

West Knoydart Deer Management Group
Minutes of Meeting Held at Inverie Village Hall
Tuesday 21st November 2017, 11.15

Present: David McDonnell, Fred Rous, Rupert Soames, Iain Biggart, Rob Cooper, Amie Dow, Jim Brown, Grahame Taylor.

1. **Apologies:** Davie Newton, Eric Delwart, Mike Kenny, Ally Macaskill, Grant Holroyd, John Crossthwaite-Eyre, Iain Wilson.
2. **Minutes of last meeting** held on Tues 13th June 2017 were agreed

3. Review of Action points

Action Point	Who	Progress
Keep display area folder and web page up to date	JB	Done/Ongoing
Draft map of seasonal stag/hind ranges	JB	To do
DMP update	JB/DN	Almost complete (copy provided)
DMP annual review at next meeting	JB/DN	Addressed in this meeting
Look to use SNH GIS system for count/cull data processing when available	GT	SWARD system not yet completed.
HIA map of collated results	CM	CM no longer with SNH. HIA funding available for data assessment (£1800), contact GT for more information. Must be spent by 31/03/18.
Maintain exchange of information and data with KDMG	JB/DN	Linzi Seivwright now KDMG Secretary; in communication with JB.
Peatlands action fund - take forward feasibility study	JB	On agenda
Consider using Best Practice format for Rubha Rhaonuill monitoring results	JB/GH	To present woodland monitoring with group HIA results.
HIA-Complete surveys and collate results	JB/IB/AM	Surveys completed.
DMG costs and subs proposal	JB	Draft cost sheet provided.

4. Mechanisms to Manage Deer

a) Stag Cull Reports discussed, as per data sheet.

111 stags culled to date, as compared to 151 proposed in the population model. JMT have not yet applied for an out of season stalking licence, but do still intend to. There are also 5 stags within fences, which they intend to cull; will be taking a total of maximum 30 stags for the year.

The Foundation culled less than planned on their own ground, but extras on Inverguserein. Also, some within fenced woodland establishment areas and there may be more.

Kilchoan had a good season, with more mature stags on the ground than for many years; planned cull of 33 achieved.

Hind Culls planned:

JMT, 20; Inverguserein, 6.

KF: 70 hinds plus calves, maybe a few more partly depending on Kilchoan numbers. 21 hinds and 19 calves culled to date.

Kilchoan have culled 42 hinds and 15 calves; looking for 170 total, so have 130 hinds still to cull within 10 weeks.

Pop. model target of 255 should be achievable.

Camusrory had 16 stags and expect to be shooting 30 hinds this year. Barisdale had 8 stags and anticipate they will be culling 12 hinds.

Brief discussion around recording of culled yearlings.

b) Deer Count Plan

WKDMG and Kilchoan plan on foot counting as usual, with the first good week of weather after end of hind season. Hoping to coordinate with Barisdale and Camusrory for counting the march areas on the same day. Also, offer of any help possible with counting as appropriate.

RS reported Camusrory considering helicopter count, to coordinate with Sir Patrick. However, they will in any case also co-ordinate with Kilchoan/WKDMG foot count. There was a general consensus that it is easier to coordinate to count on foot in the west area.

Discussion of helicopter counts: cameras are not provided with a helicopter, SNH can provide a camera, and possibly staff. GT to make enquiries re-staff availability; the best chance of securing them is to book them before Christmas. Helicopter cost approx. £7000 per day.

Kilchoan and KF counts will take place between 15th Feb and 15th March 2018. Agreed to give as much notice as possible on timing of count after minor issues last time. Also agreed to have group discussion regarding conditions/weather and where best to count on what day. RS stressed that last year they wanted to be a part of the count, and continue to want to be involved. JB/IB to liaise with others.

c) DMP update/review

JB has updated the plan and preparing for review, distributed objective scoring sheets. The 20 objectives that scored the highest are listed. Members of the group need to review the objectives and score them according to how they are currently performing. GT said that the SNH 2018/19 re-assessments would be focusing on delivery of DMPs, so we need to try and be on top of that. The group will need to go through the public interest plan, review it, refocus, and cross reference action points with the 2016 management plan. If Camusrory, Kilchoan and Barrisdale were to become members and the group delivers a cohesive plan, the low scoring areas of the 2016 assessment would be largely resolved.

Linzi Sievwright (KDMG Secretary) has offered to attend meetings, and assist with pulling together agreed population model to include Barisdale and Camusrory. Linzi, JB and DN to meet to discuss agreeing a joint population model. RS asked for it to be recorded that unless we have a common model we will have two completely different cull numbers.

Deer count area density was discussed. Overall deer density from 2017 count is up again on last year. That part of the DMP is moving in the wrong direction, so it is important that cull targets are met this season. It includes Kilchoan, but not Camusrory/Barisdale.

5. Delivery of designated features into favourable condition

The fencing at Barisdale, to protect a significant area of the pine wood SSSI has been completed.

6. Manage Deer to retain and improve existing native woodland cover

No points raised.

7. Contribute to woodland expansion target

JB provided a copy of the recently completed Knoydart Forest Trust Long Term Forest Plan, the sections marked with green tabs are relevant to the group. It includes possible sites for native woodland expansion over the next 10 years.

The Shelter belt felling at Kilchoan is likely to go ahead between January-March 2018. Restocking will be with native woodland but on the face, around the hydro pipe on the south side of the glen, rather than on the current footprint across the bottom of the glen.

Clegs completed a woodland survey at Camusory and stated it was uneconomical to plant trees as the land is too steep; the professional advise that it is unviable.

8. Monitor and Manage Deer Impacts

No points raised.

9. Ability to store carbon through ecosystem health

JB shared the peatlands action fund application with the group. He is awaiting the result and if successful the fund will be managed through a cost code with the Knoydart Foundation. The funding of £18,930 is for a feasibility study to be carried out by a contractor, which should be complete by the end of March 2018. As well as the survey work, it will generate digitised maps of existing KF habitat maps and make recommendations for future practical work. It won't cover the more remote areas due to time constraints, but these areas could be looked at in future. It will focus on Foundation, Sandaig and Kilchoan ground. Nationally SNH are providing £8,000,000 of funding for peatland restoration; to remove drains and re-cover bare peat.

10. Reduce and mitigate Invasive non- native species.

Kilchoan have shot 2 feral pigs since the last meeting, and there is thought to still be activity at Kyles. There have been signs at Camusory, but this ceased just before breeding season. Kilchoan shot a Sika stag last week, for the first time in 20 years.

GH advised the forestry commission are using drop nets for trapping pigs and tracking them as we don't know how they live and are years behind Europe. SNH are working with Achnacary and are going to purchase fabricated traps which they will loan out. The Scottish Government will be providing pig management guidance in the near future. The group are welcome to visit Achnacary.

11. Protect designated historic/cultural features

No points raised.

12. Deliver High standards of competence in deer management

Training records circulated, group member to confirm it is up-to-date.

13. Contribute to public health and well-being

A local stalker has tested positive for Lymes Disease. Blood tests at the end of the season are important.

LS is going to look at testing for chronic wasting disease. Though no reported cases of CWD in the UK, if it was reported, it would become a Scottish Government led approach.

14. Maximise Economic Benefit associated with deer management

No points raised

15. Minimise economic cost associated with deer management

JB circulated a draft of WKDMG Running Costs, and suggested subs.

16. Effective communication on deer management issues

The last meetings minutes will go up on the website now they have been approved. Display area info. is up to date.

17. Deer welfare at individual and population level

Camusory have introduced a feeding programme and now have more stags, which are healthier.

18. AOB

RS raised the subject of his offer to become chair of the WKDMG. JB advised that the group had agreed, at the last meeting, that DN would continue as chair but would now be paid for the role. This was just prior to receiving the kind offer from RS, and currently Camusory are not members of the group. RS advised that he had thought DN was standing down, but is happy for him to continue. However, if he were to become chair, Camusory would become members, and he is optimistic that Barisdale would then also come on board. IB advised that if Camusory and Barrisdale became official members, Kilchoan would too.

It was agreed that the situation could not be resolved without the other WKDMG members of the group being present, but it would need addressing before the next meeting.

19. DONM

Tuesday 12th June 2018

Tuesday 20th November 2018

Action Points

Keep display area folder and web page up to date; minutes, DMP, etc.	JB
DMP annual review at next meeting	JB/DN
Member objectives scoring	All
Review 2014 SNH assessment of DMG to ensure progress is still being made	JB/DN
Ensure cull targets are achieved	IB/AM/JB/IW
Coordinate and plan 2018 deer count	IB/JB
Peatlands Action Fund – take forward feasibility study	JB
Consider applying to SNH fund for HIA data interpretation	JB/DN
Consider expanding HIA over the group area	All
Consider using Best Practice format for Rubha Rhaonuill monitoring results	GH/JB
Meet to agree population model	JB/DN/LS
Maintain exchange of information and data with KDMG	JB/DN/LS
RS offer to chair and bring on board other members - consider	All
DMG costs and subs proposal - consider	All