

West Knoydart Deer Management Group
Minutes of meeting held at Kilchoan Estate Office
Tuesday 3rd March 2015, 11.30

Present: Iain Biggart, Jim Brown, Ami Dow, Grant Holroyd, Davie Newton (chair), Fred Rous, Iain Wilson.

1. **Apologies:** Eric Delwart, Peter Fletcher, Rachel Moore, Lester Standen, Graeme Taylor. (PF, RM, LS & GT unable to attend due to bad weather)
2. **Minutes of meeting** held on 18th November 2014 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	Ongoing
Add count detail to density map	JB	To do
Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges	JB	To do
Look at feasibility of allocating culls by area	JB	To do
Prepare charts of population change	DN/JB	Ongoing
Habitat Monitoring results for KF and Kilchoan to next meeting	JB, IB	On agenda
Consider additional publicity of group activities, inc. web sites, for minutes, agendas, etc	JB/DN/IB/L St	Ask GT, post on SNH site?
Update DMP detail for next meeting	JB	Ongoing
SNH funding for DMP	JB/DN/GT	On agenda
Description of rationale for cull animal selection	JB	To do
Habitat condition information available for group area	GT	To do
Circulate SNH count results	GT/JB	Done
Reminder of open invitation of membership to Barisdale and Camusrory	JB/DN	Done
Invite KDMG chair and their DMP consultant to a meeting with WKDMG chair and SNH	DN	No KDMG Consultant
Data, minutes and draft plan to KDMG before their meeting next Monday	JB	Done

4. 2014-15 cull reports

See data sheet.

All in season culls completed on target. JMT may take a few more up to end of March. KF still culling in deer fenced woodland as necessary.

Inverguserein hinds averaged 7.5st and 7 years old.

IWMB reported hind condition was mixed, with a lot of small hinds and calves, but also some very big beasts. Heaviest was 11st-07lbs. Average weight came out at 8st 09lbs and age at 7 (excluding yearlings), with calves averaging 4st 06lbs. Pregnancy rates seemed low.

JB was surprised at the relatively low average weight, as a lot of big hinds had been shot, and most were in good condition; however this included 14 yearlings. Heaviest was 10st-03lbs. Average weight was 7st 13lbs and age 6, with 50 % pregnant. Calves averaged 4st.

A sika stag was shot at the Guserein Plantation, and another has been seen at Cnoc Gorm. There was some discussion on where these are coming from, and whether there is possibly now a resident population? The goat cull of 7 managed was just a maintenance cull, and there was discussion on the financing. JB to show costs and income associated with this activity.

LS had passed through a report stating of the 45 stags culled, 18 were in the open and 27 close season, with 38 hinds open season and 2 close. It was noted that quite a few had been culled within deer fences, this thought to be due to deer accessing round sea-ends and Inbhir Dhorcail gorge. JMT are promoting changes to close seasons, as there is no welfare reasoning behind the stag season, and any out of season shooting cannot be let and so potentially is being penalised economically.

5. Habitat impact monitoring surveys

RM had not made it over, so nothing further on last year's results.

It was agreed to have a meet up the week prior to surveys (April 14th?), in order to ensure recording methods are compatible, and look where improvements can be made. The surveys will then be carried out week beginning April 20th, with personnel spending some time on each other's ground to try and ensure comparable data.

6. Deer Population Census

There was lengthy discussion of the SNH helicopter count.

Key points on the audit were:

- Generally happy with how it was carried out,
- Some areas covered too quickly and some not high enough,
- Some confusion when deer moved,
- Any areas missed were covered if requested,
- Only 2 deer counted in plantations/woodland where more would be expected.

Key points on the results were:

- The number must be accepted as accurate,
- Any anomalies should therefore be due to the unusual timing of the count,
- We need our foot count results before jumping to any conclusions,
- Hinds culled since the SNH count need to be subtracted, to enable comparison with spring foot counts,
- WKDMG Stag population would be expected to be lower at that time of year, but the population to the east did not appear to be comparably higher,
- KF area result is close to the target population in the KDMG Putnam Plan.

Foot count to go ahead at earliest weather window.

7. Deer Management Plan Update

Very little progress due to lack of time through stalking season, and also possibility of funding coming on stream. This is now available, for 50% of costs up to a maximum of £12,500. However, it is only possible to claim on an invoice and competitive tendering is required over £1000. There is no possibility to use staff time as match funding. So far KF has been funding JB's time, and this could continue. If we decide to spend any on mapping/GIS then the funding could be useful, but the way it is set up is difficult for us to access; more suited to a DMG contracting an outside consultant. Perhaps members could fund a consultant for setting up a GIS system, and then claim back on that. It was thought provision of data handling program by SNH, for DMG's would be useful. Updated plan to be ready by beginning of June.

8. Collaboration with Neighbours

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

9. AOB

The recent informal meeting between ED, DN, JB and GH was discussed, and DN to circulate notes. JB to outline how relationship with JMT works, re KF culling at Li.

10. 2015/2016 meeting dates

- Tuesday June 23rd 2015
- Tuesday November 17th 2015
- Tuesday March 8th 2016

Action Points

Circulate data records and continue to add to/amend as necessary	DN
Finish compiling objectives spreadsheet and append to DMP	JB
Add count detail to density map	JB
Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges	JB
Look at feasibility of allocating culls by area	JB
Prepare charts of population change	DN/JB
Habitat monitoring pre-survey meeting, wk. April 13 th	RM/JB/IB
KF & Kilchoan habitat monitoring surveys, wk. April 20 th	RM /IB
Approach SNH re posting minutes, etc on their website	DN/GT
Update DMP detail for next meeting for early June	JB
Consider SNH funding for DMP GIS system	JB/DN
Description of rationale for cull animal selection	JB
Habitat condition information available for group area	GT
Foot Count	IB/JB
Invite KDMG chair and their DMP consultant to a meeting with WKDMG chair and SNH	DN
KF Goat management finances	JB
Suggestion of data/GIS provision to DMG's by SNH	DN/GT
Outline KF/JMT working relationship re culling at Li.	JB
Circulate notes from meeting with ED	DN