

Morvern DMG Meeting Minutes, 3 November 2020 by Zoom.

Attendees

Peter Lawson (Kinlochteacuis)	Susan Larson (Kingairloch)
Steve Fox (Carnoch)	Lorraine Servant (NatureScot)
Neil Roberts (Laudale)	John MacDonald (Killundine, Drimnin,
Mark Foxwell (SWT)	Hugh Raven (Ardtomish)
Derek Lewis (Drimnin)	Ross MacKay (Ardtomish)
Gareth Mills (Glensanda)	Ian Collier (Scottish Forestry)
Richard Cooke (ADMG)	Lynda Campbell (ADMG)
Cathy Mayne (Minutes)	Bruce Taylor (Scottish Woodlands, WLDMG)

Apologies

Matt Wilson (Morvern Community Woodlands)	Simon Boulton (Ardtomish)
Angus Robertson	Iain Thomber

AGM business

1. Election of Officers. Peter Lawson (Chair), Steven Fox (Vice-Chair) and Susan Larson (Secretary) willing to stand for another year, proposed DL, seconded MF.
2. Accounts. AK no longer at Ardtomish and no longer standing as Treasurer, accounts not yet available. Hugh Raven appointed as Treasurer (unanimous). DL suggested professional support; Kirsty MacIntyre (Lochaline bookkeeper) to be asked to submit a quote.
3. Approval of MDMG fee and ADMG levy for 2021; delayed until accounts produced in the next 2 weeks. Will be settled by email.
4. Any other business. Recovery of data from Angus Davidson may incur some costs; will be finalised in the next few weeks and incorporated into HR's accounts. Thanks to CM and Community Council for Zoom hosting and Minutes.

MDMG business

1	Chairman's opening remarks	Actions
1.1	A very strange year with many changes; few if any stalking clients.	
1.2	Counting in spring 2021 is crucial; necessary to update the population model	
1.3	DMP – Rory consulted and suggests that the plan can run for another couple of years but emphasised the importance in the 2021 count and population model.	
1.4	Community Council meetings attended; disposal of SNH's Glencripesdale property may attract local community buyout interest.	
1.5	Thanks to Steve and Susan for all the work done in the last year. Time spent on chasing information; prompt response much appreciated.	
1.6	Venison market; dealer consulted. Potential reduction in price to £1/kg or complete loss of market. Gordon does not foresee the price dropping and will pay 30 days after end of month; asks kidneys and all fat removed from carcasses please.	All – carcass clean
1.7	Hinds in great condition, calving in 2020 high, potentially high in 2021. Costs to landowners to continue hind culls. Asked NS to look at what support might be available for the venison market? Public Interest could be adversely affected if the market collapses. LS – NS does see the low price for venison as a problem. Internally there is some effort to look at potential support, but this is likely to be focused on S7 areas or other places where the PI would be worst affected by a reduction in the hind cull; widespread support unlikely. PL asks that NS takes note of the net cost of culling for the group. DL – what factors are affecting venison prices and are there mechanisms through ADMG etc to support the sector. LC – not much seen from ADMG yet through SWV partnership; will take to ADMG.	
1.8	Increase in number of sea eagles in area – 6 seen on one gralloch.	
2	Minutes of the previous meeting – autumn 2019 – and matters arising	Actions
2.1	Comment that the Minute was too long and not succinct. Summary created. HR proposed, DL seconded.	

3	Estate reports	Actions
3.1	2020 stag cull: see spreadsheet	
3.2	<p>Condition reports:</p> <p>Ardtornish. HR – a couple of lovely hot days in late September. RMcK – started 19/09, light season, fewer guests than normal.</p> <p>Carnoch – SF started a bit earlier, without guests (except 1). Thinking about how to manage hinds alone.</p> <p>Drimnin/Killundine/Kingairloch. JMcD. Over all areas, undertaking the cull without clients was catastrophic, so 10% of income only this year. To reduce costs, economised with the most efficient effort used. Fat stags, some started in early September, generally a good season, good mature stags at KGL. KILL challenges around ownership changes but 10 good stags taken. Killundine will be 40 hinds, but Drimnin to be 21 hinds.</p> <p>Glensanda – Gareth Mills for Glensanda. Same feedback as the rest of the group.</p> <p>Kinlochteacuis. Good weather, nice to have time with family, good rut.</p> <p>Laudale. Quiet, only 2 weeks of paying guests, so short on numbers (25 only). Av age up as more mature stags later in the season taken. Fat beasts. Didn't really start until 23/09.</p> <p>NatureScot – NR does the cull.</p> <p>Scottish Wildlife Trust – MF generally is that there are overall good animals with a good and noisy rut.</p>	
4	Detailed update from Ardtornish	Actions
4.1	HR interesting conversation re the HIA work in 2020. Molinia dominated areas a concern – prescription uncertain. Likely to improve a useful map showing woodland potential. Squirrels now present in Ardtornish and Drimnin, which have successfully bred this year. Trees for Life very positive about the habitat for squirrels.	
4.2	<p>RMcK Simon now cracking on with the cull, plan of 170 hinds is probably unachievable, needs monitoring as the season progresses. The Andrew Raven woodland settlement; looking to start felling in the spring.</p> <p>PL – will there be a further compensatory cull be carried out or will the existing planned cull suffice? RMcK no, not planning further cull but will depend on spring count.</p>	
5	Proposed deer count spring 2021	Actions
	JMcD, SB and NR to lead. Please give warning so those travelling can make arrangements. NR to take forward. JMcD may struggle given other properties and DMGs over which he needs to manage a count. JMcD counts Drimnin each year.	SB, JMcD, NR
6	Open range HIA report 2020	Actions
	Glencrip movements not sure how much it is contributing to the impacts (LS and MF commenting) LS suggests that the population model tries to take account of this potential reservoir on numbers and culls within the NW subgroup. Continue to try and engage more with Glencrip Estate; NR to continue to liaise with owner; NR culling within the Glencripesdale Estate. MF looking to maybe put in some camera traps to look at what the movement is from Glencrip to RH.	PL, NR
7	NatureScot/SNH report - LS	Actions
7.1	Designated site condition report. Great to see the new HIA work and planned work going forward. No more monitoring in designated sites; new cycle of SCM to start with the woodlands but not until 2022. No change in feature condition status. S-r grasslands in Rahoy Hills still unfav due to over-grazing and erosion but not yet got a management plan to allow this to go to recovering. Woodlands still in unfav condition due to grazing impacts and INNS, so still looking to the DMG to address this.	
8	Deer Management Plan	Actions
	Due for revision in 2020 but letting it run for a couple of years with updates. Trying to get editable format of all these documents. Members asked to consider that CM would spend 2-3 days max on this over the next couple of years, mostly replacing mapping work.	PL, CM
9	Updates from agencies and organisations	Actions
9.1	<p>ADMG LC and RC (thank you and to LC for joining). RC – DMPs, nearly all groups at the end of the first cycle. For interest, a number of DMGs are thinking of making the leap from DMPs to LMPs, taking into account all other land uses rather than just deer. Food for thought. Maybe not a big leap since these other interests are often captured in the DMP.</p> <p>Frustrating year for ADMG. AGM in March delayed till July by Zoom. Another meeting on 18/11 in that format. SG still sitting on the DWG report. Lots that is good but lots of potentially radical underlying change. Should hear by the end of the year what the initial reaction is. With Holyrood</p>	

	<p>election due in 2021, any proposed action will go into the SNP election manifesto, with a new Deer Act possible for the next parliamentary session. SG looks at less reliance on voluntary principle, not so much influence of DMPs, looking at impacts rather than numbers but still recommend 10/100ha. Changes in policy might strain relationships with NS in the future, which would wipe out the progress made so far. SG needs to look at the criticisms made of SNH, let things run for the time being and then clear up existing anomalies and adopt a more radical top-down approach in a new Deer Act.</p> <p>Parliamentary reception held at Holyrood. Good evening. Not enough MSPs, but useful. No events in 2020. No Seminars. March newsletter. eScopes regular.</p> <p>COVID – tried to provide guidance to sector where possible. Guide to how to conduct fieldsports safely, including stalking with clients. Big impact was one household rule for accommodation from early September, which made many client parties untenable. Not much in the way of support for the sector, with the business rates holiday not available to sporting estates. Venison market also impacted, now 40% of what it was last year. Some confusion among processors about storage, since spring summer emptying did not take place. Restaurants a big part of the market but has been pretty much non-existent. Retail side has, however, grown. Highland Game new contract with M&S. Local producers are also selling locally with a dealer's licence, which is good. SVA active with SG and looking for a contribution for £50k for support for a local marketing push.</p> <p>2 impact surveys. June – large sample of industry to look at impact of no clients or venison = £9m. Some clients, some venison sales. Early Oct another survey looking at impact, 34 returns. Estimate of lost bookings =£1.1m, so overall impact considerable. 5 times written to government to remind them of the needs of the sector and the impact on jobs etc.</p> <p>Lots of SNH/NS meetings, looking for what can be implemented from the DWG report without new legislation. Not sure how extensive changes may be. Also a meeting with FLS, another one pending.</p> <p>HR asking about transition from DMPs to LMPs – is there a route-map? RC – Not yet. Look for some to be developed before doing any more work, but most DMPs don't need a lot of modification to take all these different elements into account. Helps to promote the sector and to also change our attitudes so we are not looking at deer in isolation. This may also help with conflict resolution.</p> <p>DL – need for LMPs for individual land holdings is incontestable. But is the apparatus of DMGs necessary or appropriate for LMPs since DMGs were produced to manage the need for collaborative deer management.</p>	
9.2	<p>Forest and Land Scotland no-one present. JJ not present. Nothing other than stag cull available. No known issues with fences; JMCD – reduced numbers over Drimnin and Killundine, so there may be some leakage. Management will be changing with contractors about to be used rather than the ranger in Morvern. If fences become porous, then this could have a significant impact on group members. All to bring any issues to the group so they can be sent to JJ and FLS. Full fence audit due in coming months (RMcK from new FLS contact).</p>	
9.3	<p>Scottish Forestry – IC. SRDP programme; due to finish on 31/12/20 but it will be business as usual with FGS in 2021 and onwards. With potentially more money available for woodland creation. Productive woodland plans for Ardtomish now on the public register (from today), open for comment until 6/12.</p>	
9.4	<p>NatureScot – LS has very little to add to RC to DWG report. Should hear something from SG in the next few weeks. Of the 99 recommendations, some can be started now, some need consultation and some need new legislation.</p> <p>General point, NS is for a green recovery after COVID, peatland action, woodland and sustainable deer management.</p> <p>In spring 2021, normally send out deer cull returns. Did not happen this year but will now be being sent individually to o/os but prefer for this group to use the figures that SL has collated, then LS will add to Deer Line with any changes to be sent to LS. New forms for cull numbers been sent out by SL and now being stored in a spreadsheet. Much the easiest way to manage it.</p>	
10	AOCB	Actions
	None	

Proposed date of next spring meeting – Tuesday 6 April 2021
Proposed date of autumn meeting – Tuesday 2 November 2021