

MINUTES

of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the NORTH ROSS DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP held on THURSDAY

1st NOVEMBER 2018 at 10am at
THE MACPHAIL CENTRE, ULLAPOOL

Present:	Mr P Creasey	Strathvaich (Chairman)
	Mr R Whitson	Bell Ingram (Secretary)
	Mr I Macneill	Alladale
	Mr F Welstead	Alladale
	Mr W Grant	Braemore
	Mr A Mackenzie	Corriemulzie/Loubcroy
	Mr A Davidson	Corriemulzie
	Mr A Sutherland	Croick
	Mr A Harington	Glencalvie
	Mr A Sutherland	Glencalvie
	Mr J Buckthorp	Inverlael Deer Forest
	Mr I Duncan	Kildermorie
	Mrs C Duncan	Kildermorie
	Mr T Brigg	Kildermorie
	Mr D Campbell	Langwell
	Mr A Dunnings	Ledmore
	Mr M Mackenzie	Ledmore
	Mr C Harrison	W Rhidorroch
	Mr J Legrand	E Rhidorroch
	Mr N Scobie	E Rhidorroch
	Mr S Bedwell	Strathvaich
	Mr H O'Donnell	Wyvis & Clach Liath
	Mr G Beattie	Wyvis
In Attendance:	Mr S Coghill	SNH
	Ms T Lawton	SNH
Apologies:	Mr C Kaier Thomsen	Braemore
	Mr S Colvin	Corriemulzie
	Mr J Hall	Croick
	Mr D MacAskill	FCS
	Mr I Collier	Clach Liath
	Mr D Macrae	Strathvaich
	Mr N Forman Hardy	Glencalvie
	Mr H Van Beuningen	Inverlael Deer Forest
	Mr P Dacre	Langwell
	Mr D Bulmer	Ledmore
	Mrs R Bulmer	Ledmore
	Mr H Bulmer	Ledmore

1. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed the Group to the Annual General Meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

The Chairman gave a brief synopsis of the situation that deer management groups find themselves in presently, with the Spring review approaching in 2019 and the risk that the Government may impose direct controls in the event that deer management groups across Scotland do not pull together to collectively demonstrate that the wild deer sector is working together and that we are all capable of managing our affairs.

He went on to present a brief summary of the existing Section 7s within the Group, the situation with regard to habitat monitoring, and outlined the population and culling models when looked at against recruitment and emphasised the need to maintain culls in line with recruitment. He then went on to discuss the potential expansion of the Section 7s in support of the requirements being placed on the Group by SNH. The deer management plan was discussed briefly and the requirement to do a large amount of work to it prior to the Spring review, emphasising the importance of maintaining our fulfilment of the public interest elements within the plan.

Prior to the continuing with the main agenda points he asked for a brief summary of the 2018 stag season and comment on the individual estate levels of winter mortality suffered during the winter of 2017/18.

Estate	Synopsis of the winter weather	Comment/Stag Cull
Strathvaich	Bad winter with low calf survival followed by reduced calving.	High numbers of losses.
Alladale	6 mnths of snow cover across Glencalvie/Alladale/Corrie/Croick. A strong calving was noted, although they have had a poor rut	losses into 100's.
Braemore	As per Strathvaich	19 stags shot during stag season, found 20 dead animals, a lot of late calves.
Inverlael	As per Strathvaich	General lack of stags/hinds, 32 stags shot during the season and a lot of young stags died.
Glencalvie	Estimate 60 or so stags were lost last winter including but up to a total of 200. Not seeing many yearlings around and calves on the hill are small	Potentially a big hole in the population.
Croick	Counted up to 150 carcasses. They have 500 hectares or so of woodland in which they can't count in and an 8% calving survival	15 stags shot, shortage of mature stags

	rate which could be halved if they have another poor winter.	
Wyvis	7% calving rate	Low numbers of mature stags 40 shot, they'll be shooting about 80 hinds.
Ledmore	Seeing a lack of hinds on the hill to the east section of the estate, they have nothing there at all and elsewhere they think they're about a 1/3 down on numbers. and found 46 dead from last winter. Principally yearling calves and hinds.	20 stags shot they think in recruitment of 18%
Corriemulzie	Stags thin on the ground and about a stone lighter across the piece. They found 174 carcasses so estimate 200+ dead of which 40 stags and the rest were hinds and calves. There will be a big gap in the population in the future. Calving they thought was 11%.	62 stags shot, lack of mature stags on the hill
Kildermorie	Wet into the winter and lost 26 hinds 46 calves and 6 stags. They're also seeing a shortage of mature stags.	Shot 24 stags during the season.
W Rhidorroch	They're seeing their normal quantities of hinds in amongst the glens but there is a lack of deer out on the open hill.	23 stags shot.
E Rhidorroch	A lot of dead beasts found. They're noticing a lot of hinds are missing	They only shot 8 stags from a target of 15 with a recruitment of 15%.

2. APOLOGIES

The apologies were as listed above.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 8th JUNE 2018

Members considered and approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting on the 8th June. Proposer, Mr A Mackenzie, Seconder, Mr S Bedwell.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Whilst there were no specific issues matters affecting the group would be discussed during the meeting.

All actions from the last meeting had been carried out.

5. PEATLAND RESTORATION – ANDREW COLEMAN

Andrew Coleman from Highland Conservation unfortunately was unable to give his presentation.

There was however, a discussion about the benefits of undertaking Peatland Restoration for individual estates, and that the next round of funding will shortly be open for work to be carried out next year.

The Chairman very kindly offered those present the opportunity to visit Strathvaich to see Peatland Restoration works that he had undertaken.

6. SNH 2019 ASSESSMENT ADMG HEALTH CHECK

The Secretary took the Group through the Health Check and the findings from it; that there are weaknesses in the existing plan which need to be rectified particularly with regard to the public benefit sections, and that the plan needs a fairly fundamental re-write in order to satisfy the requirements of the 2019 assessment.

Innes Macneill emphasised the need for engagement across the Group and the need to invest financially in a coordinator or someone who would undertake more of that role across the group, rather than just covering basic costs and that he felt that the Group would benefit from a dedicated plan manager.

Angus Davidson commented on the fact that the requirements of deer management groups are significantly different now to that which was required even 3 years ago and that it requires everyone to pull together within the Group notwithstanding the need for more regular intervention from a plan manager.

At this point the re-write of the plan was discussed. Quotes had been sought to undertake the work on behalf of the Group with two competent quotes being received; one from David Campbell, the other from Victor Clements. At this point David Campbell volunteered to leave the room whilst the discussion that took us to who should be appointed and after some discussion, David Campbell's quote was accepted. He was subsequently invited to undertake the role of re-writing the Deer Management Plan for the sum quoted of £6,000. A task which he accepted.

7. SECTION 7s

Both Ben Wyvis and Ben Dearg has S.7s were discussed and Innes Macneill explained some of the issues he had in managing the expectations of SNH and the Scottish Government where high herbivore impacts seem to persist independently of heavy culling pressure and significantly reduced herd numbers.

Sinclair Coghill then gave a brief presentation on the possible benefits of expanding the S.7s area, particularly to those estates surrounding the existing areas, to include Glencalvie, Croick, Ledmore, Langwell, East and West Rhidorroch and Leckmelm Hill. He emphasised the amount of resources that would be made available by SNH

and other organisations to support the Group in the event that the area was expanded. SNH now believe that adverse impacts within the SAC can only be managed if they are able to influence culls of deer found outside the boundaries of estates within the SAC but which have knock on effects on SAC herds.

He then explained that SNH were trying to get a heli count in November of 2018 and are trying to assemble the resources presently. The last helicopter count cost £76,000 and took over 2 weeks. **Afternote, this is likely to take place in January 2019.**

He reassured owners and keepers that they should not be afraid of the S.7 as it is intended to be a support and not an imposition and suggested an initial period of 5 years duration, however, it could be stopped early depending on outcomes.

There followed a discussion between some of those present as to how the S.7 might be managed and Sinclair would prefer voluntary participation.

David Campbell asked if a framework could be issued to estates to understand what they would be asked to do, which Sinclair agreed he would produce.

There is now a requirement to demonstrate that the S.7 Group has fulfilled the initial population targets, which is now likely given the impact of the wet 2018 spring.

Sinclair reminded the meeting that the very low herbivore impacts which had been proposed as targets this time last year had been modified to allow higher permitted impacts. The draft agreement was awaiting SNH approval, so he was not yet able to share the detail. The Chairman reminded the meeting that the existing S7 members had asked a year ago for any targets to be set at a level that would allow the mosaic of upland habitats and their diversity to be preserved, and there were fears then that the target impacts presented then were too low - when judged against the yardstick of SNH's own habitat manual - for that.

SNH's Chris Donald explained last year that the targets had been set by a high-level committee within SNH which had not shared details of their deliberations, but had agreed then that the Chairman would be allowed to review any targets and the methodology behind their setting, before they became fixed. Chris agreed that the objective behind setting acceptable grazing and other impact targets was to preserve habitats, and not to alter them to comply with agendas such as rewilding.

The Chairman asked again that an opportunity be given to the Group to review in detail the justification for individual targets before they became incorporated in draft S7 agreements.

8. INTERIM MEETINGS

The subject of interim group meetings was discussed, on the basis that two meetings per year is not sufficient to address all the issues that we are facing presently.

It was suggested that the first interim meeting is held once the helicopter count has taken place probably in January. **Dates for the next two meetings were suggested as**

follows: 8th January 2019 in the St Kilda room Great Glen House, Inverness and at the AGM on 7th June 2019 in the same room.

The benefits of using SNH facilities being that we can have video conferencing connections and potentially skype to enable more proprietors to join the meeting without necessarily travelling to Inverness to attend.

9. HABITAT MONITORING

A brief description of the habitat monitoring undertaken to date was given reflecting some of the issues that Dr Bodle had experienced with family bereavements et cetera.

10. TARGET POPULATION AND CULLS FOR 2018/9

It was agreed that this discussion would wait until we had accurate deer count figures and would more likely be discussed at the January meeting or at a suitable time after the helicopter count.

11. DEER COUNT

As previously discussed.

12. FINANCIAL STATEMENT YEAR TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2018

The Secretary took the Group through the financial statement and there were no issues arising.

13. BUDGET FOR THE YEAR TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2019

It was agreed to defer the budget pending deer count and other issues.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

15. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICE BEARERS

At this point there was a discussion on the role of the Secretary the evolution of the role. It was agreed that this discussion would be reviewed in the Spring.

The Chairman mentioned potentially introducing the role of a single or a number of vice Chairmen working within sub groups or working groups to help the Group self-manage and to discuss our populations, culls, et cetera.

Prior to the meeting closing the Chairman asked for all present to give an estimate of hind culls that are proposed:- Strathvaich – 30, Inverlael – 20, Corriemulzie – 60 to 80, Alladale – 80, Braemore – 30 to 40, Glencalvie – 100, Croick – 20 to 40, Wyvis – 45, Ledmore – 50, East Rhidorroch – weren't sure at this point, West Rhidorroch – 20, Kildermorie – 30 (with an emphasis on sika), Langwell – 20 and Loubcroy – 10.

16. NEXT MEETING

As previously indicated the next meetings are proposed for 8th January 2019 and 6th June 2019. The Chairman requested as broad an attendance as possible and asked that those who are able try and make the ADMG Regional meeting taking place on 21st November 2018.

There being no further business and the meeting was closed.

ACTION PLAN

Adjust and re-issue the 2018/9 Budget	RSMW
Issue ADMG/NRDMG 2018/9 subscriptions	RSMW

Bell Ingram
Chartered Surveyors
Estate Office
Bonar Bridge
IV24 3EA

RSMW/NRDMG/2
November 2018