

Morvern Deer Management Extra Ordinary Meeting

20th July 2017, Kingairloch Estate

Attendance: Iain Thornber (Glensanda), Neil Roberts (Laudale Estate), John Jackson (Forestry Commission), John MacDonald (Killundine Estate/Drinnin Estate), Matt Wilson (Oronsay), Simon Boulton (Ardtornish), Peter Lawson (Kinlochteacuis), Steve Fox (Carnoch), Robert Lintott (Kingairloch), Susan Larson (Kingairloch), Katrina Lintott (Kingairloch), Mark Foxwell (SWT: Rahoy Hills Wildlife Reserve), Tony McInnes (Ardtornish), Shaun Corrigan (Glensanda) Rory Putman (Adviser for MDMG DMP), Graeme Taylor (SNH)

**MINUTES APPROVED ON THE 1ST NOVEMBER BY TONY INNES AND
SECONDED BY STEVE FOX**

Apologies: Bill Rosier (Rahoy Estate), Jamie Cameron (Kilmalieu), Derek Lewis (Drinnin)

1) Minutes of Spring Meeting held over for Autumn Meeting

2) Update on Ardtornish Plans including hill sheep and Woodland update

Tony McInnes: Approval from the board has been given to reduce sheep numbers within the next couple of years. There are issues with the subsidies that need to be taken into consideration, however they aim to remove 780 sheep out of the total flock of approx. 2500.

They are still aiming for the population of 300 stags and 300 hinds and will carry out the cull as previously discussed and written in Tony's paper.

The habitat report is expected within the month. They will then assess again in 2019.

Ardtornish is very much aware of the need for a collaborative approach.

With the cull, they will try and avoid boundaries and will move quickly if it is deemed that their activities are not helping other members.

Regarding the woodland report, they are still waiting to hear back from the consultants. They have made some adjustments and they have put in the first application for funding.

Peter Lawson: Commented that on the return that was received it is stated that in the Autumn of 2017 the sheep will be removed on Beach.

Tony: He is not yet 100% sure of this, but it will be happening on the East of the estate.

Neil Robertson: Asked that could the sheep be removed off Laudale

Tony: Ardtornish identified that Beach, Altnahonic and the Reserve areas are where the sheep will be removed from.

3) Iain's Thornber's Motion from previous meeting

Peter: The motion that was put forward has certainly focused discussions.

Rory Putman: There are different implications on a reduction cull. After the cull has been taken, there should still be enough hinds for breeding and the desired figure of 300 stags is already a higher figure than what is currently on Ardtornish.

There may be a change in distribution, however it would be guess work to know what the distribution would be, especially with the removal of

sheep. He is not sure how long it will take for stabilization to occur.

Tony: Still not confident that there has been an accurate stag count. However, Ardtornish plans to go organic with the sheep flock, creating a more expensive commodity. If by 2030, there are no sheep on the estate, no-one on the estate's board would be that worried.

Rory: Information on cull location/count model hasn't been done as the information is not available to him. In this part of the management area there are two sub populations and much better modeling could be done if cull information was recorded.

Simon Boulton: He does have records of where culls have taken place.

Susan Larson: Kingairloch also has cull location data

To get this information to Rory would mean the interaction of the sub populations could be analysed better.

Rob Lintott: It has to be looked at geographically rather than on estate boundaries

Rory: Confident that the hinds that will remain will be able to maintain the recruitment rate. Mature stags move onto neighbouring estates and that is unlikely to change and there has been a loss of juvenile stags. Once the hind reduction has taken place, there should be an increase of mature stags, hence being able to get to the figure of having 300 stags as they are along way from that figure presently.

There are also lots of things that neighbours can do to increase the number of residential stags on their own properties.

Susan: Kingairloch's concerns have been reduced following the added details and discussions that have been made.

Rory: He advised to not avoid culling on boundaries as that is why half of juvenile stags are leaving. It is a question of trusting Simon of culling stags that are truly Ardtornish's taking into consideration wind direction/weather patterns etc.

Peter: Reiterated that the Spring meeting and the consequent motion brought a lot out for members to discuss.

Tony: They will continue to be open and share data.

Matt Wilson: What is the structure of the cull going to be- will it be through the ages?

Simon: That is still in discussion at Ardtornish.

Iain Thornber: He does not regret the motion that was put forward, he was pleased to hear what Tony had to say. He also thinks the group must continue to be open and nobody must be stopped from raising their concerns.

4) Public interest return format

Steve Fox: There has to be an annual audit from each estate. A number of estates have responded. Raised the point if members would prefer to have their own form or use a standard one.

General discussion came to an agreement that it would be better if there was a standard form. Rory pointed out that it would be easier for data collection if that was the case.

Steve: Would like to have a form sent out to all members to be filled out retrospectively for previous season.

Graeme Taylor: Highlighted that other groups provide data annually. Ardtornish have now outlined their plans and it is now up to their neighbours to react to

what their proposals. The annual audit has to be done, regardless.

John Jackson: Their records are on a computer system and should be able to pull off the required information.

Steve: Members that have to still send information are: SNH, Drimnin, Glencrisadale, Glensanda, SWT, Kilamlieu and Inversanda are very happy to be proactive within the group and provide their cull figures etc.

5) Agreement over the format of cull returns and larder recording

Steve: Thought there was an existing cull information sheet, however couldn't find what the exact requirement was for data to be collected.

Rory: He will send over a form that has the bare minimum of records that is required for the group.

Graeme: Asked to make sure that hind fertility, location, date, tag was included.

6) Additional funding to cover ADMG web hosting and sundry expenses

Peter: There is currently £700 in the account and suggested that perhaps this should be increased for any other expenditures in the future.

Funds are collected through cull numbers

Susan: ADMG have raised their figures from £3.50-£4. Based on last years cull reports, income is looking like £2000, it is not known what the ADMG take.

Tony: Stated that Alan Kennedy will support the group until the Autumn.

Peter: At the next meeting there will be another discussion on subscriptions.

7) AONB

Rob: Following the groups heli count next year, cull figures may have to be looked at again as there will be a more accurate count carried out.

Graeme: SNH cannot guarantee there will be a helicopter available, however it could be at Christmas. They will be organizing the helicopter and it is possible for 2/3 stalkers to go up the helicopter and it may be that two helicopters are used.

A week's notice will be give. A count cannot be taken after March.

Group discussion was that it would not suit at Christmas, and going into Feb/March would be better

Susan: Kingairloch will be counted by a helicopter regardless, it is within the agreed plan following the cull program carried out. Kingairloch finds it hard to foot count.

It was pointed out that even with a helicopter you cannot guarantee woodland figures.

In the event of having a heli count in November, the group would have to do a foot count in February, counting the whole area in order to work out recruitment rates.

Game dealer discussions resulted in Fyne Game (Gordon Slaughter) being the preferred. Good payer, etc and the group will use him. The FC are tied into a contract with Highland Game.

Habitat impact assessment.

Peter: Suggested that there should be 120 bog and 120 heath across the whole group and he suggested 60 Ardtornish, 20 Kingairloch and Laudale and then 5 on

all other members.

Rory: Pointed out that it varies between other groups as to how many plots are monitored.

There are currently a lot of members who are monitoring already and if members could put on a map where the plots are and send them to Graeme, he will then suggest where additional monitoring is required to each member.

Peter: He asked if the forms that SWT use will work with SNH.

Graeme: It didn't really matter, so long as there was monitoring taking place

Gut shot carcasses

Simon: Asked if clarification could be given on what gross contamination is and pointed out that E-coli cannot live in the stomach.

Graeme: He is pushing for clarification on this and it is likely there will be a review on best practice for carcass processing and also said there is a review being done for the habitat monitoring procedure.

Meetings

Iain: Asked to make sure that meetings are held in a public place.

Graeme: Agrees that for public interest, they should be held so that the public can listen.

Discussions resulted in one meeting should at least be held in a public place and open to members of the public.

Spring Meeting date: Tuesday 3rd April