

SOUTH WEST ROSS DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING

**Friday, 16 November 2017
Lochcarron Village Hall, Ross-shire, 10:30**

MINUTES

Present:

Shaun McDonald (Chairman), Mark Pattinson (Treasurer), David Abraham, Richard Curzon, Sinclair Coghill, Terry Doe, Mary Gibson, Charlie Hill, Chris Mackenzie, Simon Stewart, Neil Morrison, James Smith, Richard Munday, Willie Fraser, Archie Maclellan, Alison Hewitt, Tom Chetwynd, Gillian Pattinson, Duncan Grey.

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed those in attendance, and noted that Neil Wright was standing in for Diana Jordan.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Hugh & Rosie Tollemache, Philip Smith, Kurt Larson, Mark & Alison Raeside, Chris Marsh, Mark Adams and Nicolas Wills.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 18 May 2017

The Chairman asked if there were any amendments or issues in connection with the previous minutes or whether they were a true reflection of the meeting. There being no comment on the minutes, these were accepted.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising and anything further would be dealt with throughout the course of the meeting

5. Finance Update

The Treasurer ran through the accounts for the year and noted that the income was as predicted and there are no outstanding monies. Expenditure has been considerable this year, more than 50% on last year. After all expenditure there will be a balance of £119.

Diana Jordan from Galbraith will be calculating the following year's ADMG payment in due course; the amount is not yet known.

A copy of the Treasurer's report has been appended to these minutes for reference. He expressed that there should be more contributions from landowners that hold deer on their ground.

6. Deer Management Plan (DMP)

The Chairman noted that the management plan was as complete as possible and SC (as appointed SNH officer) agreed that the plan is as up to date as it can be, but a hind cull will need to be agreed.

SM commented that hinds that have been seen have had more calves but the weather continues to be poor and by February there may be less young calves.

Those present listed the number of stags and hinds shot, as follows:

	Stags	Hinds
New Kelso	8	12-18
Lochcarron	8	10
Bendamph	7	7
Kinloch	7	0
Coulin	30	50
Glenmhor	3	12
Kinlochdamph	25	
Tulloch	3	30
Applecross	65	60 +
Achnashellach	6	15-20

It is believed that around 8 stags have been shot locally around Lochcarron over the season.

SC commented that Dr Putman suggested the population was based on 3 or 4 groups and it would be helpful to put these population groups into the model with the cull records as a check and balance. SNH will be back next year to check on progress.

DG noted that the average age of stags are now down to 3 to 5 years of age, rather than the 7+, and there is concern that the age of stags will continue to drop.

A further concern was raised that estates intending to sell may cull harder, for say 5 years, in order to increase the game bag records and, therefore, the value of the estate. Values should be based on the DMG plan rather than the bag to prevent this from occurring.

SM noted that there is a concern over the management of stock and New Kelso is struggling to get 8 stags when 16 was once easy. The numbers are considerably lower than they were historically. Weather and age of the stock is also a worry.

The group discussed providing cull records at the end of the season so that they could be used for the model. A meeting in July was proposed to agree stag cull targets for the forthcoming season and a meeting in October to agree the hind cull.

WF commented that the DMG needs to be proactive when it comes to joined-up thinking and the data from habitat surveys and culls needs to be brought together. SM suggested that SNH need to tell the group what they need and it can be brought together. SC commented that if the habitat can be sustained it is then effectively stock management. The plan was very good and the report used a population model, but it was not included in the plan, it would be good to see how the culls affect the population.

WF noted that the habitat is the key feature and not so much cull numbers.

SC confirmed that SNH has £1,800 available to the group for starting habitat analysis and this can be used for training staff. *[Post-Meeting Note: This funding has now been applied for via SNH and Tom Chetwynd is progressing the progressing the habitat management programme].*

7. Summer Deer Count

SM noted that the summer deer count was not carried out by all members and there will be another count next year. He encouraged everyone to be involved with counts and habitat assessments.

8. Local Deer Issues

TC commented that the cattle grid is almost complete and Kirkton will be re-fenced starting from 2018. The west of the village still have a lot of deer and they are going onto the shinty pitch. A cull did help but hinds are now starting to come down. There has been minimal shooting around the village and assistance from the various estates would help.

SM noted that not all community groups wish to be involved with the DMG, specifically the Kirkton Woodlands, but they may get involved if SNH asked them for a DMP. SC suggested that the DMP would be undertaken as part of the forestry plan with the Forestry Commission.

SM thanked TC for attending the meeting and looking at the deer problem in Lochcarron.

The ground discussed further engagement with the crofting community to resolve some of the deer issues and SM is to consider.

9. Any Other Business

The group was informed of the sale of Ledgowan Estate to Kirkbi Ltd who own Strathconon estate.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was provisionally diarised for Monday, 7th May 2018

Appended Documents:

- *Accounts Summary*