

BREADALBANE DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Minutes **DRAFT**

Autumn Meeting
Friday 23rd October 2015
at 2.00pm
at The Molteno Hall

1 Welcome

Present were:

Richard Barclay (*Innerhadden, Chair*), James Scott (*SNH*), Ian Dingwall, John Sinclair & George Coyne (*Auchlyne*), Robert Dalglish & David Pirie (*Innerwick*), Alan Cory-Wright (*Auchessan*), Steven Macdonald, Adam Jamieson, Michael Gates Fleming & John Sinclair (*Meggernie/ Lochs*), Ian La Sales de Terriere (*Crossmount*), Calum Gillies (*Dalchosnie/ Kynachan*), Ally McNaughton (*Glen Lyon Estate*), John McNulty (*FE*), Andrew Warwick (*NTS*), Duncan Richardson (*Coire Carie*), Morven Frost (*Boreland*), Hamish Rae (*South Chesthill & Inverinian*), Donnie Broad & Jimmy Barrie (*Glenlochay Estate*), Liz Auty (*JMT*), Duncan Richardson (*Coire Carie*), David Rankin (*Innischoarach*), Lochy Porter (*Cashlie*), Kate & Andrew Duncan (*West Tempar*), Victor Clements (*Secretary*), James Duncan Miller (*ADMG*)

2 Apologies

Gen & Charlie Ramsay, Gareth Taylor (*South Chesthill*), David Brown (*Innischoarach*), Colin Buchan (*Garth*), Tim Fison (*HPCLT*), Emma Paterson (*Auchlyne*), Iain Wotherspoon (*Glenlyon Estate*), Roddy Billimore (*Roros*), John Holland (*SRUC*), Mark Duncan (*FE*), Alastair Riddell (*North Chesthill*), Lord Pearson (*Coire Carie*), Robert la Sales de Terriere (*Crossmount*), Scott Symon (*Scottish Fire & Rescue Service*).

3 Minutes of previous meeting

Under "Present", minutes should read "Adam", not "Alex" Jamieson. With this change, the minutes were proposed by Alan Cory Wright and seconded by Morven Frost.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Financial Report

There was £8727.70 in the bank account, with one subscription of £330 outstanding. Future expenses in this current financial year would be £1000 for admin expenses, and a net cost of £2000 for the deer management plan. This would leave approx £6000 in the bank at year end.

6 **Health & Safety**

No incidents reported.

7 **Wildfire Control- Scott Symon**

Scott Symon had to give apologies for this meeting. He would like to attend spring meeting to talk about fire protection on estates in this area.

8 **Looking ahead**

Stag Cull progress & Season Report

The following reports were given:

Innerhadden/ West Tempar/ Dalchosnie:

Good numbers, but not many older deer. Plenty of hinds.

Auchessan:

Deer numbers poor, rut very late, not in good condition. Small stags only.

Cashlie:

Reasonable stags, very few hinds on north side.

Innerwick:

Good stags, fewer hinds.

Meggernie/ Lochs:

Very poor numbers of stags, late rut. Concerned that reduction cull was now having too big an impact, although mortality and their woodland projects may also be having an effect. Very few stags in the NW of estate, and on the boundary with Boreland.

South Chesthill:

Stag numbers down. Quality OK. Hind numbers down as well. Lack of mature stags.

Auchlyne:

Got nos of stags required, but very hard work. Very few hinds around.

National Trust

No stag requirement as such, but ■ culled.

Glen Lyon Estate:

Good rut. Numbers fine. Good quality animals.

Glen Lochay Estate:

A few good stags. Very few hinds. A lot of the ground was empty. Rut very late. Pneumonia in some calves.

Kynachan/ East Schiehallion:

Very slow rut. Numbers down. Might be weather related.

Forest Enterprise:

Numbers down on last year. Rut lasted approx 10 days.

Coire Carie:

Numbers attained, but very hard work. Good early on, but became a lot harder.

Boreland:

Got numbers required, but very hard work. Weather might have been to blame.

Innischoarach:

█ stags culled in total. Over 300 stags on the ground, and lots of hinds.

Crossmount:

Numbers OK, but no keeper at present, and that resulted in a lower cull. Not clear which deer came from Breadalbane, and which came from ground to the north.

North Chesthill:

Culled █ sporting stags on hill, plus another █ on low ground. Good season, although not as many deer as last year.

Population Modelling- Going Forwards

A number of potential population models were discussed. There was a widespread acceptance that hinds were now being over-shot, that there was no longer a buffer in the deer population, and the priority for the next five years was to try and produce a more stable population in line with sporting and habitat requirements.

Although the population model for the South Group had never worked particularly well, it was obvious that their hind population had now been driven down too far, and that the cull could be relaxed over the coming five year period, perhaps to 100 hinds in total. Care would be needed with the distribution of this, to give everyone some opportunity, and to move the deer around a bit. The stags looked to be broadly OK, although 3 X properties with non- sporting requirement would need to be asked to cut back a bit.

The population in the Middle Group looked more stable. The stag cull looked about right, but a reduction in the hind cull of approx 70 animals would be required to have a stable population.

The population model for the North Group suggested that current culls would crash the population within 3-4 years, and

therefore, we needed to pull back from the current reduction cull. There already were signs that this was now starting to bite. It was proposed that the hind cull be reduced to 375 animals, with the eastern estates taking up the greater part of this. The stated sporting stag cull of 350 animals appeared to be unsustainable at any reasonable population density, and it was suggested that a target cull of 300 stags be agreed for the North Group.

While people seemed generally happy with the overall strategy of above, much depended on the individual estate break-down/ allocation.

Hind Cull 2015-6 arrangements

VC to distribute suggested hind cull programme listed by estate in the coming week, after discussion with Chair/ vice Chair/ Morven Frost & SNH. All to consider and return comments asap.

The general message was to go easy on the hind cull this winter.

Section 7- Yes or No?

There was a long discussion about whether we should sign up to another Section 7 agreement. A small number of properties, not present at the meeting, had signalled their reluctance to take part in another arrangement, seeking the greater flexibility of working outside any scheme.

SNH think the previous agreement worked really well, and they would like to consolidate the benefits already achieved. The designated sites issue was not going to go away.

Another agreement would unlock £130,000 worth of further SNH investment, in the shape of 2 X helicopter counts and habitat assessments. They were having another reduction in funding and were having to re-organize, with deer input dispersed to an area office basis.. A S7 agreement signed would give us some security for a 5 year period in which many aspects of the industry would be subject to change.

The overall mood of the meeting was to sign another S7. RB would speak to individual owners who had concerns.

9 Deer Management Plan

A draft of the plan had been circulated, although there were some gaps in this, and the finished population models were yet to be agreed. Not all maps had been circulated as these were a large size in total. Once the models were agreed, a final draft plan would be distributed for comment, consulted on over the Xmas period in to the New Year, and hopefully signed off in the spring of 2016.

10 Wider Deer Management Issues

SNH Update

SNH were having a reduction of funding. There would be knock-on effects from this, as discussed above, and necessary re-organizations.

ADMG Comment

All 44 x DMGs had been assessed, with the majority taking forwards new plans in advance of the RACCE review in 2016.

85% of sites were in Favourable or Recovering condition. The SGA had been emphasizing the socio- economic benefits of stalking.

Section 7 agreements were more formal than in the past, with only 6 months now to agree on whether to take one forwards, although SNH were wary of Section 8.

Cowal and Assynt were 2 X areas where there was concern at the moment.

Deer plans should reduce the need for S7/8 agreements in the future.

Communications would be very important going forwards, hence ADMG initiative to provide websites for every DMG free of charge.

The rating proposals were discussed, with a focus on the bigger properties with exemptions for smaller ones, and possibly those with agreed deer plans in place and being implemented.

The PACEC report was not out yet, but would be shortly.

There had been an outbreak of e-coli, supposedly associated with Highland Game, but it not not develop in to a serious issue.

11 Next meeting

Friday April 22nd, 2pm, Molteno Hall.

12 AOCB

There was some discussion about the Heading to the Scottish Hills website. Glen Lochay were getting a lot more activity and a lot more contacts, especially from groups.

Boreland were getting a lot of walkers, but little HTTSH contact, especially for one of their Corbetts.

Innerhadden were also getting a lot mre walking activity, possibly as a result of the good autumn weather.