

Strathconon Deer Management Group Meeting

25/04/2016
at
Little Scatwell House

Minutes

1. Attendees

Name	Estate / Organisation
Charles Aylesford	Chairman - Little Scatwell
Angus Kelly	Secretary
Linzi Seivwright	Caorann (DMP consultant)
Finlay Clark	ADMG / Strathconon
Frank Spencer Nairn	Culligran
Colin Hendry	Strathconon
Troels Bavnhøj	Strathconon
Heidi Bavnhøj	Strathconon
Mike Watt	Little Scatwell
Jamie Bain	Little Scatwell
Glyn Robson	Lochluichart
Peter Hingston	Fairburn
Eliza Leslie-Melville	Lochluichart
Jamie Stewart	Lochluichart
Angus Cameron	Strathconon
Eric Downie	Glencarron
Brian Watson	Glencarron
Murdo Maclean	Strathconon
Sinclair Coghill	Scottish Natural Heritage
Danny Mackie	Ledgowan

2. Apologies

2.1. Apologies from Douglas Orr & Colin Blyth (Olsson Woods), Derick MacAskill (FES)

3. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 3 February 2016

3.1. Minutes were approved and no comments from attendees.

4. Matters arising from previous minutes

- 4.1. Frank Spencer Nairn and Mike Watt commented that the consultation night held by Affric Kintail & Glen Strathfarrar went well with a good turn out from RSPB, Trees for Life, Mountaineering Group, local Community Councillors and local MSP.

5. ADMG Update

- 5.1. Finlay Clark commented Regional Meeting for ADMG to be held on the 5 May at Birnam, Perthshire followed by one in Inverness in November.
- 5.2. ADMG continues to work with the Scottish Government regarding the Land Reform Bill and in particular amendments to part 6 and part 8 (Sporting Rights and Deer Management). ADMG have consistently asked the Scottish Government what procedure res they have in place if they need to step in and control deer management. To date no answer but it is clear they want more regulation.
- 5.3. Finlay recapped on the political framework attached to the voluntary system, emphasising that all members need to engage in the process.

6. SNH Update

- 6.1. Sinclair Coghill commented on the timescales for DMG plan assessment to be carried out in June 2016, which would focus on each groups Assessment progress.

7. Count

- 7.1. The Chair invited the group to comment on the count carried out on the 14 and 15 March 2016.
- 7.2. A concern was raised that double counting could have occurred on Strathconon Estate. Angus Cameron commented that on the margins of the estate to the South and at the march with Scardroy there could have been double counting. The question was asked what controls were in place to mitigate double counting. The Chair asked Sinclair if the flight path could be provided to all members as well the photos taken on each day. The Chair commented that the analysis of the figures would have rigours but Angus C and Murdo Maclean were concerned that a group of 100+ deer may have been double counted.
- 7.3. Sinclair offered the team from Strathconon and other members the opportunity to come to SNH, Dingwall to review the data.
- 7.4. Peter Hingston raised his concerns of double counting on Fairburn which he and the estate stalker Keith would raise with Sinclair.
- 7.5. Sinclair mentioned that Jimmy Irvine of PDG had emailed him about concerns of Strathconon Estate as the Strathconon team spoke directly with PDG on the second day. In his email he assures that no overlap occurred and the pilots had stated the count went very well, with good weather so little movement of the deer during the count.

- 7.6. Finlay observed that the whole South Ross Deer figures appeared high and that remodelling would be recommended. The Chair agreed that the margin for risk was too high not to look at a new cull model.
- 7.7. Linzi commented that confidence is a key issue and all the members have to agree with the count figures as any escalation of the figures could result in under culls. It reiterated that another helicopter count in 3 years would be justified so that cull matches population growth.
- 7.8. Eric commented that Glencarron count went well; likewise, the stalkers for Scatwell, Lochluichart and Ledgowan said the same.

8. Deer Management Plan – Introduction of Dr Linzi Seivwright

- 8.1. Chair invited Linzi to recap on the background of the plan, the political framework and the structure of the Group plan going forward.
- 8.2. Linzi then provided the Group her initial analysis of the population based on the count data;

Strathconon DMG

Property	Planar Area (ha)	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Density (Deer/Km ²)
FAIRBURN & CORRIEHALLIE	6164	230	607	172	1009	16
GLENCARRON & GLENUAIG	4699	109	428	107	644	14
LEDGOWAN	1574	45	169	53	267	17
LOCHLUICHART (GLENMARKIE)	2295	179	247	80	506	22
SCARDROY & CARNOCH	4146	344	390	107	841	20
SCATWELL	3588	322	333	104	759	21
STRATHBRAN & SCATWELL	254	1	12	3	16	6
STRATHCONON	25948	1539	2367	721	4627	18
Total	48668	2769	4553	1347	8669	18

- 8.3. Excluding Lochluichart (Glenmarkie) due to it being fenced and thus not impacting on the rest of the Group would lower the figures accordingly to total Deer 8,163 resulting in a Density of 17.6.
- 8.4. A discussion then ensued regarding the interpretation of these figures; would suggest that more stags than needed; no real external interests (i.e. SNH management of designated sites); a requirement to see hind cull numbers increased; control needed to prevent any increase in environmental pressure of deer, though accepting that the pressure per se is not bad; a request that culls would be applied not on a blanket cull i.e. estate(s) with more deer may need to cull more.
- 8.5. Linzi asked the Group to consider the requirement for a higher cull in 2016. Finlay commented that although the Group has no external interests its neighbouring DMG's such as Glen Strathfarrar do and so this Group should give consideration to this.

- 8.6. It was commented that the stalkers will need to be more collaborative on where deer are / not are so that the Plan can work. Thus allow the Group to react to culling requirements quicker and thus manage the numbers, such culling hind's sooner.
- 8.7. The Group agreed for Linzi to run several cull model at a higher rate and to feed this back to the group. It was also agreed that these numbers should be run with Glen Strathfarrar as like both DMGs' will need to work together to manage numbers.
- 8.8. In regards to the draft plan Linzi ran through the progress made to date thanking the members for their input into the Plan and providing a background to each member's deer management proposals. Linzi confirmed that Outcomes for the Group were largely complet but still a requirement to consider the Assessment and to arrange a Public Consultation allowing interested parties to comment and input into the Plan.
- 8.9. The Chair agreed to canvass the proprietors with the above, and to revert back to Linzi by the end of May so that finalisation of the Plan can occur in June prior to the SNH Assessment.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1. SRUC Workshop on 'Meeting the challenge of wild deer research to support delivery of sustainable deer management in Scotland' on the 11th May. The aim of the workshops is to access local knowledge on deer management issues, as well as what research and monitoring information is available in the region and stakeholder views on information gaps. Potential attendees include landowners and land managers (including DMG representatives), NGOs, Local Government, FCS and SNH staff and police/rescue services. Agreed that Troels Bavnhøj and Frank would attend on behalf of the group.

10. Date of next meeting

- 10.1. TBC June 2016