners deliver on requested agreements.
- A training day was going to be organized by NS at Callop for the new Lite Woodland HIA methodology to be rolled out for DMGs to consider adopting.
- There is a proposal being considered to have a new register of competency of deer managers/culling staff beyond that already recorded in DSC Level 1 and Level 2 e.g. An additional competency assessment might be brought in and recorded for Night Shooting etc.
- NS board will be maintaining focus on prevention of biodiversity losses by 2030 and targeting delivering substantial biodiversity improvements & landscape scale restoration in Scotland by 2045.
 - 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.

ADMG.

- Whilst there was no representative from ADMG at the meeting SF reminded all parties that ADMG keeps us updated regularly with their online Scope Magazine. E-Scope is the email bulletin from ADMG. You can view recent e-newsletters and/or sign up for the mailing list on this link. [Publications – ADMG \(deer-management.co.uk\)](https://deer-management.co.uk/publications)
- ADMG have been in touch with SF regarding outstanding web-hosting fees and members subs. SF and DM are to review and discuss this before the next DMG meeting and report back to members.

Stakeholders and Public comments.

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

9. AOB.

- A brief discussion was held on an article by V Clements in the SGA magazine highlighting that trees planted or established on organic-rich soils often change that soil from being a carbon store or sequester into a carbon emitter. B McKeown of NatureScot explained this was due to the respiration of the trees drying out the soil. SF will copy the article to the members which can also be found on this link. <https://www.scottishgamekeepers.co.uk/latest-news/2023/2023-09-14-in-the-atmosphere-in-the-trees-or-in-the-ground.php>
- SF reported that a Fungal and Aphid infestation of Scots Pine trees has been identified in our area. Copies of a report from Forest Research were handed out at the meeting.
- The next meeting is suggested to take place in circa Autumn/Winter 2024.
- No other business.

Meeting closed.

¹. This was subsequently reinforced by G Taylor of NatureScot in reference to the Atlantic Rainforest cluster, of which Morvern also forms part, at the Morvern DMG meeting later that same day.

Minutes Approved at the 22/04/2025 ELSDMG meeting: Signed S. Fox. ELSDMG Chair.