

# Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Group

## Summary Minutes of the Meeting on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017, at 10am at Glenfalloch Lodge, Ardlui, By Arrochar

**Present:** Hugh Nicol – Argyll Estates (Chair), David Lowes – Glenfalloch (Vice-chair), Helen MacIntyre (Secretary), Jimmy Irvine – SNH, Estelle Gill – SNH, Peter Wilkinson – Savills, representatives from: Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, Strone, ADMG, Glenfalloch, Ardkinglas, Blarghour, Achadunan, FCS, Tilhill, Scottish Woodlands, Stuckendroin, Cononish, Auchreoch, Strathfillan, Garabal, MOD and Luss Estates.

**Apologies:** Balliemeanoch, Glen Croe Farm, Inveruglas, Quadrat Scotland

**1. Chairman's Welcome** – Hugh Nicol welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

### **2. Culls & Counts**

Members commented that the stags are in good condition, with good recruitment, due to two mild winters and an early spring, with some not seeing as many larger stags. JI (SNH) said the 2017 count showed slightly higher numbers than we were expecting, but across the whole group there is not an urgency to reduce hind numbers now, rather over 3-5 years instead. Garabal and Cononish recognise they need to increase their hind culls significantly, particularly with relation to designated sites. Stag numbers are nothing to worry about, we need to focus on the hinds. There is a bit of work to do to get down to the target hind population of 1400 on the hill. It was suggested that we collate recruitment figures from group members to help with the population model. These will be requested in May/June.

### **3. Group Habitat Impact Assessment update**

The group project was set up this summer, and the successful tender was from Nikki Dayton at Quadrat Scotland. She has allocated the 300 points between the holdings involved and will draw up maps shortly. JI said there should be funding of £1800 for every DMG to carry out HIA (6 days work at standard consultancy fee of £300/day). Group members not yet doing HIA were encouraged to start. The information will help explain what is happening with your deer population and the quality and carrying capacity of the ground.

### **4. Sporting Rates**

Peter Wilkinson from Savills gave a brief presentation. He was a member of the Scottish Assessors Association shooting working group when sporting rates were being reintroduced. He believes the scheme has a lot of anomalies in it so he left to work for Savills representing the other side in appeals. Appeals must be submitted within 6 months. Assessors will come out and look at holdings. For appeals, check the factual details e.g. area, predominant land type. The small business rate relief exemption level is currently £15k, but be aware that this may change and you may then not be exempt if they reduce the small business rate relief band, so even if you are under the £15k minimum if you think your valuation is wrong you must appeal now. You can apply for small business rates relief and still appeal the land valuation.

### **5. Proposed Group Restructure and Sub-Groups**

It was proposed to set up an executive committee, a stalkers sub-group, a DMP group, an HIA group and a cull targets group to allow quicker progress than the twice-yearly meetings currently produce. It was agreed to try this for a year or two, with the DMP and HIA in one subgroup. Several group members volunteered for the executive committee and subgroups, plus SNH and LLTNP are happy to help with the DMP/HIA group. Subgroups will report to the exec committee. Any members who would like to get involved please contact the group Chair or Secretary.

## 6. Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports

There are a few outstanding subscriptions because the invoices went out late this year. Please arrange payment if you have not already done so. The bank balance is healthy enough to see us through any short term costs.

## 7. Chairman's Report

HN explained that most issues are covered elsewhere in the agenda. He attended a recent ADMG meeting, and the main focus was on making progress with HIAs. Our DMP has taken a back seat this year but will be revisited shortly to keep it updated.

## 8. ADMG Report - Tom Turnbull gave his report as ADMG rep.

- a. **Role of SNH** - SNH have published their 'Enhanced approach to deer management', stating that SNH is assuming a more assertive leadership role. All existing Section 7 agreements have been re-appraised and over the next 6 months, refreshed targets will be put in place. If these targets are not met then Section 8 agreements may be used. Over the next 12 months new Section 7 agreements will be put in place, focused on areas where DMGs are perceived to be underperforming. SNH have produced a 2016 assessment ranking of all DMGs and how they perform against the benchmark. ITDMG are doing well and are near the top of the ranking. SNH plan to use their powers to require the advance setting of cull targets where necessary. SNH are likely to target their engagement with DMGs on those groups that are perceived to need the most support. However, Jimmy will still be available to ITDMG as usual. The ECCLR Committee has suggested that the voluntary basis for deer management is maintained alongside a more regulated approach.
- b. **Deer Working Group** - The Cabinet Secretary has appointed an independent Group to examine deer management issues, following the report by the ECCLR Committee. The Group will run until April 2019, is charged with making recommendations for change to ensure effective deer management that "safeguards the public interest and promotes the sustainable management of wild deer." Appointed to the Group are Simon Pepper OBE (Chair), Robin Callander (special adviser), Andrew Barbour, and Jayne Glass. ADMG Chairman Richard Cooke has been appointed as an external adviser to the Group.
- c. **DMG Re-assessments** - Going forward it is extremely important to remember that DMGs will be assessed again in 2019 by SNH. As such DMGs should be looking at all areas where improvements can be made particularly with regard to population modelling and HIA. Tom is confident that in the reassessment most of ITDMG's amber boxes will become green.
- d. **Sporting Rates** - There is concern from ADMG that on landholdings where income is marginal there may be an implication for both stalking activity and employment. ADMG has started to hear reports that some assessments bear little relation to ownership, occupation or acreage. If this is the case it would be advisable to approach the assessor informally at first to seek clarification. ADMG would encourage an Appeal if people are unhappy with their valuations. ADMG will continue to monitor the situation, and lobby Government.
- e. **ADMG Work Programme** – This includes developing HIA frameworks across all DMGs, relaunching Wild Deer Best Practice, finalising SWARD to assist DMGs in processing and analysing deer population and habitat data.
- f. **Scottish Quality Wild Venison** - SQWV are doing free pre-assessments for estates looking for more information for any changes they might need to make to meet criteria for SQWV certification.
- g. **E.Coli 0157** - Current recommendations suggest that where present, E.Coli is carried in the faeces of deer, with one of the areas of highest risk being the last 12 inches of the gut/rectum. One measure that everyone can implement now is to ensure that when gralloching a carcass and removing the pluck, there is no spillage whatsoever, especially from this area. This step in itself will make a significant contribution to minimising risk

and ensuring that bacteria do not enter the human food chain. SQWV now states that carcasses that are grossly contaminated due to shot damage to any part of the green gralloch, or due to green gralloch spill must not be presented for human consumption. There is currently considerable research being undertaken to establish the prevalence of E.Coli in wild deer in Scotland. Free testing kits are available for group members to take part in the deer health survey. Particularly useful for finding out about E.Coli prevalence.

- h. **Chronic Wasting Disease** - Don't assume that guests will be aware of the risk of CWD transmission. Send the BDS leaflet provided on their website to all guests so they are aware the risks and of their responsibilities. Advise them in the documentation that their kit will be checked for cleanliness. Undertake a kit check upon arrival, if suspicious of contamination, bag up all suspicious articles for return to their home and provide alternatives for the duration of the visit. The British Deer Society provide regular updates on their website.

In a discussion about ADMG, it was noted that Richard Cooke works very hard at lobbying the Scottish Government on deer management, that ADMG work incredibly hard with scarce resources to put the deer management voice across, and that SNH and ADMG have a good working relationship.

**9. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Report** - Given by Jimmy Irvine, Wildlife Management Officer, SNH

- a) They have a new chairman in place, Mike Cantlay, who was previously involved in Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park. There is also a new chief executive, Francesca Osowska, who has more of a business background.
- b) SNH are looking at using more section 7s for deer management, further to some criticism in the past that they have not been used enough. However, they are not needed for our group. The right to request a DMP will also be used in due course in some areas, but again also not needed for us.
- c) The new Deer Working Group set up by the Scottish Government have been tasked to look at everything to do with deer so it might be worth bringing to their attention the impacts of new sporting rates from our deer group's perspective. There is an HIA grant available as discussed earlier.
- d) Deer counts – SNH are getting back into a rolling program of counting each area every 5-6 yrs, so we would be counted again in 2022.
- e) The designated sites in ITDMG are being addressed by SNH. Ben Lui is no longer a NNR but still a SSSI.
- f) Peatland restoration is becoming more important to help Scotland meet climate change targets. Start thinking about what funding members might want to apply for next year, including money for a feasibility study for those not sure what to do with their peatland. Glenfalloch and Argyll Estates have applied for peatland restoration funding. Benefits from restoration include better water quality. LLTNP are keen to help those within the Park. They hope to have a demonstration day in Breadalbane DMG in December when work starts. Note that unless deer density is <10 deer per sq km then restoration cannot take place due to damage from trampling.

**10. Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Report** – Given by Nicola Colquhoun

NC thanked Falcon Frost (Glenfalloch) for coming on to the public access forum in LLTNP as a voice for deer management. The Park will be having another HIA training day at 13th March at Montrose Estates. Please contact NC if interested.

**11. Any Other Business**

- a. Setting the next deer count date – The stalkers subgroup will arrange this and notify the group.
- b. Maps – We are aware some of the boundaries are not correct on the maps in our DMP and we are working on a solution, please bear with us.
- c. The drone trial project at Breadalbane is still ongoing. They also have a disturbance project looking at the impacts of walkers.

**12. Date of Next Meeting** –10am Friday 20th April 2018 at Crianlarich Hall