

West Knoydart Deer Management Group

Minutes of Meeting held 8/6/18

Inverie Village Hall 11.30 am.

Present: Davie Newton, Ally Macaskill, Fred Rous, Iain Wilson, Amie Dow, Grant Holroyd (first part of meeting), Iain Biggart, Jim Brown, Rupert Soames, Arthur Soames, Rob Cooper.

Attending: Graeme Taylor

1. Apologies

Cathy Mayne, Eric Delwart, Elisabeth van Basten Batenburg

2. Minutes of last meeting

Draft minutes adopted. Note that JB had missed himself off attendance list!

3. Mechanisms to manage deer

a. Welcome to new members

Barisdale, Camusrory and Kilchoan were welcomed as official members of the West Knoydart Deer Management Group.

RS said that John Gordon had retained ownership of some land at the east side of Barisdale and would be happy to also join the group.

b. Constitution

The minor changes in the latest constitution draft are:

-In para.3 Group area; removal of property names in favour of geographical description,

-Para.4 Membership; inclusion of KFT and ACGC,

-Addition of headers and footers.

All were in agreement to adopt. Need to get map of new area coverage.

c. Subscriptions

DN presented some alternatives for calculating subscription rates, including by land area or number of deer culled or counted. After some discussion it was agreed to use the 3 tier system for simplicity, with rates per band to be agreed annually at AGM. Suggested first year rates are:

Small (<500ha?), £50

Medium (500ha to 2000ha?), £250

Large (>2000ha?), £500

d. Cathy Mayne secretariat role

All present were happy to engage CM as per her offer of services. Thanks Cathy!

e. 2018 deer count results

Area	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Calving %
WKDMG	675	512	228	1415	45%
Kilchoan	381	627	249	1257	40%
Barrisdale	250	360	153	763	43%
Camusrory	88	173	75	336	43%
Total Count Area	1394	1672	705	3771	42%

All were happy with the way the count had gone, with confidence in the results as accurate. There was agreement to repeat next year in the same collaborative manner. Past issues with count results on the Kilchoan/Camusrory march area have been resolved.

f. 2017-18 cull reports and 2018-19 season cull plans

Final cull numbers for 2017-18 season are as per the attached data sheet.

Knoydart Foundation (JB)

Higher ratio of calves to hinds culled than expected.

Average weights (hinds 7st 06 lbs, calves 4st 03 lbs) similar to last season.

Relatively low pregnancy rate of 40%.

High proportion of male calves at 63%.

Mortalities: 1 stag, 1 hind, 2 calves.

2018-19 plan; about 70 stags and 70 hinds plus calves.

Kilchoan (IB)

High hind cull achieved on target.

Mortalities: 4 stags, 4 hinds, 3 calves. Not as bad as expected

2018-19 plan; 32 stags and 130 hinds plus calves.

Population is up on stags, and down on hinds as hoped. Plan to gradually reduce hind numbers further.

Mike leaving at end of June, currently looking for replacement ghillie.

JMT (AM)

Had problems with incursions of stags within fences during the winter. Tried to drive some out. Had culled some, but not all. Checked fences and ok, so must be coming in around sea ends. Did not apply for Out of Season license in the end, so stags culled were under the general Authorisation within fenced woodland.

2018-19 proposal; don't like to set target as depends on numbers on the ground and impacts, but maximum 35 stags, 25 hinds plus calves. Would like to take more in season in Coire Dhorcaill, but difficult access. Maybe scope for collaborative working with Barisdale.

Inverguseran (IW)

3 hinds culled, were all pregnant.

Some stags were culled by KF with guests.

2018-19 plan; 5 or 6 stags and maybe 4 hinds plus calves.

Some deer now within recently established woodland are having positive impacts.

Barisdale (FR)

New start, so no figures to hand from last season.

2018-19 plan for about 20 stags, 30 to 35 hinds plus calves.

The SSSI woodland management plan includes deer management targets.

Camusrory (RC)

Hind weights are up, and almost all hinds culled were pregnant.

Calves were 50% male/female.

Mortalities: 6 stags, 7 hinds and 11 calves.

2017-18 plan; 15 stags, 30 hinds, plus calves

WKDMG 2018-19 cull plans summary	Stags	Hinds	Calves (est.)	Total
KF excl. woodlands	70	70	40	180
Inverguserain	6	5	3	14
JMT	35	25	15	75
Sgamadail (est.)	2	2	1	5
Kilchoan	32	130	65	227
Camusrory	15	30	15	60
Barisdale	20	35	20	75
Totals	180	297	159	636
Actual Cull 2017-18	164	308	168	640

g. Group population model

DN demonstrated the model functions, including input of planned culls for this season to see population projection over 5 years. It became apparent that adjustment of the recruitment and mortality variables will give significantly different outcomes, so getting reliable data to use will be important.

We will also need to think about target densities to be aiming for as part of the DMP review, including Male/Female ratio. The evidence for reducing hind densities to increase productivity of males and making the ground more attractive for stags was discussed.

CM will be fine tuning the model so should be a good tool to help with future cull plans.

h. DMP update plans

The DMP is due for a review, and now also needs a thorough update to include new members. Maybe looking at simplifying the members objectives scoring exercise carried out at the original group formation.

SNH 2019 Assessment of DMGs will focus on the delivery of DMPs including Group operations, constitutions, deer welfare, designated sites, woodland condition and expansion, use of population models, and communications.

A government review of the effectiveness of the voluntary system will be happening in parallel.

CM has 2 days work covered by ADMG to carry out a DMG 'health check', which will look at how we measure up against 35 Public Interest and Benchmark criteria, this autumn.

4. Delivery of designated features into favourable condition

- a. Impacts on WKDMG resulting from management of designated features.

Three deer fenced enclosures are now complete at Barisdale SSSI.

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

New woodland establishment areas will come under this criterion once deer gain access, as fences become 'porous' and then are eventually removed. Will need to look at implementing HIA through this process. Consider 'opening' several areas to deer simultaneously to spread impacts. Garsley, Glen Meadail and Kyles Knoydart are the oldest fences, but hoping to keep maintaining Garsley for as long as financially / practically viable, ideally 10 years.

6. Contribution to woodland expansion target

- a. KFT forest plan update

The new Long-Term Forest Plan has been approved, which covers re-structuring of conifers primarily at Inverie, as well as new woodland and community priorities.

KFT/KF have 8 potential new woodland establishment areas and are hoping to implement 5 over the next 10 years. The first between Sandaig and Doune is hopefully going in next winter. The Guserein and Follach plantations are to be largely retained for the period of the plan, being the only significant woodland cover accessible to deer. If felled, then deer impacts would be transferred to more sensitive neighbouring habitats.

- b. Plans for new woodland establishment out-with existing native woodland.

Inverguserein is looking to put in a new woodland on the west side of Glen Guserein, c. 70ha. ACGC have a 60ha scheme applied for within existing deer fence.

Camusrory have had a feasibility study carried out by Cleggs, which suggests that the ground is too steep and rocky for new woodland establishment to be viable there. RS can provide copy of the report if interested.

FGS budget is secure until April 2019, but uncertainty beyond due to Brexit. Advice is to get potential schemes to contract ASAP.

7. Monitor and manage deer impacts

- a. 2018 habitat impact assessment results

Linzi Seivwright is carrying out a 3rd year of HIA for Camusrory.

KF surveys done; mainly low or moderate impacts. KF are resurrecting some old woodland monitoring plots. Kilchoan & JMT doing surveys soon. Kilchoan plan to establish more plots next year.

- b. Any actions resulting from impact assessments

Camusrory are focusing hind culling on areas of higher impacts.

c. HIA data project support from SNH update

CM is processing available data and will be displaying results on GIS mapping, along with a report. Will be looking to incorporate data from new members next year.

JMT have queried SNH, on the validity of CM comments about the effectiveness of their plot distribution. Holly Deary has responded, in summary, that the program is acceptable.

8. Ability to store carbon through ecosystem health

a. Peatlands Action Fund study and feasibility report

Feasibility study mostly found recovering peatlands with low impacts. Recommendations were for some drain blocking and hag reprofiling. KF had hoped to take some forward, but due to short deadline for application and need to assess recommended techniques, are not doing any this year.

SNH optimistic that the fund will continue next year, then members can look to implement practical recommendations, and possibly expand the area of study.

9. Reduce and mitigate invasive non-native species

a. Sika, wild boar, feral goats.

Sika now thought to be resident at Guserein Plantation. KF managing as and when possible. No recent pig sightings or signs. KF culled just 4 goats; low recruitment this and last year.

10. Protect designated historic/cultural features

11. Deliver higher standards of competence in deer management

a. Training record review and future training/professional development proposals

Need to update for new members and staff changes.

12. Contribute to public health and well-being

13. Economic costs and benefits associated with deer management

14. Effective communication on deer management issues

15. Deer welfare at individual and population level

a. Winter mortality

Mortalities recorded. Generally not as bad as feared; more in the east/interior than west/coastal areas.

16. AOB

-Carnoch bridge is still out. New will be pedestrian only and has planning permission. Big structure due to SEPA requirements. Hoping to complete in September or October.

-EB has offered to host next meeting at Barisdale. It was felt that June meet might be better due to higher chance of bad weather in November.

-JMT and EB still met up on Tuesday despite the wider JMT planning day being postponed. Could still be possible to re-schedule an event?

17. Data Protection

No issues raised.

18. Review of action points

Keep display area folder and web page up to date; minutes, DMP, etc.	JB	Done, ongoing
Member objectives scoring	All	Re-score, more concise list
Review 2014 SNH assessment of DMG to ensure progress is still being made	JB/DN/CM	Will now be covered by CM 'health check'
Ensure cull targets are achieved	All	Done, ongoing
Peatlands Action Fund – Look to apply in 2019	JB/CM/All	Feasibility Study now completed
Complete HIA data interpretation report	CM	In hand
Consider expanding HIA over the group area	All	Awaiting final HIA report recommendations from CM
Consider using Best Practice format for Rubha Rhaonuill monitoring results	GH/JB/CM	Need for a standard format for woodland monitoring results
Maintain exchange of information and data with KDMG	JB/CM/LS	Done, ongoing
Adopt draft constitution at AGM	All	Done, formalise at AGM
DN to chair next 2 meetings	DN	Done, ongoing
Subscription rates recommendation	DN	Done, formalise at AGM
Complete HIA data report	CM	Awaited
ADMG 'health check'	CM	In the Autumn
Population model scenarios	DN	Done

New Action Points

Gordon's land membership	RS/DN/CM	
New Chair-person for November AGM	DN/CM/All	
Fine-tune population model	DN/CM	
Update DMP with new members' info.	JB/CM	
Implement current woodland proposals	GH/IW/JB	
Develop new woodland establishment proposals	All	
Resident Sika management	JB	
Training record review	JB/CM/All	

19. DONMs

Tuesday November 20th 2018

Tuesday June 11th 2019