

# South West Ross Deer Management Group Spring Meeting

**Lohcarron Community Hall, Lochcarron  
Friday, 3 May 2019**

## Attendees:

Shaun Macdonald (Chair)	- <i>New Kelso</i>	Sinclair Coghill	- <i>SNH</i>
Kurt Larson (Treasurer)	- <i>Ardoch</i>	Neil Morrison	- <i>Coulin</i>
Tom Chetwynd (Secretary)	- <i>Tullich</i>	Alison Hewitt	- <i>Kinlochdamph</i>
Gillian Pattinson	- <i>Lohcarron</i>	Troels Bavnhoej	- <i>Ledgowan</i>
Charlie Hill	- <i>Glen Mhor</i>	Danny Mackie	- <i>Ledgowan</i>
Archie MacLellan	- <i>Applecross</i>	Malcolm Turner	- <i>Ben Shieldaig</i>
Chris Mackenzie	- <i>Achnashellach</i>	Fanny Olsthoorn	- <i>Tick Researcher</i>
Colin Murdoch	- <i>Reraig Forest</i>		- <i>Wildfire Researcher</i>

## 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed those present and, in particular, Malcolm Turner (Woodland Trust) Ben Shieldaig.

## 2. Apologies

Philip Smith	- <i>Coulin</i>	Duncan Gray	- <i>Ben Damph</i>
Mark Raeside	- <i>Couldoran</i>	Louise Gray	- <i>Ben Damph</i>
Alison Raeside	- <i>Couldoran</i>	Will Gray	- <i>Ben Damph</i>
Mark Pattinson	- <i>Lohcarron</i>	Mark Adams	- <i>Kinlochdamph</i>
David Mackenzie	- <i>Couldoran</i>	Bill Stalker	- <i>Lohcarron</i>
Nicholas Wills	- <i>Achnashellach</i>	David Bertie	- <i>Applecross</i>
David Abraham	- <i>Applecross</i>	Richard Munday	- <i>Kinloch</i>
Richard Curzon	- <i>Tullich</i>	Andrew Cope	- <i>Glen Mhor</i>

## 3. Minutes

3.1 AGM Meeting – 7 December 2018: minutes were approved with no changes

3.2 Stalkers Meeting – 1 March 2019: minutes were approved with no changes

## 4. Finance Update

The Treasurer referred to the approved budget for 2018-19 that shows total annual expenditure of £10,143 for the group split between ADMG Levy, DMG Subscriptions and Special Project costs. He also confirmed that two membership subscriptions issued in

November 2018 to cover this amount remain outstanding and that the rest had now been settled in full.

The Treasurer outlined that 2018-19 had been identified as an intensive year for the group workwise and that the draft budget for 2019-20 is currently showing reduced total annual expenditure in the region of £5,500 for the group.

Discussion followed on how the DMG subscription element may be set in a more equitable way for the membership as a whole. The Chair proposed that each member should pay a flat rate fee, regardless of circumstances and that the balance should be split according to the average number of stags shot in the same way as ADMG levy is levied.

The Chair confirmed that a budget and proposal for the payment of annual subscriptions would be circulated to all members for approval.

**(AP: Circulate Budget and Proposal for payment of subscriptions)**

## **5. Deer Management Plan**

The Chair handed this part of the meeting to TC who provided an update on the Working Plan for South West Ross DMG.

TC informed those present that the Working Plan had now been prepared following reference to the Deer Management Plan 2015-20 prepared by Professor RJ Putman on behalf of SWRDMG. He also confirmed that elements of the plan had been updated to reflect minor changes in circumstances, the action points agreed at meetings and details of the action points completed and collected through either meetings or surveys over the course of the last year.

The Working Plan is split in to two sections as follows:

Part 1: ADMG Benchmark – Operation of the Group

Part 2: Deer Management Planning - Public Interest

TC outlined that each part of the Working Plan details the complete range of criteria and actions that the DMG members adopted and agreed to when they signed up to the Deer Management Plan produced by Professor Putman in 2015. The DMGs performance against these criteria and the delivery of actions is used as the basis for assessment of the DMG by SNH with the next assessment being undertaken on Tuesday 7 May 2019.

The Working Plan now forms the basis for all discussions at DMG meetings with the relevant criteria and actions being raised for discussion and, action points recorded and details of actions completed recorded in the minutes.

TC led the members present through Part 1 and Part 2 of the Working Plan and the key points discussed were as follows:

## Part 1: ADMG Benchmark – Operation of the Group

- **Area & Boundaries:** updated ownership maps have been produced and a number of smaller properties have been identified ie. Lubmore Forest, Lochrosque, Dornie and ownership of these will be clarified.
- **Sub-Groups:** now established following the transfer of Ben Shieldaig from east to west sub-group in 2018.
- **Membership:** Owners of smaller and outlying properties such as Kirkton Plantation and Reraig will continue to be encouraged to become members of the DMG.  
*(AP: Approach other ownerships to encourage membership of DMG)*
- **Meetings:** annual programme of four meetings per annum now established.
- **Constitution & Finance:** proposed budget for 2019-20 will be circulated together with proposal for subscription (AP recorded above).
- **Deer Management Plan:** Members will consider whether a full review of the DMP is required in 2020.  
*(AP: Members to consider at AGM – Friday 15 November 2019)*
- **Population Model:** update on regular basis with next update due following receipt of foot count information-Spring 2019. This will be used to inform, discuss and agree proposed stag culls by members via email prior to 1 July 2019.  
*(AP: Circulate updated model following collation of Spring 2019 count data)*
- **Other species of Deer:** no goat groups currently evident in the DMG.
- **DMG Plans:** key original plans have been reviewed and updated for DMG.
- **Annual Action List & Assignment of roles:** now attached to Working Plan as Appendix
- **ADMG Principles of Collaboration:** adopted and incorporated as an addendum to the Constitution.
- **Deer Counts:** East Sub-group have completed their foot count which they feel is accurate although it shows an unexplained reduction in both stags and hinds. Central Sub-group are undertaking a foot count on Sat 4 & Sun 5 May. West Sub-group have undertaken a partial count in the north and will undertake a recruitment count on the main area.
- **Deer cull information:** now collected for 2018-19 season.
- **Habitat Monitoring:** HIA report produced for HIA undertaken by 8 members following receipt of final information on Thursday 2 May – to be circulated with minutes.

*(AP: Members who have not commenced HIA to be encouraged to commence and assisted with identifying random plots, training and survey assistance if required)*

- **Competence:** Current qualification levels good and matrix attached to Working Plan.
- **Training:** Requirements identified for 2019 and matrix attached to Working Plan.  
*(AP: Circulate training requirement list for 2019 for identification of possible course within DMG)*
- **Venison Marketing:** SQWV membership still low and Ledgowan confirmed that they are becoming accredited in 2019.
- **Communications:** Contact list for meeting invites now updated to include Police Scotland and local community councils. Website for DMG updated on ADMG website with minutes and plan in place.

## **Part 2: Deer Management Planning - Public Interest**

- **Development of mechanisms to manage deer:** Confirmed that Sub-groups established, regional co-ordinators appointed and Annual Action List and Assignment of Roles attached as Appendix to Working Plan.
- **Delivery of designated features into Favourable Condition:** Confirmed that HIA undertaken on Lochcarron, Glen Mhor and Tullich in 2018 and recorded in HIA report. Proposed woodland expansion scheme at Doire Damph. HIA to be extended in 2019 – see AP above.
- **Management of Deer to retain existing woodland cover:** Recognised that much of the existing woodland in DMG is fenced. HIA to be extended into open woodland areas when appropriate woodland monitoring method is available.
- **Contributions to the Scottish Government woodland expansion target of 25% woodland cover:** Current woodland expansion proposals discussed and identified as follows:
  - Ben Damph – 150 ha. within 500 ha. enclosure
  - Ledgowan – 3 enclosures extending to 250 ha. total
  - Applecross – 10 ha. oak / native woodland scheme at Toscaig
  - Ben Shieldaig - proposing further woodland expansion
  - Lochcarron - currently investigating options.Scope of Forestry Co-operation Option outlined in identifying potential projects.  
*(AP: FCO information sheet to be recirculated to DMG)*
- **Monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside:** HIA Report for group discussed with good level of data collected from 8 members over Applecross, Kinloch, Lochcarron, Glen Mhor, Tullich, New Kelso, Achnashellach, Ledgowan and Coulin. Predominant habitat type sampled is Dwarf Shrub Heath and some Blanket Bog. Majority of sites showing low impacts for browsing (DSH: 83% / BB: 63%) and

trampling (DSH 93% / BB 100%). HIA discussed and presence of sheep identified in some sample areas. Opinion of some surveyors that there has been little noticeable change in last 30 years and with falling deer densities this is unlikely to change. There was felt to be no need to change deer management approach and HIA would continue and be expanded to monitor this.

- **Improve Scotland ability to store Carbon by maintaining or improving ecosystem health: Importance of trees, moorland, grassland and peatland in storing Carbon discussed.** Ledgowan confirmed that approximately 30% of a 247 ha. peatland restoration scheme is now complete. Applecross had looked at a Peatland restoration scheme but it had been discounted.
- **Reduce or mitigate the risk of establishment of invasive non-native species (INNS):** Confirmed that Sika control continues in season but control also possible under general licence / authorisation to owners and occupiers of agricultural and forestry land.
- **Protect designated historic and cultural features from being damaged by deer management activity:** Joint Agency Fencing Guide and Statement referred to and attached to Working Plan.  
(AP: DMG to obtain data for historic sites for inclusion in Working Plan)
- **Contributions to delivering higher standards of competence in deer management:** Members reminded that DMG as a whole has a commitment to encourage and ensure that all full-time members of staff will obtain DSC Level 2.  
(AP: Full time staff to investigate routes for achieving DSC Level 2)
- **Identify and promote opportunities contributing to public health and wellbeing:** Requested that Members report DVCs to DMG wherever possible. Suggested that upto 12 deer per annum struck by trains at Achnashellach and SNH agreed to provide link to rail mortality database. Approach to dealing with deer in Lochcarron identified as successful approach to collaborative DMG based action and will be used as strategy for dealing with similar deer related issues in future. Fewer deer identified in Kishorn but still present and this will be assessed by Ardoch and Glen Mhor with actions reported to DMG.  
(AP: Approach to ScotRail to determine level of rail mortality)
- **Maximise economic benefits associated with deer:** Wildlife tourism discussed as an opportunity for diversification in DMG. With NC500, some properties are already adopting an approach to offer this to visitors with success. Larder sharing used successfully at Achnashellach (Achnashellach and Fionnaraich) and Glen Mhor (Glen Mhor, Tullich, Lochcarron, Reraig and Couldoran).
- **Minimise the economic costs of deer and ensure deer management is cost effective:** Larder sharing used successfully at Achnashellach (Achnashellach and Fionnaraich) and Glen Mhor (Glen Mhor, Tullich, Lochcarron, Reraig and Couldoran). Approach to dealing with deer in Lochcarron identified as successful

approach to collaborative DMG based action and will be used as strategy for dealing with similar deer related issues in future.

- **Ensure effective communication on deer management issues:** Agreed that brief annual report would be produced by DMG for website and local press.
- **Ensure deer welfare is taken into account at individual animal and population level:** Welfare was discussed in detail with poor weather and liver fluke identified as factors affecting deer welfare. Most members maintain comprehensive larder records that can be analysed to identify trends between sub-group and individual estate populations. Agreed that decline in rotational burning possibly has adverse impact and that ticks on deer have increased following decline in sheep stock and changes in veterinary practice. Natural mortality has also been identified as including predation by foxes and eagles, particularly with calves. New Kelso confirmed that a woodland area has been opened to deer to provide winter shelter.

## 6. SNH Report

SC reported that the focus was on the assessment and that it was evident that there had been a huge shift in the performance of DMGs with evidence of good delivery of deer management provided by those groups assessed so far. Members were also reminded that the next assessment would be undertaken in 2022.

Members were reminded that both the report on the assessment and the report currently being compiled by the independent Deer Working Group are both due to be delivered to the Scottish Ministers in Autumn 2019.

## 7. Wildfire Plan

Wildfire Assessments are regularly circulated to members via, the DMG and following the recent spate of wildfire TC made members aware of a proposal put forward by Richard Munday to produce an updated Wildfire Plan for the DMG, to include the following:

- Contact details
- Estate Staff, Resources & Equipment
- Access Points and Restrictions
- Helicopter Procedures & Insurance

This was supported and it was agreed that on completion this will be attached to the Working Plan.

(AP: DMG to collect relevant information for wildfire plan from members)

## 8. AOCB

The culling of deer by non-members of the DMG in outlying woodland blocks was raised and the question asked whether cull returns were submitted /collected by the DMG. TC confirmed that in most cases they were but there were still several small woodlands where

they were not. It was confirmed that these members would be approached and encouraged to join the DMG under the AP detailed above.

**9. Dates of Meetings in 2019**

**Stalkers Meeting**

Mon 21 October 2019

**Autumn Meeting - AGM**

Friday 15 November 2019

DRAFT

**South West Ross Deer Management Group  
Annual General Meeting**

**Lochcarron Community Hall, Lochcarron  
Friday, 3 May 2019**

**10.0 Action List**

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.0</b>	<i>Circulate Budget and Proposal for payment of subscriptions</i>	
<b>2.0</b>	<i>Approach other ownerships to encourage membership of DMG</i>	
<b>3.0</b>	<i>Members to consider whether full review of DMP required in 2020</i>	
<b>4.0</b>	<i>Circulate updated population model following collation of 2019 count data</i>	
<b>5.0</b>	<i>Members to be encouraged to commence HIA and assisted with identifying random plots, training, etc.</i>	
<b>6.0</b>	<i>Training requirement list for 2019 to be circulated for identification of possible course within DMG</i>	
<b>7.0</b>	<i>FCO information sheet to be recirculated to DMG</i>	
<b>8.0</b>	<i>DMG to obtain data for historic sites for inclusion in Working Plan</i>	
<b>9.0</b>	<i>Full time staff to investigate routes for achieving DSC Level 2</i>	
<b>10.0</b>	<i>Approach to ScotRail to determine level of rail mortality</i>	
<b>11.0</b>	<i>DMG to collect relevant information for wildfire plan from members</i>	