

Strathconon Deer Management Group Meeting

03/02/2016
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
Jamie Stewart	Lochluichart
Angus Cameron	Strathconon
Eric Downie	Glencarron
Brian Watson	Glencarron
Murdo Maclean	Strathconon
Megan Robertson	FES

2. Apologies

Apologies from Douglas Orr & Colin Blyth (Olsson Woods), Derick Macaskill (FES)

3. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 24 June 2015

Minutes were approved and no comments from attendees.

4. Matters arising from previous minutes

No comments from the Group.

5. Deer Management Plan – Introduction of Dr Linzi Seivwright

Chair invited Linzi to provide a background of the plan, the political framework and the structure of the Group plan going forward. Linzi provided an overview in regards to the plan and emphasising the pressures on all Deer Management Groups (DMG) in producing a plan that shows viable environmental responsibility and management planning for the management and control of deer. Emphasising that although a voluntary system is currently in place by the end of 2016 SNH will carry out a survey of the DMG's plans and report back to the Scottish Government. The Group needs to show a robust plan with a clear structure with input from all members which demonstrates forward thinking and is target driven. In particular Linzi commented on the requirement to demonstrate and deliver public interest with emphasis on the environment, woodland and public participation. Also to note that habitat monitoring benchmarking is advisable to all Groups.

In regards to the structure it was emphasised that this should be open and transparent so that the public can view and participate in the development of the plan and in particular to the consultation phase to be implemented on the draft plan. Linzi mentioned three parts of the process which included;

1. The Working Plan;
2. General Information;
3. Group Operation;

The initial focus will be on the Working Plan which is a key part for the members to sign up to and commit. This includes a summary of activities that each member will deliver and in particular the who, when and how to deliver.

In regards to General Information this would incorporate the historic information pertaining to the previous plan, introduce the 14 public benefit initiatives and Information on each respective member.

Lastly in regards to Group Operation this will formalise the structure of the Group against the ADMG bench mark i.e. principal of communication and participating as a formal Group.

In regards to member participation Linzi has requested that all members complete and provide a completed spreadsheet pertaining to their respective deer management. It was emphasised that Linzi has a wider role in the South Ross DMG and as such would be able to provide a good overview of the area, with a consistent approach achievable for Strathconon DMG and its neighbours.

Thereafter a brief answer and question session followed;

Question 1) What is the starting point for the Group?

Linzi commented that the emphasis should not be on a sole aspect and should capture both environment and public benefit and ultimately on how deer are a resource for the Groups members. Linzi encouraged the members to be forward thinking in regards to the information they provide in particular woodland expansion projects as one example.

Question 2) What if the plan does not include Scottish Government Policy

Currently it is difficult to ascertain the full extent of how the plan will deliver all of the objectives, however it is critical for the Group to demonstrate capacity

and forward thinking, what it can and cannot do in the current parameters of the plan.

Question 3) Is there a deadline?

We are required to provide a draft plan as of **May 2016** therefore it was emphasised that participation of each member is critical to reach this target.

Next part of the process would be to have individual meetings and the Secretary will provide Linzi a copy of all email addresses. It was agreed that there would be individual meetings with members as well as a group meeting of the Estate Stalkers.

It was mentioned that Affric Kintail & Glen Strathfarrar were holding a consultation night on 5 February 2016 and was going to be attended by MSP Dave Thompson. It was agreed that Mike Watson and Frank Spencer Nairn would attend on behalf of Strathconon DMG to highlight the progress it is making.

6. ADMG Update

FCC recapped on the political framework attached to the voluntary system, emphasising that all members need to engage in the process.

ADMG is currently working with the Scottish Government regarding the Land Reform Bill and in regards to Deer Management, emphasising that DMG plans will be under a high level of scrutiny. ADMG will continue to liaise with Scottish Government regarding amendments to part 6 and part 8 (Sporting Rights and Deer Management). One such amendment to the Bill is to incorporate relief to Sporting Estates that are part of a DMG. FCC suggested members seek further information from the ADMG website on what they can comment on.

It was confirmed that the ADMG AGM will be held on 26 February in Duke the Gordon Hotel, Kinguissue.

7. SNH Update & Count Update

Unfortunately no representative from SNH attended however the Group discussed the proposed helicopter count. Mike as Count Co-Ordinator stated that this has been booked and scheduled but dependent on an opening with the weather.

8. Report from Stalkers

Figures to date for 15/16 season;

	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Comments
Strathconon & Scardroy	90	146	52	Good condition across the stags and hinds though not many calves. Started early.
Culligran	8			Weather was favourable and deer in good condition
Little Scatwell	18 Hill 6 Woods 2 Sika	22 Hill 9 woods 6 sika		Good condition, but recently started to see some reduction of quality.
Lochluichart and Glenmarkie	14			Good condition across stags and hinds.
Ledgowan (Provided after meeting)	15	10		
Glencarron	31	29	4	Different season experienced compared to the other members with a hard start on the stag with first 12 days only one stag shot. Hinds are well down partly due to increase in hiking parties. Though Hinds in terrific condition.
Fairburn (Provided after meeting)	52	49	10	The rut was normal, with the deer in good condition and coming through this winter well . The herd looks well for the future

9. Poaching/Police Report

Those members who participate in the Rural Farm Watch commented that it is working well and it was emphasised by the Chair that all members should try and participate in this process and at least be on the emailing list for any incidents or notifications from the police.

10. Any Other Business

Secretary confirmed that the ECAF submission was completed on 16 January 2016 with a formal decision due in February/March.

FCC as treasurer confirmed that there was £2015 in the bank account and commented that in due course additional funds would be requested to cover the ADMG membership fee.

In regards to the financial arrangements for payment of the helicopter account, it was agreed that Strathconon would cover this and recover from each member based on time.

Management Plan; it was reiterated and confirmed that 50% share of the cost will be covered by the members and this will be further divided by 25% on the Group membership and 25% on the 5 year cull average.

Secretary confirmed he would be contacting Dick Playfair in regards to establishing the domain name for the Group.

11. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.