

West Knoydart Deer Management Group
Minutes of meeting held at Inverie Village Hall
Tuesday 23rd June 2015, 13.00

Present:

Iain Biggart, Jim Brown, Victor Clements, Peter Fletcher, Rachel Moore, Davie Newton (chair), Fred Rous, Lester Standen, Graeme Taylor.

Victor Clements, of Native Woodland Advice, who is writing the KDMG DMP was introduced.

1. **Apologies:** Eric Delwart, Ami Dow, Ian Dow, Grant Holroyd, Lorna Schofield, Iain Wilson
2. **Minutes of meeting** held on 3rd March 2015 were agreed.

3. Review of action points

| Action point | Who by | Progress |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Circulate data records and continue to add to/amend as necessary | DN | Ongoing |
| Finish compiling objectives spreadsheet and append to DMP | JB | Done |
| Add count detail to density map | JB | No |
| Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges | JB | No |
| Look at feasibility of allocating culls by area | JB | In DMP |
| Prepare charts of population change | DN/JB | Done |
| Habitat monitoring pre-survey meeting, wk. April 13 th | RM/JB/IB | Done |
| KF & Kilchoan habitat monitoring surveys, wk. April 20 th | RM /IB | Done |
| Approach SNH re posting minutes, etc on their website | DN/GT | Will use KF. Hard copy file in KF display area. |
| Update DMP detail for next meeting for early June | JB | Done |
| Consider SNH funding for DMP GIS system | JB/DN | SNH trialling a system |
| Description of rationale for cull animal selection | JB | Done |
| Habitat condition information available for group area | GT | Done |
| Foot Count | IB/JB | Done |
| Invite KDMG chair and their DMP consultant to a meeting with WKDMG chair and SNH | DN | Done |
| KF Goat management finances | JB | Append goat management to DMP |
| Suggestion of data/GIS provision to DMG's by SNH | DN/GT | N/A |
| Outline KF/JMT working relationship re culling at Li. | JB | No |
| Circulate notes from meeting with ED | DN | No |

4. Habitat impact monitoring survey results

The monitoring had gone well, and carried out a bit earlier this year by KF and Kilchoan, so need to be consistent on future timing. KF results were available, KE still to input into data sheets, but will circulate when done. It was noted that trends might not show up until about 7 years data shown. LS reported a significant increase in tree seedling height over previous years, and that this was not accompanied by a reduction in browsing levels. GT offered to provide the system SNH uses to display data in graphical form, which all thought would be useful.

5. 2015 - 2016 Cull Plans

Kilchoan; 32 stags, 90 hinds, + calves.

KF; 70 stags, 70 hinds, + calves + woodland

Inverguserein and Sgamadail unknown.

JMT; likely 40 to 50 hinds, but no clear plan for stags. LS reported that this is because of restrictions placed on, and recent difficulties with applying for out of season shooting authorisation and subsequent refusal, so will need to maximise the in-season stag cull. Would prefer to target the stags which are causing the habitat damage on the low ground in the winter, but been forced into a position of culling increased numbers of stags on the high ground in the summer. Will need to co-ordinate more with JB during the season, to avoid disturbing each other while stalking.

GT reported that the authorisation had been refused on grounds that not enough evidence of habitat damage during late winter had been provided, and issues involving collaboration with neighbours had not been resolved. The fact that JMT felt an authorisation was necessary is partly a symptom of wider issues, such as low habitat quality and therefore a lack of deer forage and shelter in some areas to the east. These issues need to be resolved in the DMPs.

6. Deer Management Plan Update

The updated WKDMG DMP was tabled, and JB confirmed that the main body of the plan was complete, with just a few details to be added in and the appendix to compile.

GT stressed that the plans need to resolve any issues highlighted in the DMG Assessment, so that aspect still needs to be reviewed. Plans need to be in place by April 2016, when DMG's will be re-assessed. The plan needs to mesh with the KDMG plan now being developed by VC, as the deer population range is shared.

JB to update plan taking this into account, then circulate for comments to be made within 1 month.

VC said that he could offer whatever assistance was necessary to help finish the WKDMG plan, including any mapping requirements. He suggested we all have a look at the NW Sutherland DMG plan, which can be accessed through the ADMG website, as this is a similar format he proposes to use for the KDMG plan. He would also like to come back and take more time to visit the WKDMG ground. Suggested mid July to have a day seeing ground from Inverie (KF/Kilchoan), and a separate day on the Loch Hourn side (JMT) accessed from Arnisdale.

The KDMG plan will be prepared in time for their November meeting, with any further discussion needed to ensure the 2 plans are complimentary taking place before an additional meeting to be scheduled in December.

It was noted that the Knoydart Forest Trust are beginning the process to update their Long Term Forest Plan, and that Knoydart Foundation are also having a re-assessment of their Land

Management Plan. These processes will include further community consultation. It was thought that the DMP format should be flexible enough to cope with any changes made to those plans, particularly with consideration to the annual and 5 year reviews proposed.

7. Collaboration with Neighbours

A reminder to all that we need to keep up sharing information and activities.

8. AOB

WKDMG members have won prizes at the recent Scottish Finest Woodland Awards! JMT won best New Native Woodland, primarily for their alternative model of deer management at Li & C.D. KFT won the Promoting Viable Livelihoods competition and also the Tim Stead Trophy as overall winner in the Community Woodlands category. The judges were impressed by the number of people employed and the range of activities carried out.

At the recent east KDMG meeting, concern had again been expressed over the high number of natural mortalities. In the past this would tend to happen periodically during a particularly bad winter then reduce for a number of years, so it is a concern that it has happened 2 years running (over 300 mortalities were reported last year). This is a deer welfare issue and reflects the need to improve habitat condition and increase woodland cover.

9. 2015/2016 meeting dates

- Tuesday November 17th 2015
- Tuesday December 15th 2015 (Note additional date to adopt DMP)
- Tuesday March 8th 2016

Action Points

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Outline KF/JMT working relationship re culling at Li. | JB |
| Minutes to be posted on KF website, with links from KE, JMT and poss. ADMG sites | JB |
| Keep display area folder up to date; minutes, etc | JB |
| Add count detail to density map | JB |
| Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges | JB |
| Append KF Goat management plan to DMP | JB |
| Update DMP detail and circulate for comments back by end July | JB/all |
| Look to use new SNH GIS system for count/cull data processing when available | GT |
| Habitat impact data display system | GT |
| Circulate notes from meeting with ED | DN |
| Circulate habitat impact monitoring results | RM/IB |
| Co-ordinate re. stag culling at Li & C.D. | LS/JB |
| Arrange dates for VC visit mid July | VC/IB/LS |
| Assist with finalising and presenting DMP | VC/IB |
| | |