

THE STRATHTAY DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

HELD AT

DERCULICH HOUSE ON SUNDAY 12th AUGUST 2018

PRESENT:

Charles Butter	Cluniemore (Chairman)
William Jackson	Derculich (Secretary)
Michael Campbell	Edradynate
Alasdair Emslie	Lick
Steven Wade	Lick
Linzi Seivwright	Consultant
Iain Wotherspoon	Farleyer
Brian Troup	Cluniemore
Ed Fenton	Edradynate
David Stirling	Findynate
Kevin Peters	FES

APOLOGIES:

Tom Turnbull	ADMG
Jon Lambert	Glengoulandie
Iain Hope	SNH
Mark Bouwens	Findynate
Graham Galimore	Farleyer

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 20th AUGUST 2017:

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on Sunday 20th August 2017 were approved.

2. CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT:

There were no changes in ownership reported. Dik Wessels from Findynate has died; his son in law Mark Bouwens is now looking after Findynate. Rolly Angus has retired as an Edradynate tenant.

3. SNH

As last year, the meeting was again disappointed that despite all the additional work burdened on the Group by SNH, there was no representative again at our only meeting of the year.

Linzi Seivwright reported that a further assessment by SNH is due in Spring 2019 and it is important that we deliver on the requirements and keep our working plan up to date.

Linzi had arranged an informal update on the benchmarking with CB and WNJ. It was noted that the last time this was undertaken by SNH they had been particularly critical of elements of the plan.. However, this has now been better focused and improved dramatically. The fencing issues have been addressed, which should allow the population model to help determine culls in future. We have had both a foot count and a helicopter count this year – the latter for which we are grateful to SNH. The results came out close bearing in mind the time delay and give us confidence to continue with foot counts. Looking through the population model, it appears that we are on a borderline to support the number of sporting stags, however those on the ground believe the beasts both to be there and in good order and this issue will be kept under review.

It is considered that the general health of the population is good and this shown by calving improvement rates plus the habitat. We now have an accurate habitat survey undertaken by Dr Cathy Mayne which shows the majority of our deer management area in good health. Training within the DMG is good with most Estates having DCS 1 and 2 or working towards that. We do however lack larder information and will require further information on this retrospectively. Cluniemore, which provides the greatest cull, will be able to give information on weights and ages going back at least 20 years which will help see fluctuations. Consistency between the Estates in taking weights and ages is important. There should be better communication with the West Grampian Deer Group although as Iain Wotherspoon is both a member of SDMG and Breadalbane, there is good information between the two.

The only leakage from the Group is on the Cluniemore/Bonskeid boundary which is dealt with on an Estate basis. Edradynate and Forestry Commission have improved their fencing to allow for a separate hill population. All information regarding the Group, Meetings and the Plan is available on the website but it is unlikely this is inspected by many and particularly not from Community Councils with whom we have had no communications. Cluniemore have an environmental scheme which is funded by SSE/OfGem. We are encouraged to look at further afforestation. Cluniemore and Lick have proposed plantations and it should be noted that in recent years there has been a significant planting scheme on Foss, Glengoulandie and further back on Killiechassie and Edradynate which have considerably reduced the area of open hill and should well satisfy the requirements for further afforestation. The SSE/OFGEN Vista scheme is awaiting final approval. On Cluniemore almost 200ha of new plantation has been carried out in the last 6 years. It is understood that there may be further afforestation at Foss after the mine has been closed.

Under the habitat survey there were 30 dwarf shrub heath plots of which 77% had low impact, 18% moderate impact and 5% high impact. . A map was circulated of the plots and the Group discussed areas where impacts were slightly higher and these were attributed to areas where deer naturally congregate during the winter. Overall the Group were content with the overall condition of the Dwarf Shrub Heath habitat and will continue with the proposed hind cull which should reduce impacts further.

The woodland monitoring plots found 57% in the Moderate category and 43% in the High Category for Herbivore Impacts. The Group discussed the woodland results and agreed that the impacts were highest in woodlands which provide the main source of shelter for the deer herd.

We discussed competing uses on the hill including sheep and cattle as well as other sporting interests including grouse and renewable.

On access, it was noted there are competing use at the west end with Highland Safaris with a number of off road bicycles being used on the track from

4. CULL RESULTS 2017/2018:

These have previously been reported and these are

	Stags	Hinds	Calves
Clunimore	24	76	20
Derculich	2	22	6
Edradynate	5	33	10
Farleyer	11	30	12
Findynate	4	33	12
Foss	10	3	1
Glengoulandie	11	31	13
Lick	10	44	12
Pitcastle	1	4	0
Totals	78	276	86

In addition, Forest Enterprise also carries out woodland culls.

5. BUDGET CULLS 2018/2019:

A discussion took place to determine the budget culls for the forthcoming season. We took into account both the helicopter and foot counts we considered the afforestation of further areas and the habitat impact assessment which had been undertaken. Based on this information, it was agreed to leave the 2018/2019 budget as before, namely

	Stags	Hinds
Clunimore	23	80
Derculich	2	20
Edradynate	5	33
Farleyer	9	30
Findynate	4	33
Foss	10	15
Glengoulandie	13	30
Lick	8	50
Pitcastle	1	9
Total	75	300

It was noted that previously fewer hinds were on the ground in the western section and it is important that interim figures will be circulated. These will take place for stags on the 7th October.

Interim hind culls will be required on the 1st December, 13th December, 14th January and 31st January. It is important that all Estates cooperate if there is a shortage of beasts, please discuss with your neighbours so this cull can be achieved.

6. DEER COUNT:

Gary Galimore was thanked for arranging the deer count which took place on 29th March 2018. Following the helicopter count which was carried out on behalf of the Group on 2nd February 2018. Further information on this is available and has been distributed on the working plan.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Health and Safety was considered at the meeting.

8. AOCB:

WNJ is to retire as Secretary of SDMG but will keep in place until the end of the hind season.

9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:

It was agreed the next meeting would be held on 18th August 2019.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.