

West Knoydart Deer Management Group
Minutes of meeting held at Inverie Village Hall
Tuesday 21st June 2016, 11.15

Present:

Cathy Mayne, Iain Biggart, Iain Wilson, Jim Brown, Davie Newton (chair), Lester Standen, Grant Holroyd.

In attendance as observer: Matt McMullen

1. Apologies: Eric Delwart, Ami Dow, Fred Rous, Graeme Taylor, Peter Fletcher.

2. Minutes of last meeting held on 30th November 2015 were agreed.

3. Review of action points

Action point	Who	Progress
Outline KF/JMT working relationship re culling at Li.	JB	Done/superseded
Minutes to be posted on JMT and poss. ADMG sites	JB/LS	Done, on JMT and Visit Knoydart
Keep display area folder up to date; minutes, etc	JB	Done, ongoing
Add count detail to density map	JB	New map is in DMP
Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges	JB	Still to do;
Woodland & fences maps	GH	Done
Population model	DN/GT	Done
DMP to GT before Christmas	JB	Done
Look to use new SNH GIS system for count/cull data processing when available	GT	Still in development?
Habitat impact data display system	GT	CM offered to map once collated
Circulate notes from meeting with ED	DN	Done
Circulate habitat impact monitoring results	RM/IB	LS to collate
Assist with finalising and presenting DMP	VC/JB	Done
Foot Count	IB/JB	Done
Additional meeting before end Feb.	DN/GT	Done
Re-affirm invitation of membership to Camusrory and Barisdale	DN	Only done via minutes being circulated this time. JB to email.
Differentiate carcasses not recovered	LS	Action this season.

4. Habitat Impact Monitoring Results 2016

Some members behind with monitoring this year, but still intend to complete.

LS offered to collate group results, and CM to display spatially on maps.

5. Deer Count Results 2016

Count had gone well. Results are shown on the data sheet. Over the whole area of WKDMG plus Kilchoan, total count was 2235 deer, this being 143 deer less than spring 2015, but still 251 more than SNH autumn 2014 count.

6. Population Model and Cull Plans 2016-17

As requested by SNH, Davie had drawn up a population model which included Barisdale and Camusrory, but we have been requested by VC to remove their entries. Our current model is therefore just for WKDMG plus Kilchoan. All were happy with proposed culls. IB said their plan is to cull 25 stags. JB said KF may again take some on JMT ground.

There was discussion on whether cull targets in the population model needed to be a limit, especially if deer were found to be causing damage within fenced blocks after the agreed cull had already been taken. It was thought that additional could still be taken if absolutely necessary, because they would be taken into consideration for the following year within the planning process. Looking at last years' data, this was a very small proportion of the cull anyway.

It was noted that the JMT cull number entry is fixed year on year, rather than a % of population as the rest are. For them, this is not a target as such, and if more or less needed to be culled in any one year, it would also have a knock-on effect to the following year. Again, culls would not in any case be significantly different to the proposal. Maintaining good communications through the season will be important.

VC had presented a model to KDMG described as 'Davie's Model', but some numbers have apparently been changed. The feedback from KDMG is that they are generally happy with those cull proposals, though we don't yet have details of all. This would be useful to know in order to contribute to our planning. There was apparently no objection to the suggested stag cull entry of 35 for JMT. SNH are still requesting cull planning and population modelling to cover the full deer range, ie the boundary of the peninsula.

7. Deer Management Plan and SNH Re-assessment

Ran through some of the key points/new issues raised by the re-assessment.

- Barisdale SSSI; if management changes, might impact WKDMG. Also if impacts on SSSI remain too high, WKDMG might need to contribute to helping reduce.
- If Inverie River is designated, there could be implications for deer management.
- NWSS impact data not relevant for us because most woods now fenced. However, in order to deliver the public interest we still need to demonstrate impact levels, so would need our own surveys/monitoring in place if not using NWSS data. KFT forest plan review will require survey work for all its areas, but wouldn't cover others, and would not be in depth. More detailed surveys best to be done just as deer gain access to woods again, as habitat will be different at that point.
- KFT plan review outcomes and all other owners aspirations re woodland expansion to be quantified, with timescales. This to feed into pop. model/cull planning.
- Only 'red' light is lack of 'river basin management plan', but should be easy to sort. It generally refers to situations where upstream management can have a big effect on flooding, etc downstream. Need to ask SEPA if relevant for us, then add to plan.
- There was concern with some of the comments added by Chris Donald, especially where the issues highlighted were already being dealt with. For example, citing 'recent issues relating to JMT' being of relevance to need to improve the plan; this could re-enforce previous misconceptions over validity of different management objectives. The change in staff structure at

SNH was outlined, and some of the problems this had thrown up for the DMG assessment process. So, some of those comments may no longer be relevant, due to the change in process since 2014 being looked at.

- There was agreement that we would use the Public Interest Criteria as future meeting agendas. SNH will report back on the re-assessments to Scottish Government in July, on whether standards expected have been achieved. In general some, like WKDMG, are doing a 'fantastic job', whilst most are 'in the middle', and a few are not performing well at all with all red highlights. Government will then decide how to progress, with options to use from the land reform legislation. One possibility could be that DMGs will need to attain a threshold level of compliance with the public interest criteria, with those that pass remaining 'voluntary' and those that fail drop into a 'compulsory' category. Re-assessment is envisaged as being every 3 years in that case.

8. Finance for Website

We have agreed to pay Steph £10/month to maintain the web page. It was thought that KF could have a cost centre to manage that payment. However IW said he would pay for the full 1st year, so it was decided that members would just take it in turns to pay direct.

9. Collaboration with Neighbours

It was noted that WKDMG shares all minutes and data with KDMG, but this is not always reciprocated. JB to request up to date information.

Camusrory and Barisdale, or a representative with delegated decision making powers, will be attending our November meeting, which could however also be remotely/virtual presence. The hope is that owners will attend in person. This is a condition of the final grant payment to KDMG from SNH for their DMP. They are also being required to take part in a coordinated spring count with WKDMG in 2017, from which an agreed joint population model can be started. SNH should be able to contribute personnel to assist. If that is a success then a summer count would also be considered, the purpose being to try and assess deer movement. The last summer count carried out on WKDMG area was 2007, when significantly more deer were counted in the summer than had been expected from the spring count.

The merits of helicopter/foot counts were discussed at some length. To extend the model of regular foot counts east to include Camusrory and Barisdale was thought to be the best option, as it is less expensive, and could have additional benefits of neighbours working together on the ground, which could help to foster a higher level of trust and cooperation. JB to include in communication, and need to focus on at next meeting.

If KDMG members continue to fail to engage with WKDMG in the planning process, then it would be a 'short step' away from a Section 7 agreement becoming necessary. The current thinking is that this would need to cover the whole deer management area, ie both complete DMGs. WKDMG would be in a good position to use a Section 7 to help demonstrate benefits of good practice. It is a voluntary agreement between all parties, and would be based on an assessment of the public interest criteria, which we are already delivering well.

10. Community Event

This was suggested to increase community information/involvement, about the DMG, the way it works and what it is expected to achieve. In particular there may be little public knowledge of the public interest criteria we are now expected to work towards. It was decided to hold an 'event' during the summer, possibly a talk in the hall followed by BBQ. CM offered to contribute, and so it would make sense to do when she is back in the area from July 21st to 24th. It would link nicely with KFT plan review.

11. KFT Forest Plan Review Update

The revised plan will include all existing outlying Knoydart Foundation woodland, as well as proposed new establishment areas for the next 10 years. It will also discuss fence removal, but probably won't have set target dates. This because removal depends upon condition of strainers, woodland development stage and deer pressure outside fences. A rough projection might still be useful for deer management planning purposes. Have been carrying out community consultation exercises, and currently collating feedback. There will be a 'Scoping Meeting' for stakeholders in early July.

White Gate scheme to be fenced and planted this winter, but thought to be no deer issues as a relatively small area and joining onto existing Inverie fence.

12. AOB - None

13. Proposed meeting dates

- Tuesday November ? 2016 (day after KDMG mtg?)
- Tuesday June 13th 2017?

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 following input from SNH re-assessment	JB/DN
Population model update to follow 2017 spring count	DN/GT
Look to use new SNH GIS system for count/cull data processing when available	GT
Complete 2016 HIA and send data to LS	LS/IB/IB
HIA collate group results	LS
HIA map of collated results	CM
Re-affirm invitation of membership to Camusrory and Barisdale	JB/DN
Request KDMG data, proposed culls and meeting dates	JB
Communicate/coordinate with Camusrory and Barisdale for 2017 spring count	JB/IB
Maintain good communications through the season	All
Use the Public Interest Criteria as future meeting agendas	All
Web page payment	IW/IB
Organise DMG community event this summer	DN/IB/CM
KFT and all to input new woodland expansion plans to DMP	GH/All
Woodland condition surveys/monitoring proposals	GH/All