

**Minutes of the Spring Meeting of the
EAST SUTHERLAND DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP held at the GOLSPIE INN, GOLSPIE
Friday 13th May 2016 at 2.00pm**

Present:

Mr. T. Chetwynd. (Chairman, Loch Choire)	Mr. N. Mackay. (Loch Choire)
Mr. J. McMorran. (Vice Chairman, Balnacoil)	Sir Michael Wigan. (Borrobol)
Mr. R. Rowantree. (Secretary, Gordonbush)	Mr. J. MacDonald. (Borrobol)
Mr B. Lyall. (Badanloch)	Mr. R. Bain. (Torrish)
Mr. L. MacNicol (Tressady)	Mr. A. Grant. (Kildonan)
Mr. P. Bakker. (Altnaharra)	Mr. V. Ryan. (Dalnessie)
Mr. I. McMyn. (SSE – Gordonbush)	Mrs. C. Ryan. (Dalnessie)
Mr. J. Urquhart (Dunrobin Sporting)	Mr. A. MacKay. (Dalnessie)
Mr. J. Billet (Kintradwell)	Dr J. Milner. (Deer Management Plan)
Mr. J. Hollingdale (Tilhill – Rosal)	Ms. V. Wilson. (SNH – North Highland)
Mr. V. Clements. (Deer Management Plan)	Mr. W. Lamont. (FCS)
Mr. J. Leonard (Torrish Woodlands)	Mr. D. Macaskill. (FCS)
	Ms. M. Robertson (FCS)

1. WELCOME

Tom Chetwynd welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially to those attending for the first time and to Dr Jos Milner and Victor Clements, who would be presenting the first draft of the revised group Deer Management Plan.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Mr. S. Green. (Syre)	Ms. R. Strickland. (Clebrig)
Ms. H. Deary. (SNH)	Mr. B. Colvin. (Kintradwell)
Mr. D. Patterson. (SNH)	Mr. G. Symmers. (Balnacoil)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2015 were circulated at the meeting. They were proposed by J. McMorran and seconded by M. Wigan

4. MATTERS ARISING

None that were not addressed in the agenda

5. Counts and Culls

- Cull and count spreadsheets were circulated and discussed. There was a correction made to the Badanloch count as the unclassified figure was a sum of the classified count. The data set will be amended. There were no count figures submitted from Clebrig, Morvich, Gartymore, Crakaig and West Garty. While the lack of data from the more peripheral estates was an issue, lack of data from Clebrig was of concern.
- The discussion on the quality of the count data was discussed in detail during the presentation on the Deer Management Plan by Victor Clements.
- The cull was regarded as sufficient to keep the stag population constant but was regarded as insufficient to prevent the increase in hind numbers, although this varied across the group with faster growth in the South East section of the group area.

6. DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN (DMP)

The first draft of the DMP had been circulated to group members. Victor Clements then presented the points of the plan by a PowerPoint presentation, focussing on the areas around the designated sites and woodlands that had been established in the last 25 years and the need to fit the plan to the benchmark assessment required by SNH to meet the test applied to DMP's by Scottish Government with regard to sustainability and the public interest. The low membership levels of the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme (SQWV) was also discussed.

There was a vigorous discussion on the deer population modelling spreadsheets that were attached to the draft plan narrative, with some concerns of the effects on neighbours of densities that might or might not deliver favourable condition status on designated sites.

Dr Milner stressed the need for high quality data if the models were to deliver meaningful information on deer populations, which stimulated a discussion on training needs and an efficient means of consistently gathering and storing high quality group population and habitat data.

The delivery of the "SWARD" data management tool was discussed; the group will be made aware of any progress on this programme.

7. Funding: The DMP and the Group

The funding discussion covered two topics, firstly, the funding of the DMP and secondly, the annual contribution to group costs and membership of ADMG.

Various models of funding the group DMP were discussed, but it was felt that the fairest way to allocate the cost of the plan was on the basis of area of land holding. The cost of the plan would be divided by the total open hill Ha. of the group and then multiplied by the holding area. This would be reduced by 50% as the ESDMG received match funding from SNH for the cost of writing the DMP. A motion to follow this model was put to the group. It was proposed by Mrs. C. Ryan and seconded by Mr. D. Macaskill. The motion was carried unopposed.

The funding of the annual cost would continue to follow the ADMG formula of a headage charge for each stag, hind and calf shot. The ADMG charge is fixed by the members at the ADMG AGM. The ESDMG charge would be to cover the costs of running the group and would be agreed by the members of ESDMG at the AGM.

8. AOCB

- **ESDMG Constitution:** - The group is required to have a constitution. A model constitution, drafted by ADMG, was circulated by e-mail prior to the meeting. No amendments to the constitution were made and a motion to adopt the model constitution as circulated, was proposed by Mrs. C. Ryan and seconded by Mr. J. Billet. The motion was passed unopposed.
- **Website:** - Populating the website is underway, with the initial work being done by V. Clements as part of the DMP work. The website is an element of demonstrating deer management in the public interest and will show the DMP and associated maps, contact details for the group and minutes of meetings. Certain sections, for example, cull and count data will be confidential to members.
- **ADMG Regional meeting:** - Held last week, topics discussed were Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 [received Royal Assent - 22nd April 2016] Deer Management Plan Re-assessment – June 2016 – This will be a step change in approach. Playfair Walker did a presentation on the import of PR. Venison marketing in the light of the E-Coli 0157 incident, SQWV update and Scottish Venison applying to receive PGI status for Scottish Venison (EU Regulation No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012). The need for increased levels of Bio-security following the discovery of a Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE – sometimes called Chronic Wasting Disease) in wild reindeer in Southern Norway.
- **Environmental Co-operation Action Fund (ECAAF):** - Summary of the drivers for and expected benefits of this agri-environment scheme were discussed
- **Deer Research Workshop – Ullapool:** - Chairman and Secretary attended this workshop, organised on behalf of Scottish Government by SRUC to identify gaps in Deer Research
- **South East Sutherland DMG:** - There are ongoing discussions to address the lack of a DMG around the Kyle of Sutherland. An invitation to be extended to Mr G. Gruber, acting chair of the informal South East Sutherland group, to the next meeting of ESDMG
- **Land Reform:** - The current situation is that although the bill is now an Act, there are numerous elements of secondary legislation to be passed before the full effect will be felt. The main areas for DMG's to consider are, the function of deer panels and engagement with local communities, SNH to require a DMP and a 3 yearly delivery check and the re-introduction of "sporting rates". The ADMG have stressed that they cannot condone or excuse any landowner who is seen to be holding the sector back.
- **SNH Update:** - Valerie Wilson explained the changes to the SNH operational structure, with a central wildlife operations unit dealing with policy issues while the Wildlife Management Officers would be operating from regional offices. Holly Deary is the WMO for the North area as well as supporting ADMG.
- **Chronic Wasting Disease:** - has been confirmed in wild reindeer in Norway, virtually impossible to eradicate. Advise all estates to follow high standard of bio-security
- **E-Coli 0157:** - The outbreak of e coli 0157 could have serious implications for the venison industry. Best Practice should be adhered to at all times. Membership of SQWV is recommended by ADMG.

9. Date of next meeting: - 28th October 2016

