

MINUTES

AGM

Monday 10th August 2015 2.00pm – Duke of Gordon Hotel

**STRUTT
& PARKER**

www.struttandparker.com

Present

Drew McFarlane Slack
Ralph Smith
Alan McIntyre (AMI)
Andrew Hamilton (AH)
Andrew McDonnell (AMD)
Andrew Norval (AN)
Angus Macpherson (AM)
Bill Barnett (BB)
Bruce Hendry (BH)
Charles Connell (CC)
Chris Donald (CD)
David Kinnear (DK)
Donna Skelly (DS)
Dougie Campbell (DC)
Ed Jones (EJ)
Edward Greenwell (EG)
Finlay Clark (FC)
Frank Law (FL)
Graeme Macdonald (GM)
Graham Mabon (GM)
Hamish Cruickshank (HC)
Ian Christie (IC)
Ian Stewart (IS)
Jamie Williamson (JW)
Jim Grant (JG)
Jimmy Irvine (JI)
John Forbes-Leith (JFL)
Jonathan Carslaw (JC)
Kathleen Wolton (KW)
Kevin Fletcher (KF)
Richard Benyon (RB)
Richard Vernon (RV)
Scott Bremner (SB)
Steven Mackenzie (SM)
Thomas MacDonell (TM)

Chairman
Strutt & Parker (Secretary)
Kinrara
Strutt & Parker/Glenbanchor
Glen Mazeran
Kinveachy
Craig Dhu
Aberchalder/Invergarry
Glenshero
Garrogie
SNH
Alvie
Grigor & Young/Coignafearn
Strath Caulaidh
Easter Aberchalder
Dalmigavie
Glenshero/ADMG
Kinveachy
Alvie
Pitmain
Dunmaglass
Glenshero
Braeroy
Alvie & Dalraddy
Glenbanchor
Glen Mazeran
Dunachton
Glendoe
Strutt & Parker
Kinrara
Glenmazeran
Glendoe
Culachy
Aberchalder/Invergarry
Tulloch & Braeroy

Apologies

Allan Hodgson	Dalmigarry/Moor Estate
Andrew Fleming	Kyllachy
Andrew McKelvey	Knockie
Doug Waldron	Killin
Faye Gonzalez	Smiths Gore/Cluny
Jeremy Finnis	Dell
John Jackson	South Laggan & Inverroy
Philip MacKenzie	Farr
Tom Richmond	Smiths Gore/Cluny
Wattie Barbour	Corriegarth

1. Minutes of Last Meeting – 4th August 2014

No objections to the veracity of the previous minutes. They will go from draft format to final. No matters arose following the previous minutes.

2. Draft Constitution

ACTION: Due to time limitations a draft constitution was not available for this AGM. Chairman advised that a meeting will be held later this month with the Task Group to produce a draft and thereafter an EGM will be held to approve a new constitution.

3. Stakeholder Event Feedback

It was previously agreed, as part of the SDMP, that stakeholder meetings should be held at least annually. The first meeting was 23rd June at Alvie House and had a good turnout of 45-50 people including community councils (CC), local woodland trust, FCS, CNPA, Crofters and Farmers. Highland Ward Councillors, MP's and MP's were invited but were unable to attend. The SDMP was discussed thoroughly with plenty time available for Q&A. CC responses from the floor highlighted their concerns about Government attitudes to rural Scotland and deer management in particular. They considered that Deer Management was an important local supplier of quality employment and they hoped that more jobs could be generated in the sector over the life of the DMP. They advised that the continuing flow of economic

benefits to the Monadhliath through deer management, arising from the development of the plan, was their prime objective. There was positive feedback for the plan going forward. FCS and CNPA also confirmed they supported the approach taken by MDMG.

AH asked whether this is likely to be a regular/annual event, to which the chairman confirmed it would be with some consideration given to location and timing to better suit key stakeholders.

4. Issues Surrounding the SDMP

There are several 'missing estates' that have not been involved in the development of the SDMP. The chairman stressed that it is important for all estates to be involved, even if deer management is a minor part of their business. There are many environmental/habitat considerations within the plan that will affect them. DC mentioned that some of these estates have high winter stag counts and it would therefore be good to get them involved. **ACTION:** The missing estates identified include:

- Upper Glenfintaig
- Alltruadh Estate
- Coire Neurlain

The Chairman had been in touch with some of these estates already and there may be a willingness to engage going forward.

There was an audit of land that estates owned outwith the Red Deer Management Area. There is the potential for a lot of stakeholder conflict with deer in these areas, and so what is occurring outside the fence of the RDMA is important for owners to consider.

The MDMG Task Group has been used over the last two years as a sounding board for the development of the SDMP. The Chairman recommended that the Task Group members should now reform as our Executive Committee (EC) as outlined in the SDMP. This EC has amassed a great deal of experience in working together and will meet at an early date to recommend a draft constitution to members. The EC will be subject to election at the next AGM. One place was required to be filled due to the retirement of KM and the Chairman asked for expressions of interest from the floor. JI was suggested by RB and members unanimously agreed that the TG should morph into the EC with the addition of JI to replace KM.

In terms of subscriptions the Chairman advised the SDMP gave two options; either they were worked out (i) solely by cull numbers or (ii) by culls numbers and land area, with a recommendation that the latter be used. Members agreed with the recommendation to the use approach based on a combination of 5-year cull averages and estate land area

5. Peatland Restoration

Criticisms have been raised in the past regarding SNH's method of peatland condition monitoring. SNH have claimed a perceived increasing rate of decline of the condition of peatland is caused by deer. There are concerns that the decline can be attributed to other factors, such as climate change. The area has on multiple occasions failed Site Condition Monitoring, however the competency of this evidence has been disputed by owners. DC stated that Strath Caulaidh had reviewed the evidence as part of the planning process and concluded that the issue was complex hence more research was needed. The judgement was that it was difficult for SNH to prove unequivocally that deer were the main cause of problems on the SAC. Currently, SNH are speaking to the Scottish Ministers for further research funding. DC explains that this topic is currently very under-researched, especially at high altitudes, in Scotland.

6. Deer Counts

A question was raised about a summer count being undertaken soon (as mentioned in the SDMP). CD stated that the next count would most likely be a winter count in respectr of SNH funding. Subs will pay for half of the helicopter cost for the proposed winter 2018 count, and there may also be funding support available, but no subs have been raised for a summer count. AM suggested the costs of fixed-wing drone counts should be investigated.

Members expressed a strong preference for aerial counts as opposed to on-foot. RV stated a summer count would also be beneficial and this was supported by the group. DC commented that this was part of the SDMP and should be done in 2016 ideally. TM felt the group needed to get aerial count underway and agreed that summer counts were important. AD supported TM's comments and emphasises that summer counts are beneficial also because they provide supporting information for the SACs, including the research of the peat bogs.

ACTION: CD will look at funding for a winter count; while he supports the idea of a summer count, it may not be financially viable to fund it due to present SNH budget constraints. CD would be happy with just winter count if it was the only option. 50% of the winter 2018 would be funded by subs. The Chairman suggested putting pressure on SNH for their support of a summer count. CD agrees, provided the issue of funding can be alleviated.

TM suggested August would be a better month for the use of helicopters due to the decreased demand then and supported looking into fixed-wing costs as they may be becoming more viable. CD agreed that there could also be potential in using drones, but there were technical limitations with them at this time.

DC explains that the Monadhliath deer population is very mobile, and there is a great deal of seasonal movement. Thus, 2 counts in one year (summer and winter) would provide a good deal of interesting information. DS points out that there may be a chance to better monitor vegetation in the summer also if imagery was obtained at this time. DC commented that this was not a standard method, and also that good imagery is available online anyway.

7. Website

The Chairman stated he has been coming under pressure to publically publish the SDMP and that a website will be required to do so. DS expressed there may be legal issues surrounding the plans publication and that express consent from all owners should be sought before going onto a public forum. It was agreed that the best course of action would be to publish a shortened version of the plan, and to omit anything that may potentially be contentious. TM expressed that in order to move forward, transparency is important and that hiding historical records would be perceived negatively. RB agrees.

ACTION: The Chairman suggested passing the task of creating a shortened document to the executive committee, who will be charged with publishing a document that the whole group would be happy with. This was agreed unanimously.

8. Questionnaire

Strutt and Parker sent out a deer cull questionnaire (including mortality/change of status etc.) in March. JFL felt the inclusion of mortality at this time would be unhelpful. DC stated that a judgement was made to send the form out fairly early, in

order to compile as much information as possible prior to the group deer management review meeting in April, and reiterated that the mortality percentage will be within set parameters that can be reviewed afterwards if found to be inappropriate.

ACTION: These forms are available from S&P. This form can be sent out to members if required.

The cull larder records form was also discussed. It is in the rear of the SDMP and ideally should be used by members, or otherwise members should ideally make sure they are gathering the core information contained in it. It may also be that members are asked what form their current cull record is in, and then they simply add some extra information to it, for the sake of estate continuity. TM suggested having some sort of training day in order for the group to understand what is required to complete the larder record.

9. Peatland Action and Other Schemes

There was a show of hands for those estates interested in Peatland Action, a peatland restoration scheme through SNH. It should be noted that the application dealing is 17th August 2015, however additional funding may be available in the next financial year, or possible through SRDP. Estates interested include:

- Glenshero
- Alvie
- Coignafearn
- Glenbanchor
- Pitmain
- Braeroy
- Dalmigavie
- Glenmazeran

It was also asked which estates were interested in opening up woodlands for shelter and to move the fencing. Those interested include:

- Glenbanchor
- Alvie (already done)
- Garrogie (already done)

It was also asked which estates were interested in being involved in woodland expansion. Those interested include:

- Dunachton
- Alvie
- Kinveachy
- Garrogie
- Pitmain
- Culachy
- Glenmazeran
- Braeroy/Tulloch

In addition, a new Glendoe woodland plan will be developed which will include measures to help bring the Tarff SSSI woodland into better condition. Work will also continue at Creag Dhu to help improve woodland condition in the SSSI, with proposed larger culls in the wider area round the estate likely to help deliver this aim.

10. Deer Culls

AM will work to achieve the deer culls, as agreed in the SDMP, this year in the Speyside SG as last years hind target was missed (shortfall of c. 140 hinds).

DS confirmed, in relation to the above, that their proposed cull of 100 hinds on the out of season licence was included in their overall proposed hind cull target of 385 for 2015-16. This confirms RV's question following the Stratherrick Sub Group Meeting.

ACTION: DC encourages better flow of information inside and outside of the Speyside Sub Group, as well as other sub groups where necessary. It was decided that TM would organise the Speanbridge SG to have a meeting soon. DC has all the relevant information he would need and it would be easy for him to come up with statistics. A meeting will be sought hopefully in October.

11. SAC's

CD is happy the plan is up and running and is happy to continue with site condition monitoring, and will report the results.

SNH are looking to extend the Kinveachy section 7 agreement until June.

12. ADMG

FC gives thanks to JW and to the current Chairman for their work.

There is much going on politically and there will be a comprehensive review in 2016 that will assess how well the Deer Management Groups are working. The Scottish Ministers will expect to see significant progress. FC thinks that the MDMG are well placed within the ADMG system. He hopes to have strong publications in order to help support a vibrant deer sector in Scotland.

The next ADMG meeting is on 25th November in Inverness. MSP Dr Aileen McLeod will be attending.

AH asked how the MDMG fares in the whole ADMG compared to other groups. FC advised there are around 6 groups that are falling behind, and around another 6 groups that should be up to speed by the deadline.

He also advised there may be a 'compulsory system' for those not complying. Some areas are not part of a formal DMG system, such as estates focused predominantly on farming. However, some of these areas still contain a lot of deer and therefore need to be introduced into the system.

AH expressed concern that a compulsory system may be implemented to all estates, should a few not be able to comply. FC thinks only those who cannot agree will be subject to the compulsory system.

13. Finances and Secretarial Matters

The MDMG 2014-2015 accounts are below.

Monadhliath Deer Management Group	Accounts 2014 - 15		
	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening Balance as at 1 July 2014			£5,186.56
Interest to 30 June 2015	£0.00		
Levy Payments Received	£10,055.16		
Donations for Gift to Chairman	£765.00		
Cheque - ADMG Levy		£8,003.10	
Cheque - Strutt & Parker		£1,703.77	
Cheque - Strath Caulaidh – SDMP planning fees - non-payment contribution		£708.36	
	£10,820.16		
		£10,415.23	
Closing Balance 30 June 2015			£5,591.49
Cheque (1 July 2015) Alvie House		£540.00	
Cheque (1 July 2015) Strath Caulaidh – annual technical support (1 st of 2 bills due)		£1,680.00	

RV mentioned that it was likely that the normal expenditure would rise following the successful adoption of the SDMP. The Chairman confirms that increased costs have been budgeted for, and the tables in the SDMP detail them all and also confirm subscription rates going forward. There will be increased attention required from Strutt and Parker, and fees have already also been amended to reflect this in the SDMP budget costs.

14. Any Other Business

AM suggests a tour around all estates and the Chairman will consider this.

There will be an EGM to consider the constitution and other matters in due course.