

WKDMG Minutes of Meeting of 13 June 2022

Venue: Inverie Hall, 11:00 on 13 June 2022

Present: Rupert Soames, Michael Laing, David Ferguson, Jim Brown, Lewis Robb, Tom Dalziel, Luise Janniche, Richard Williams, David Balharry (JMT), Iain Biggart, Christophe Henkel, Cathy Mayne, Richard Martin, Drew Macpherson (KF Ranger), Fred Rous, Andrew MacMaster (NatureScot), Ian Wilson.

1. Apologies

Elisabeth van Basten Battenberg.

2. Minutes of last meeting

Draft Minute of meeting 15 November 2021 attached, for approval. No comments.

3. Reports from the Chair and the Treasurer; report from NatureScot

Financial spreadsheet attached. Noted healthy surplus and review of subscriptions in November.

On-going discussion about role of secretariat and other expertise, such as HIA. Will report on outcomes in due course. Tom Dalziel to perhaps to take on secretariat.

4. Deer management – count, cull and population model

Culls from 2021/22. Cull numbers confirmed with higher numbers than planned, particularly stags. RS noted out that JMT had not given the Group any estimate of their cull numbers, so the cull of 83 came as a surprise and has been unhelpful in maintaining a model of the population. Meeting noted disproportionate number of stags to hinds; JMT responded that they do not model on numbers, more on habitat, and they shot what was there at the time, not to a specific target number. However, JMT would accede to Group requests on three points:-

- They would give a cull number for the upcoming season – at least 40 stags and similar number of hinds.
- HIA survey would be done in 2022, and they would share data with the Group
- The fences around the JMT woodland would be made secure during 2022 and then maintained

Count 21/22: there had been no DMG-wide count this year, but several estates had done their own counts:

	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Total prior year
Camusrory	80	142	27	249	604
Kilchoan (inc Delwart)	317	431	141	889	1,223
Coire					
Choinnichean	45	71	22	138	227
Black Hills	207	19	4	230	343

All noted much lower numbers than the prior year, indicating that previous year had seen an exceptional incursion of deer from elsewhere.

Group should try for a full count of the DMG area in 2023.

Proposed stag cull 2022.

Camusrory – 10-15

Kilchoan – 40

KF – outside Black Hills project, would normally take 50 plus incursions.

Barisdale – 20

Inverguserein – 4-5

Bhraomisaig – Kilchoan/KF will clear if there is an incursion but fence is now tight and strong.

JMT – 40 minimum.

5. Deer welfare

Recruitment in the 30-33% region. Very little mortality.

6. Woodlands and forestry

Feedback on the Black Hills Regeneration Project – no comments received from KDMG East.

Discussion of the proposals; compensatory cull likely start this year. DMP proposed compensatory cull of 150S 30H 15C over a two-year period which would be in addition to normal cull levels. After consultation and discussion amongst various interested parties, KF agreed to re-weight the cull to increase hinds and

reduce stags, so proposed numbers would be 100-110S, plus 60-70H plus calves, totalling about 195 over 2 years. 2022 – 24S through the summer (some have already moved away) in July and Aug, but will apply for OoS in Jan-Mar to take 50S, 20H + C, but will change to fewer stags and more H+C and take some of the extra H from adjacent ground (eg Inverguserein and the flats behind the village). Totalling about 60 additional stags over the full year, so about 110 all together from KF. Hoping to have the fence closed by June 2023.

DB – commending KF for taking compensatory cull prior to putting up the fence, which is better for welfare.
JB – committing to no increased habitat impacts or deer density outside the area, or inside, so will see any changes caused by the movement of deer out of the project area. Working around residents and recreational use, to prevent upset.

RS – discussion and consultative approach of KF, and specifically Jim, very welcome, as was the adjustment in stag/hind balance in the light of comments. Camusrory would be happy to help Ian W or other parties if required to get the hind numbers.

NatureScot – endorse the approach, and pleased to see effective consultation.

CM – chat with JB about how to incorporate this into the population model.

7. Habitat impact assessment

HIA work had been carried out in 2022 by KF Kilchoan and Barrisdale. Camusrory had carried out comprehensive “baseline” managed by LZ in 2021, and will plan to do future updates in the same rhythm as other estates. Kilchoan looking to increase number and spread of their HIA measurements.

8. Invasive non-native species

Feral pig reports?

IB – evidence at narrows in Oct 2021. KF – Croulin had one patch. IW – some again at Inverguserein, one for a few days in dense bushes then moved on further round the coast (summer 2021).

Sika stags – 3 in KF in 2021, assuming hinds now breeding in the conifer blocks.

9. Training and competence

Lewis Robb now DSC1, possibly level 2. KE would combine with Terry, if possible.

Register needs updating.

10. Communications and Data Protection

Website update check.

11. AOB

AMacM – the Scot Gov Biodiversity Strategy needs to be monitored. Climate and Environment high priorities for government. Working group looking at ammunition, with lighter bullets for lower calibres for copper ammunition; will circulate update after the meeting.

12. Review of action points

13. DONM

Monday 14th November Inverie Village Hall TBC