

Morvern Deer Management EGM
18th April 2017 in Lochaline Village Hall
MINUTES APPROVED ON THE 1ST NOVEMBER BY TONY INNES AND
SECONDED BY STEVE FOX

Attendance: Bill Rosier (Rahoy Estate), Jamie Cameron (Kilmalieu), Craig Harbison (Kilmalieu), Iain Thornber (Glensanda), Neil Roberts (Laudale Estate), Torquil Kennedy (Forestry Commission), John Jackson (Forestry Commission), John MacDonald (Killundine Estate/Drimnin Estate), Matt Wilson (Oronsay), Steve Brazendale (Kingairloch), Simon Boult (Ardtornish), Peter Lawson (Kinlochteacuis), Faith Raven (Ardtornish), Steve Fox (Carnoch), Angus Robertson (Ardtornish), Alan Kennedy (Ardtornish), Angela Yeoman (Kingairloch), Hugh Raven (Ardtornish), Robert Lintott (Kingairloch), Susan Larson (Kingairloch), Katrina Lintott (Kingairloch), Alasdair Firth (Morvern Community Woodlands (Drimnin), Mark Foxwell (SWT: Rahoy Hills Wildlife Reserve), Tony McInnes (Ardtornish), Derek Lewis (Drimnin), Ian Collier (Forestry Commission), Lynda Campbell (ADMG), Rory Putman (Adviser for MDMG DMP), Cathy Maine (SNH)

Angus Robertson: Gave notice to the meeting of his resignation as Chairman also added that Alan Kennedy would also be resigning as secretary. In previous communications with voting members of the MDMG he asked for nominations of both roles. Nominations that came forward were one person for either vacant position. Roles that were proposed and given were:

Peter Lawson- chairman (was previously vice chair) Proposed by Angus Robertson, Seconded by Susan Larson

Steve Fox – vice-chairman Proposed by Iain Thornber and Seconded by Susan Larson

Susan Larson- secretary Proposed by Angus Robertson and Seconded by Peter Lawson

Alan Kennedy-to continue in his role as treasurer

Angus Robertson: Thanked the group and handed over the meeting to Peter.

Morvern Deer Management Meeting

Apologies and introductions

Peter Lawson: No apologies were given for the MDMG meeting
Everyone present above introduced himself or herself and stipulated who they represented.

Minutes of the last meeting (1/11/16) and matters arising

Iain Thornber: Commented that the minutes that were taken in the last meeting were very poor. He took his own notes during the previous meeting and noted that his own notes were somewhat different to the ones that had been circulated.

Peter Lawson: Asked Iain to clarify which points he was making particular reference to.

Iain: In particular point 8 “Living Landscape” and also point 5 the 2016 Ardtornish cull had more than usual out of season shooting and that there was no habitat assessment.

Alasdair Firth: Pointed out that Angus had a table with all the cull numbers. It was commented that this table was not passed around when the minutes were

passed around. It was then noted that in the future the cull figures must be attached to the minutes.

Alan Kennedy: Mentioned to the group that he has a master table and updates the figures annually. Alan would have liked to have comments on the previous minutes so that amendments could be made prior to the next meeting taking place. Alan then asked Iain when he received the minutes and Iain replied a few weeks ago and he had emailed Alan with his comments from the previous minutes.

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed after making changes to: Steve Brazendale represents Kingairloch and Peter Lawson represents Kinlochteacuis. It is proposed that the cull figures go into the same table as total numbers. This should be done for 2016.

Minutes of meeting 1/11/16 were then proposed by Iain Thornber and seconded by Susan Larson.

Members Report and Discussion

Below is the cull figures given during the meeting.

Estate	Stags	Hinds	Calves	other	Poaching
Carnoch	2	11	8		Non
Ardtornish		97	48	enclosed 1 stag	
Kingairloch		59	24	1 Roe doe	
Oronsay		1	1		Non
Killundine		19	6	enclosed 4 hinds, 4 calves	Non
Drimnin	10	17	11		
Forestry Commission	52	54	20	9 Roe Does, 14 Roe Bucks, 4 Kinds	
Laudale		40	26		
SNH		29	17		
Glencripesdale NR					
Glensanda	0	0	0		
Inversanda					
Rahoy Estate		4	1		
Kinlochteacuis		11	1		

Below is a table outlining comments made by estate representatives during the hind cull season and any other notes taken during the numbers discussion.

Estate	Condition
Carnoch	Good condition
Ardtornish	Below average condition. However, very high calving. Didn't see one yeld hind
Kingairloch	Good condition and continued improved weights.
Oronsay	Very low numbers of deer on the island with the objective of healthy native woodland being achieved.
Killundine	Poor hind condition, seen to be drying up in November
Drimnin	Varied but average to poor
Forestry Commission	
Laudale	Good condition, however quite a number of smaller calves
SNH	
Glencripesdale	no figures
Glensanda	no cull. However animals looked in good condition
Inversanda	no figures
Rahoy Estate	Forestry operations at Barr seem to have caused some migration onto ground, inflating hind numbers in early March. Fence between Kinlochteacuis forestry and Rahoy is now permeable in a few places. Appears to be a larger number of calves at foot than usual, probably due to the milder weather
Kinlochteacuis	Good condition

Below is a table outlining the proposed stag cull figures by all groups present:

Estate	Proposed Stag cull
Carnoch	12-4
Ardtornish	50
Kingairloch	30
Oronsay	1
Killundine	12
Drimnin	12
Forestry Commission	50
Laudale	35
SNH	Not decided
Glencripesdale	Not decided
Glensanda	On assessment
Inversanda	5
Rahoy Estate	?
Kinlochteacuis	10-12
Kilmalieu	6-7

Mark Foxwell: Nothing to add following mentioning they had not decided on cull level. The habitat is all a bit fluid and they will respond to what happens. They will only carry out any culling in the season, they will make a decision later on.

Iain Thornber: Pointed out that Christopher Cadbury put up the money to buy Rahoy Reserve and that there would be no culling as it should be left alone. When the estate changed hands there was a gentlemen's agreement that no culling would take place. He was disappointed to hear that there's going to be a change right in the middle of Morvern.

Mark Foxwell: Replied with that he was not aware of the gentlemen's agreement. Currently the site is in an unfavorable condition. Issue with sheep and deer grazing. Would not want to see the reserve in a continued unfavorable condition and culling was given the nod by the Cadbury's heir. The DMG report does state that culling can happen if required and is currently over grazed. Management aims to follow the DMP. A consent has been issued by SNH permitting the cull of 10 hinds.

DMP update-Ardtornish

Alan Kennedy: Opened up by stating that long term forestry plan was discussed at the Scoping Meeting a few weeks ago. He then went on to say that Ardtornish have decided that significant reductions will be taking place in deer numbers. This year's cull position is unchanged, continuing to shoot 120 hinds. From the beginning of the 2018 season they are aiming to roughly halve the number of deer on the estate, in the 2018/19 season they will aim to cull 40 stags and 190 hinds.

The main reason for this was that the owners want to improve the condition of the various habitats of the whole estate and to reduce herbivore impact. This is something that they have been wanting to do for some time and both the managers and the owners want the estate to be more ecological. The SSSI's are in a declining position and over 3-4 years they want to reduce the deer herd by about 50%. The current population is around 1150-1200, their aim is to reduce this to 227 stags and 228 hinds, with around 4 deer/ 100 Ha. Noting that these were the figures suggested by Rory Putman.

The culls will be targeted within woodland and in conjunction with the new planting proposals. There will be compensation culling for the new woodland. However they still want to have a sporting aspect on the estate.

Rory Putman: These figures are a lot lower than what was proposed in his report he has prepared for Ardtornish and are NOT the figures he had suggested. He also noted that justification for reduction in relation to protection of woodland was in contradiction of the Estate's previous assertions that the primary method which would be used for protection of vulnerable woodlands would be fencing.

Alan Kennedy: The plan would be to have a split of 227 stags and 228 hinds, a total of 531. These figures do not include calves.

Rory: Went on again to say that these are categorically not his figures from the report that he submitted to Alan. **(see end for RJP comment) Rory went on to say that in order for Ardtornish to be a sporting estate with a stag cull of 30, with these figures put forward by Alan, it is not possible. Alan's figures were not from Rory's model and they must've been from Graeme Taylor's. Rory then went onto explain that with Graeme's model, it does not take into consideration loses, in particular the 17% emigration population. Rory then went on again to say that there is one model from SNH and one model of his own and the figures quoted is categorically not his own model.

Alan Kennedy: In reply, he stated that he has misinterpreted Rory's report.

Rory Putman: Stated that Graham Taylors calculations have not taken account of any movement and loses and has based his calculations on a closed population. He then went on to say that he thought we were getting a plan and it now turns out that there are a lot of discrepancies.

Alan Kennedy: Proceeded to outline to cull figures for the next few years:

2018-2019 :40 stags, 190 hinds

2019-2020: 30 stags, 185 hinds

2020-2021: 30 stags, 185 hinds

Rory Putman: Strongly advised that for this year, the stag call should only be 30 as the proposed 50 for this year is unsustainable. They have not taken account of the 17% of animals that are lost every year. He repeated that Ardtornish had been well advised to not take more than 30 stags this year. He then asked if the model that he presented to Ardtornish be circulated to the whole group. He recommended that it should be 30 stags a year EVERY year from THIS season.

Alan Kennedy: He wants to have Rory involved.

Rory Putman: He repeated that some of these recommendations are not his own and have been mis-represented as being his own. He had never recommended a final population at stability of 225-225 adult stags and hinds (the 227:228 split presents a spurious precision resulting from the output of population models); he had always argued that an end population of 225 stags and 225 hinds would not be sufficient to support the Estate's stated intention of sustaining a cull of 30 stags per year. To support such a cull in the future the absolute minimum required population is estimated at 275 and 300 hinds.

Seeking approval from the Estate to reveal the results of his analyses he quoted that from 2018/19 recommended cull figures to achieve such end-populations after three years would be

2018/19 30 stags : 170 (adult) hinds

2019/20 30 stags : 170 (adult) hinds

2020/21 30 stags : 170 (adult) hinds

Alan Kennedy: Pointed out that they have already sold over 30 stags for this year. Suggested that a solution would be that if Ardtornish shot more this year, could they shoot less next year?

Rory Putman: Pointed out that it simply doesn't work that way
Alan Kennedy: The estate has yet to decide on what the final population is going to be. Before 2021 they are looking closely at their farming enterprises and a habitat assessment will be carried out. There will be change and we might have to disconnect ultimately with the population.

Rory Putman: Replied with "This is all very vague for neighbours" and that "what the very minimum could be is what we all need to know"

Matt Wilson: Reiterated Rory's points that there is a 17% emigration of stags and a 4% emigration of hinds. He asked is it hoped that Ardtornish wants to get along with their neighbours?

Tony McInnes: Ardtornish will be reducing their numbers by 2021. This is to improve the general environment and to aid the SSSI's that are in poor condition. Their first recourse is fencing- they are committed to fencing.

Rory Putman: If indeed protection of new and existing woodlands is to be primarily by fencing, populations reductions can only be justified as compensatory culls for loss of woodland area. Condition of woodlands alone does not justify reduction culls more generally across the estate and this should rather be justified in relation to condition of open hill habitats rather than in relation to woodland.

Alan Kennedy: They will have to do a compensation cull and not just inside the fences but also outside.

Neil Roberts: Asked what time of year is the damage happening?

Alan Kennedy: They may have to put a temporary hold on sporting aspects. They are not going to set targets and will continue to monitor.

Moving onto tree planting

Alan Kennedy: There is a 220Ha application in and there are others currently being proposed. The plan is to plant more trees and to recover existing trees.

Matt Wilson: Asked Alan that with the established woodlands, will Ardtornish be shooting out of season?

Alan Kennedy: Replied saying that they will be prepared to shoot out of season.

Matt Wilson: If these are going to be taken, will these figures go towards the total cull figures?

Alan Kennedy: Said that any culls taken within woodland areas would inevitably be an unknown quantity and would be on top of proposed sporting culls.. He said that they may have to take stags out of season. A decision will be made this summer on the removal of hirsels(sheep) from some parts of the estate.

Rory Putman: pointed out that figures offered by him for minimum population were for populations in support of a total annual cull of 30 stags, not simply a cull of 30 sporting stags plus some other unknown additional offtake. To achieve a guaranteed sporting cull of 30 stags, a higher population would be required.

Alan Kennedy : went onto say that the tolerance for deer will be increased once they have looked at the farming and that figures discussed to date are likely to be the absolute minimum scenario.

There is an “overarching land plan” being prepared.

Matt Wilson: Stated that an intelligent cull must be made in relation to affected neighbours.

Alan Kennedy: The RTS forestry plan is being submitted this week and that there will be compensation culling as well as shooting in previously un-shot areas. A habitat assessment has been commissioned in the latter half of May looking at deer, farming and how to best manage the impact.

Peter Lawson: Stated that there seems to be A LOT of uncertainty on final numbers.

Iain Thornber: Following the Long Term Forestry Plan meeting, he barely had any communications following his comments

Ian Collier: Stated that Miller Harris has drawn up a draft plan of the report and should be able to produce the report in the next few weeks. Once the report has been sent out, people will be able to make comments. For all new planting, Veronica is the point of contact.

Susan Larson: Is extremely concerned with the Beach plantation and how it will affect the best sporting ground and some of the best grazing ground. She suggested that a smaller group meeting between key members should be had to discuss Beach, from the plans, there are not many trees being planted and a lot of open ground is shown.

Alan Kennedy: Said that Beach had been submitted but has not been signed off.

Susan Larson: Stated that there were two maps, the one from the scoping meeting and the one emailed following the meeting were very different and she is extremely concerned.

Alan Kennedy: Produced some forestry maps, however they did not have the information that Matt Wilson requested showing all EXISTING forestry and fencing. Matt wanted to have a map showing the connectivity of current fence lines with the proposed new ones.

Iain Thornber: Proposed the following Motion. He went onto explain that the motion would be:

"This group does not accept the Living Landscape proposal and the associated woodland expansion for the following reasons:

- 1 There is insufficient detail (on which to form a judgment)
- 2 It will de-stabilize the deer population in the group area for the next 50 years
- 3 It is contrary to the functions and objections of the group
- 4 It is contrary to the existing collaborative deer management plan
- 5 It will create an ecological mess through under-grazing
- 6 It will impact seriously on neighbouring estates who wish to continue traditional deer stalking through the usual culls.
- 7 It will result in the loss of a fine and ancient strain of deer which came onto the peninsula not much later than the rare alpine plants we all rave about
- 8 It will upset the local community which is already divided over the issue.

Steve Brazendale: Seconded the motion

Mark Foxwell: Said that Iain should remove the term "Living Landscape"

Iain Thornber: OK- re wilding, it's still going to be the slaughter of deer

Derek Lewis: Stated that before going ahead with the motion, we need more information. We are a collaborative group and votes cannot be made and he suggested that another meeting should be had.

Rory Putman: Said that his figures were to have a population of 300 stags and 300 hinds. With the cull figures being 30 stags and 170 hinds for the next four years, starting from the 2017/18 season. The figures that Alan is quoting are a lot different to what Rory proposed.

Alan Kennedy: The Beach block is going to happen and compensation culling will take place.

Peter Lawson: Proposed that Ardtornish, Lauderdale and Kingairloch need to have another meeting. There is a lack of detail on the end figures and there is a lack of firmness on the final detail.

Iain Thornber: He withdrew the motion citing that more information was needed on the cull figures and targeted end population figures

Alasdair Firth: Stated that it shouldn't be necessary to have in mind an end-population, but that necessary levels of culling could be advised by monitoring of habitat condition and its improvement.

Rory Putman: pointed out that this doesn't work in practice since there is a significant time-lag in recovery of vegetation even after deer densities have been

reduced (as long as 5 – 7 years) so that if once culled only in response to vegetation condition without acknowledging that time-lag one would kill many more deer than actually required. It is far better to have some notional end-population in mind, cull towards that and then consolidate for a period to monitor whether or not this has been sufficient to deliver recovery of the vegetation.

Alan Kennedy: Quite happy to come back with more robust cull figures as soon as the issue between Alan and Rory has been resolved, he will send the information round. However, there will be maintenance and compensation culling when Beach is planted. The application is in and it was hoped to make a start in 2017, however it looks like it will now be 2018. It will be discussed with Kingairloch.

Susan Larson: Objected to the Beach block

Hugh Raven: They will not progress without discussing matter with neighbours

Alan Kennedy: Ardtornish sheep to be discussed at next estate meeting

Tony McInnes: Some do not want Ardtornish to carry on, but Ardtornish will be planning on reducing numbers.

Iain Thornber: There is only one estate in the group that wants to reduce numbers significantly.

Alasdair Firth: Stated that woodland creating could benefit the whole community
Peter Lawson: Proposed that we need to see the figures and then a vote can be made. Information required are cull figures, end population figures and sheep numbers.

Iain Thornber: Will circulate the motion so that all members can decide if it should be added to the constitution.

Derek Lewis: Once the data is clearer, the information IS to be added to the DMG plan.

2017-18 Count

Alan Kennedy – Stated that there was no count this year and we are still on the list to be heli-counted next year. Graham Taylor has said we're still in consideration

Rory Putman: Stated that a heli-count is NO USE in November.

Alan Kennedy: Requested for it to be done in February. There is no guarantee that we will get it, but the group is high on the list.

Matt Wilson: Said he had also spoken to Graham Taylor and that Graham had said that other groups had priorities. However, Matt did beat the drum for the

MDMG stating that there is a lack of cooperation between members. Matt said that Graham couldn't see a reason why would be moved lower down the list and it is still likely that we are high on the list.

Susan Larson: Has offered to communicate and arrange with SNH to have the heli-count done in February. If they say they do not have enough funding to do the count on Morvern, she will foot the bill herself, BUT only if SNH refuses to pay. Kingairloch would still be planning to do their own heli-count next year as the last heli-count was carried out in 2014.

Yorkshire Game

Peter Lawson: Stated that there is still time to get a claim in for anyone who is still owed money. He asked the group if there is a desire to only use one dealer. Susan Larson and other members: All said they had been written to from Highland Game. They were going to offer £2.10/Kg non SQWV and £2.34/Kg for SQWV assured. When dealing with a new dealer, he suggested that it would be best to set up an agreement that estates are paid promptly and an agreed price is set.

Neil Roberts: Commented that Highland Game have condemned a lot of carcasses in the past. Since YG going into administration, Lauderdale use Fyne Game (Gordon Slaughter) and they had been good payers for the remainder of the season. It was decided that the group would approach Gordon Slaughter to collect for the whole peninsula.

ADMG Business and SNH

A group discussion came to the decision that training sessions with Graham Taylor is still high on the list of wishes for group members, having habitat assessment training.

Lynda Campbell: Said that Angus Davidson had done a good habitat assessment.

Mark Foxwell: Hoped that they would have finished their 140 sites shortly.

Lynda Campbell: Stated that deer management is not an easy thing to manage and 50% of groups are failing. It is a struggle to get all land managers to agree. She said with our group, that it is a good thing that we are trying to discuss matters and to move forward. The next ADMG meeting is on the 31st May in Perth. There is an increase in subscriptions.

Cathy Maine (SNH): Government is pre-judging that plans are not going to work. There will be more government enforcement and SNH will have more powers and enforcement. She said to the group that we need to focus on our plan, especially the action points on the back pages. SNH is not resource rich and this may have implications for areas that require funding. She then went onto say that we have a plan and we must deliver it. If we don't there may be repercussion. Do not wait for SNH to do the training, the group can do it themselves.

Susan Larson: Pointed out that there were two dates given to the group by SNH and SNH did not keep to them.

Any Other Business

Matt Wilson: Brought up voting and non-voting members. On the agenda for this meeting, Oronsay is stated as a non-voting member and he wanted to know when did that change.

Angus Roberts: Said that he couldn't remember, when the constitution was created it was hard to decide who could vote.

Matt Wilson: Produced minutes from 2014 showing that Oronsay was a voting member then.

Derek Lewis: Stated that as they were a voting member in 2014, Oronsay should be reinstated.

Alasdair Firth: Asked is there a clear policy of who should be voting members?

Alan Kennedy: Said that in the constitution it is a significant land holding within the group that has deer.

Alasdair Firth: Stated that Drimnin crofts are not members of the group

Rory Putman: Pointed out that if you are a subscriber, then you can vote?

Peter Lawson: Asked that if there is a desire to change the constitution can the amendments be requested before the next meeting? He then reinstated Oronsay as a member as it must have been a typing error for them to be stated as a non-voting member. As a group we should try and encourage people who own land to join the deer group. No-one from 2014 that was on the list should have been removed (unless they haven't paid). He proposed that a review of the constitution should be done at the AGM. The community woodland group can be an observer and if they wanted to become a member, they need to fill out an application.

It is agreed that meetings will continue to be held in public places and at the AGM we will encourage the public to come along as observers and they will be allowed to make comments at the end of the meeting. It will be an open meeting.

Derek Lewis: Suggested that the Chairman write an annual report to go on the group's website.

Cathy Maine : Commented that a number of other groups open up their meetings to the public. We should encourage community groups to come along. That way the communities would have a better understanding of what deer management groups do.

Iain Thornber: Suggested that the whole AGM should be held as an open meeting.

Lynda Campbell: Stated that once minutes have been approved they too should be put on the website.

Peter Lawson: Asked if the group would consider having a paid operative to keep abreast of legislation. May be a small fund to go towards paying someone to do this? Perhaps an additional amount to add to cull figure payments?

Derek Lewis: We would need to know exactly what the role would be before going any further

Rory Putman: Pointed out that Angus had said in previous meetings that there is a lot of data collection and management now going to be required under the new Group Benchmark Plan and a data officer would be of use. If we are going to collect data, we must do some analysing.

Matt Wilson: Good data management can only be done by someone that really knows their business. He also asked to be added back onto mailing lists.

Peter Lawson: Thanked the outgoing secretary (Alan Kennedy) and chairman (Angus Robertson) and thanked Aggregate Industries through Iain Thornber for organizing the hall and refreshments.

Next Meeting 1st November. Venue to be decided.

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RJP's Comment - Right for clarification.

"I was asked to do 5 things by the Estate.

1. To review Graeme Taylor's proposed reduction culls (numbers to be shot each year to reduce to a population of 225:225. In doing so, I noted a) that the mathematics of the models SNH use are actually flawed in some respects and b) (more to the point here) they assume a closed system with no immigration and no emigration. I was thus asked
2. to calculate from pre-existing count and cull figures (previous years) what was the actual emigration/attrition rate and
3. having done so, to produce new cull projections for the required annual culls required to deliver 225:225 split of adult population over three years of alternatively four years.

I did this. However, the rates of emigration/attrition of stag numbers calculated at point 2, imply that it is not a closed system and that even therefore Graeme's initial target population at stability of 225 stags:225 hinds PLUS calves will be insufficient to sustain an annual cull of 30 stags as the Estate requested. Therefore

4. I calculated what the absolute minimum required population at stability to support an annual cull of 30 adult stags (given that there are these additional losses through emigration) and
5. Then calculated the annual cull rates required to produce THAT end population in 3 years.

