

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
EXECUTIVE MEETING  
MONADHLIATH DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP  
Alvie House  
Thursday 28 July 2016  
10.00 AM**

<b>Present:</b>	Drew McFarlane-Slack (DMS)	MDMG Chair/SLE
	Ralph Smith (RS)	Secretary/Strutt & Parker
	Chris Donald (CD)	SNH
	Donna Skelly (DS)	Grigor & Young/Coignafearn
	Jamie Williamson (JW)	Alvie & Dalraddy
	Thomas MacDonell (TM)	Tulloch & Braeroy
	Richard Vernon (RV)	Glendoe

**Apologies:** Angus Macpherson (AM)

• **General Matters**

Glen Gloy wish to leave the Association of Deer Management Groups.

**ACTION:** RS to organise meeting between Mr McMillan and DMS regarding Glen Gloy Estate.

**ACTION:** DMS to speak to Simon Clows of Clune Estate.

**ACTION:** RS to write to Will Anderson to ask if he would like to join the Executive Group.

• **Spean Bridge Sub-Group**

The Executive Committee have decided that interaction with Spean-Bridge Sub Group would be beneficial, primarily because of the need of cull information. The Group also intends on getting in touch with the 'missing Estates'. A majority of those that have been identified as missing are within the Spean Bridge Sub-Group area. The Executive Committee have decided to organise a Sub-Group meeting for Spean Bridge Sub-Group.

**ACTION:** RS to identify those members who have not paid their subscription fees for the DMG.

**ACTION:** DC to get a list of 'missing estates'.

**ACTION:** RS to include the Spean Bridge Sub-Group as an agenda item for the next AGM.

- **East/West Split**

The Committee also discussed the potential split between the East and West Deer Management Group areas. However, it was noted at this time that there has not been a huge demand for this split, so this idea will be put on hold until after the AGM in August.

**ACTION:** Executive Committee will prepare for 2018 a report detailing the pros and cons of an East and West split.

- **Cull Data**

DC stressed importance for gathering in all data in a timely fashion.

**ACTION:** RS to make sure reminders are sent in early April. This will include mortality.

The Committee has decided that the best time to hold a meeting to discuss Culls and Mortality would be at the end of May. It was also discussed that it would be beneficial to have a rolling agenda, for example, an initial meeting with the Western area, a second meeting incorporating the whole group, and finally a meeting specifically for the Eastern area. This would allow parties to interchange between each meeting if required.

- **Summary of Action Points**

DC suggested sending out a summary of all the action points from the Executive Committee to all members, so that they could read it prior to the AGM in August.

- **High/Low Ground Areas**

DC discussed the differences between the high and low ground areas. There is an element of dislocation between the two areas and there is a risk the Strathnairn Group areas would become more disengaged with the Deer Management Group. DMS suggests that we should invite the Strathnairn Group to future AGM's.

- **Stakeholder Day**

The Executive Committee have decided that Glenfeshie will be the location for the next Community Engagement Stakeholder Day in 2017. This will likely be at the end of May. We also discussed that this meeting could merge with the Stakeholder Day, site visit and the cull discussion prior to the AGM - all on the same day. DC also thinks it would be a good idea to engage a wider range of Stakeholders such as agricultural tenants and foresters. DMS agrees with this and encourages us to include as many Stakeholders as possible.

There was also a discussion on how to challenge the Deer Management Group in terms of getting out of our comfort zone as we feel they need to challenge the Group by increasing

the scrutiny of our Deer Management Plan. It was discussed that we should get in touch with James Fenton in this regard. DC thinks that one large day incorporating all of the above events would be more efficient in terms of time and delivery of information.

- **Sporting Rates**

JW pointed out that sporting rates will be incorporated by next year's meeting. This is to be discussed at a later date in future objective meetings.

- **Larder Records**

There were also discussions on the requirement of a standardised larder record. DMS encourages the use of larder records. There is a form for this, however, we are unsure how many actually use this form as opposed to using their own methods of recording. DC expects the majority of estates to gather this information, however, it is not all recorded in a similar fashion. The Executive Committee has therefore decided that in time for the AGM in August we should introduce a basic standardised larder form which only requires the most basic of information to be included. However, this would also allow for additional information should the estate be able to provide it. A version of this form is already included in the back of the Deer Management Plan, however, the group feel that this should be simplified significantly. DS, TM and DC are happy to discuss the format that is required. It is hoped that this will be done in time for the AGM. Once the layout of the form is agreed, it will be distributed to all Estates before the AGM.

**ACTION:** DS, TM and DC to agree the contents/layout of the standardised larder form.

- **Leaving Estates**

The Group also discussed that certain Estates expressed an intent on leaving the Deer Management Group. We are yet unable to confirm how this would impact the Deer Management Group Plan as a whole. Currently those Estates who have either expressed intent to leave or have not paid their subscription fees are currently receiving all information regarding the Deer Management Plan. This may be reviewed should they continue not to pay their subscription fees.

- **Deer Counts**

SNH are yet to confirm funding for helicopter counts, however the group is currently saving for a future deer count with the hopes that half of it will be paid through subscription fees and the remainder through government grants. SNH grants are currently under a financial review so it is unknown if we will actually receive a grant.

The initial plan was for a winter count, however, we also discussed a 2016 summer count. The benefits of a summer count would be reduced costs and additional air time, however, the previous count was a winter count and this would mean changing the base count from previous years.

## **Coignafearn SAC**

We also discussed the trial area in the Coignafearn SAC. The Executive Committee recognises the benefits of maintaining this trial. DMS is also happy for the MDMG to input some additional funds into this area. If this Coignafearn does not wish for research to continue, the group will consider shifting the research to Braeroy. With all the monitoring equipment currently at Coignafearn, it would be preferential to remain at that Estate.

**ACTION:** DS to speak to her client and see if Coignafearn will input any money into this test site

## **• Questionnaire**

CD states that ministers are expecting a review of all Estates requiring information on what the Estates are doing in order to achieve their Deer Management Plan. DC recommends a simple questionnaire detailing information of what Estates have done in the last 12 months should be sent out to all members. This would then be discussed at the next Stakeholders Meeting.

There is special importance for all those estates with woodland interest. This questionnaire will therefore be discussed at the AGM. The form will be reviewed by the Executive Committee thereafter. The Group hope to get responses by early October and have a further Executive Committee Meeting thereafter.

**ACTION:** RS to include this questionnaire as an agenda item for the AGM.

## **Fencing**

RV expressed concerns over fencing on Aberchalder. In light of historical practices The Executive Committee recommend that they should collaborate and contribute to the maintenance of the fence accordingly.

DC stated that it would be beneficial for the next audit of estates to include a comment on the condition of fencing.

**ACTION:** RS to include common funding pools for fencing replacement as an agenda item for the AGM.

The Executive Committee recommend that in terms of Aberchalder Estate, contributions should likely be received from Glendoe, Garrogie, Corriearth and other neighbouring

Estates that receive a benefit from this particular fence.

We discussed the Craggan Crofters and a potential solution to the fence line at Glenbanchor Estate. A possible solution is a Forestry Woodland Scheme incorporating grants for tree establishment on improved grounds. There will be a future site meeting with all key stakeholders to discuss the proposal.

DC emphasises that any Estates who wish to erect any new fences must first consult the Deer Management Group. DC also emphasises it is important to receive the questionnaires in a timely fashion as it is important for the AGM.

**ACTION:** RS to write to all those estates who have recently erected new fences as this will have to be incorporated into the SDMP. This includes estates such as Corriegarh and Pitmain.

- **Training Update for Keepers**

It was also discussed that a keepers meeting could be had during the stakeholder day which would allow for discussions on larder records and an update on the identification of deer. This could potentially be done on one day as opposed to two separate days. Training updates for keepers will be included in the agenda for the AGM.

### **Legislation and Policies**

DS has agreed to do a talk on various significant legislative issues including vicarious liability, trapping, snaring etc. This legal update could be carried out at Coignafearn.

It was also discussed that an SNH representative could attend this workshop to discuss the Deer Code.