

West Knoydart Deer Management Group
Minutes of meeting held at Inverie Village Hall
Tuesday 13th June 2017, 11.15

Present:

Ally Macaskill, Davie Newton (chair), Grant Holroyd, Iain Biggart, Iain Wilson, Jim Brown.

1. **Apologies:** Ami Dow, Eric Delwart, Fred Rous, Graeme Taylor, John Crossthwaite-Eyre, Mike Kenny, Peter Fletcher, Rupert Soames.

2. **Minutes of last meeting** held on 22nd November 2016 were agreed.

3. Review of action points

Action point	Who	Progress
Keep display area folder and Web page up to date; minutes, DMP, etc.	JB	Done/Ongoing
Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges	JB	To do
DMP update following input from SNH re-assessment	JB/DN	To do
Look to use new SNH GIS system for count/cull data processing when available	GT	Ongoing. KF/KFT looking to possibly adopt a GIS system
Use the Public Interest Criteria as future meeting agendas	All	Done
Maintain open invitation of membership to Camusrory and Barisdale	JB/DN	Done
Maintain exchange of information and data with KDMG	JB/DN	Done
Web page payment	IW/JB	IW happy to fund again.
KFT and all to input new woodland expansion plans to DMP	GH/All	On agenda
Woodland condition surveys/monitoring proposals	GH/All	On agenda
Maintain good internal communications through the season	All	Done
Ensure hind cull targets achieved	All	Done
HIA map of collated results	CM	To do
Communicate/coordinate with Camusrory and Barisdale for 2017 spring count	JB/IB	Done, partially achieved
Population model update to follow 2017 spring count	DN/GT	Done
Habitat impact monitoring surveys spring 2017	LS/IB/JB	KF done, Others to do.
Peatlands Action Fund – consider application for surveys	DN/JB	On agenda
River basin management plan – contact SEPA	DN/JB	On agenda
Continue invasive/non-natives management	IB/JB/IW	Done, ongoing
DMP annual review at next meeting	JB	Postponed

4. Mechanisms to Manage Deer

a) Members 2016-17 final cull reports and 2017-18 proposals

Attached data sheet approved.

Proposed culls for coming season.				
	Stags	Hinds		
Knoydart Foundation	65	70	Plus calves	
Inverguseran	5	10 to 15		
JMT	20 (max. 35)	30	Some to be taken by K.F.	
Kilchoan	30	170 to 190	Plus calves	
Totals	120 to 135	280 to 305	141?	541 to 581
Pop. model proposal	151	255	141	547

Proposed culls combined are comparable to the level suggested by the population model, with proposals being slightly less for stags and more for hinds (in response to increasing population and high recruitment). All happy with proposals.

Camusrory final cull report (by email) for 16/17 is:

15 stags, 7 hinds, 6 calves and 1 injured hind shot OOS.

2016-17 plan is 15 stags, 15 to 20 hinds, plus calves.

b) Deer count report and analysis

WKDMG/Kilchoan count had gone well, including communication with Camusrory but full count coordination not possible, and no engagement yet from Barisdale. There had again been discrepancies between counts on the march between Kilchoan/Camusrory. Full engagement from all still seen as main priority next year to get a coordinated count.

c) Population Model update

Updated model, taking account of cull, recruitment and count, was discussed. Noted that concerns have been raised by Camusrory about accuracy and interpretation of data used for them and Barisdale. This re-enforcing the need for full coordinated count next spring. DN thanked for work on the model.

5. Delivery of designated features into favourable condition

a) Any impacts on WKDMG resulting from management of designated features.

Nothing reported.

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

a) Current open range native woodland deer management

GH reported on monitoring at Rubha Rhaonuill, showing some places where seedlings are getting away, but largely browsing levels still high. Consider using Best Practice format for results, in order to include with group monitoring data. AM noted a transition in JMT management currently, with Lester Standing having stood down. AM now managing Li & C.D., as well as Skye properties, and is looking at options for using contractors and commercial stalking as well as ongoing KF access.

Current intention is to maintain low impacts, with more targeted management of open range deer, and generally less dramatic cull levels. Wants to work within group population model, and taking account of neighbours aspirations.

Noted that there are increasing areas of localised tree regeneration getting away throughout the WKDMG/Kilchoan area, despite high deer densities. Need to understand the mechanisms involved to see if targeted management might further increase this in the future.

b) Current woodland deer management within fenced exclosures

Ongoing roe management in Inverie Woods, and control of red incursions into new native woodlands. All currently working well.

c) Plans for expansion of targeted deer management within native woodland.

KFT was unable to carry out the 'Cooperation Fund' feasibility study for Rubha Rhaonuill, but hopes to carry over funding to next year. This to look at potential for regeneration and new woodland there, and ways of achieving that.

7. Contribution to woodland expansion target

a) Management of existing woodland expansion schemes

KFT plan to maintain Garsley fence for now, hopefully another 10 years, to maximise tree recruitment there. When fence becomes un-viable, will need to begin impact monitoring and assess deer management levels.

AM reported plans to maintain existing schemes, to achieve required stocking densities. Now plan to maintain fences for the foreseeable future and be firm on control of deer incursions.

b) Plans for new woodland schemes out-with existing native woodland cover.

GH showed the KFT Woodland habitat network map, with aspiration for further linkages. Looking at potential schemes for the next 5 to 10 years. The most likely to progress initially being between Sandaig and Doune, below the road.

IW flagged up a possible new scheme at Inverguseran, between the two existing schemes on the Black Hills side of Guserein River. Potential for impact on deer movements in/out of Black hills there. JB mentioned possibility of further planting at Airor, but within existing deer fence.

GH left the meeting.

8. Monitor and manage deer impacts

a) Habitat monitoring results and group impact assessment

KF done, and impacts looking within acceptable levels.

JMT and Kilchoan still planning to carry out surveys.

b) Actions resulting from impact assessment

No action.

c) Future habitat monitoring plans

Need to look at how to take forward group collation and interpretation.

9. Ability to store carbon through ecosystem health

a) Update on communications with Peatlands Action Fund

JB outlined communication with Lucy Ballantyne. There is potential to have a feasibility study carried out as part of this round of funding, looking at options for a costed plan of practical work which might then be funded under a future round. This could include data collection such as aerial photos and peat depth. For this to go ahead on the whole DMG would require signatures of all land owners involved, to agree to preserve any restoration carried out, ie not doing anything to damage restored peatland such as drainage. Options include hag re-profiling, re-vegetating bare peat, and re-profiling drains. Deer densities could be an issue, if damage to restored sites is likely, but there is no set density level requirement.

All happy to take forward feasibility, so long as recommendations do not tie the group members to specific future actions at this stage.

b) River Basin Management Plan – update on communication with SEPA

JB outlined response from SEPA:

“You are quite right, I’m not sure at this stage what you could do in the Knoydart area to help deliver RBMP. As you say the catchments are small and the water quality is predominantly good. Where there are issues we need to take a closer look at the ecology before we can know if there is a problem or not. In some areas we have been interested in deer numbers as there has been ecoli counts from uplands that don’t appear to match sheep populations but this is generally in and around shellfish protected areas that are impacted.”

So guessing we can assume no further action needed there at present.

10. Reduce and mitigate invasive non-native species

Sika, wild boar, feral goats.

KF reported ongoing goat management and 2 sika stags culled, with more sika, including hinds, seen in Guserein Plantation.

IW had culled a young feral pig, and lots of sign on Kilchoan. Some signs of pig activity now on KF and JMT ground as well.

11. Protect designated historic/cultural features

Plan to list and map group designated (and other) historic/cultural features?

No progress.

12. Deliver higher standards of competence in deer management

Training record review and future training/professional development proposals

AM has DSC Level 2.

13. Contribute to public health and well-being

Any public safety risks

Any food safety issues

CWD actions

Lymes disease awareness

Ranger/walking group awareness and integration in deer management operation

Other public access issues

Current activities ongoing.

14. Maximise economic benefit associated with deer management

Assess deer management income throughout WKDMG in previous year

Assess associated benefits of deer management in previous year

Potential new opportunities to increase income from deer management

Ongoing aspiration.

15. Minimise economic cost associated with deer management

Assess deer management expenditure throughout WKDMG in previous year

Assess associated costs and impacts of deer management in previous year

Potential areas to reduce cost of deer management activities.

Ongoing aspiration.

16. Effective communication on deer management issues

Communication issues within WKDMG over last year

Communication issues between WKDMG and neighbours over last year
 Communication issues with communities affected by WKDMG area deer management in the last year.

An objection to deer fencing from a local community member had been received by KF. This highlighting need to inform community better on reasons behind need for temporary fencing. KF/KFT are going to respond to the individual, and producing map of fences with gates and stiles marked.

17. Deer welfare at individual and population level

General health of deer population.
 Any deer welfare concerns for this winter
 Deer access to food and shelter

Low winter mortality and deer generally in good condition.

18. AOB

DN not able to continue DMG work as part of LDO role. IB said that ED would be happy to contribute financially if it meant we could keep DN in the role. Noted that JB time all being contributed through KF. Other main costs are web page and meeting space currently not paid for. After discussion it was agreed that the group needs to look at ways of managing finances, including:

DN to be paid for work

JB to calculate cost of his time

JB to cost subs. proposal, taking account of all DMG costs, and allocating share of costs to members.

Noted that KDMG have taken on Linzi Seivwright for their secretarial role. JB to contact re. sharing of information, data, etc.

19. DONM

Tuesday November 21st 2017

Tuesday June 12th 2018?

Action Points

Keep display area folder and Web page up to date; minutes, DMP, etc.	JB
Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges	JB
DMP update	JB/DN
DMP annual review at next meeting	JB/DN
Look to use new SNH GIS system for count/cull data processing when available	GT
HIA map of collated results	CM
Maintain exchange of information and data with KDMG	JB/DN
Peatlands Action Fund – take forward feasibility study	JB
Consider using Best Practice format for Rubha Rhaonuill monitoring results	GH/JB
HIA – complete surveys and collate results	JB/IB/AM
DMG costs and subs proposal	JB