

THE STRATHTAY DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

HELD AT

DERCULICH HOUSE ON SUNDAY 21ST AUGUST 2016

PRESENT:

Charles Butter	Cluniemore (Chairman)
William Jackson	Derculich (Secretary)
David Stirling	Findynate
Tom Turnbull	Association of Deer Management Group
Alasdair Emslie	Lick
Steven Wade	Lick
Brian Troup	Cluniemore
Alastair McNaughton	Farleyer
Iain Wotherspoon	Farleyer
Ed Fenton	Edradynate
Michael Campbell	Edradynate
Linzi Seivwright	Consultant
David Murray	Farleyer

APOLOGIES:

Iain Hope	SNH
Dik Wessels	Findynate
Jon Lambert	Glengoulandie

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 16th AUGUST 2015:

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on Sunday 16th August 2015 were approved.

2. CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT:

Cluniemore explained that an area of compensatory planting is to be developed on the Estate this spring. David Campbell of Edradynate is retiring and Ian Smith, currently at Glenstriven, will be taking his place as from the 15th February. No other changes were reported.

3. SNH

SNH have burdened the officers of the DMGs with a considerable amount of additional work. This has been frustrating and has been a much bigger task than had been anticipated. However, the background work is now largely completed and it should be possible with sense and co-operation of all sides for a reasonable plan to be adopted. The Chairman particularly thanked Linzi Seivwright for keeping us on the straight and narrow and for her robust defence of the work which we have been achieving.

Linzi updated the group on the nature and extent of feedback received on the plan which was quite considerable.

Unfortunately The Group had no chance to meet and go through the draft reassessment and this had to be done by email but Linzi felt that having queried many of the initial "draft scores" with SNH the final assessment was a fair reflection of the plan.

The purpose of all this work is to protect the voluntary principle of deer management. It is our belief that the close co-operation between the eight participating estates has been a great success and that the extra work and bureaucracy tends to hinder the free-flow of information between the properties.

At the end of the day, the group is really there for the management of the deer and there is no doubt that since its inauguration nearly 30 years ago, as a group it has been enormously successful.

Dealing with the deer management plan, it appears that SNH had several critical views on this:

- I. Boundaries. SNH would prefer to see the area of the deer management group to be expanded to include the surrounding low ground. In fact, this is not too much of a problem as most are within the same ownerships. However the original boundaries were in place as the group was set up to deal with the hill population.

2. They believe we should have shown more possibilities for native woodland expansion. It should be noted however that during the currency of our group, considerable areas of the Strathtay hills have been afforested including Edradynate, Killiechassie, Glengoulandie and most recently Foss. We believe that if further afforestation is considered, it will have a detrimental effect on our population of deer. The population modelling is also causing difficulty. From the figures shown in the counts, it may imply that we are overshooting particularly so far as the stags are concerned. We therefore have to question whether the counts are accurate. Obviously, we can only count the deer that are on the open hill on a particular day. Some time was spent discussing the porous fences which enable woodland beasts to move between the open hill and the fence and the wood. This is particularly the case at Edradynate which then leads on to Killiechassie, the birch woodlands at Lick and Cluniemore. However, as a whole, the majority of the deer fences are in reasonable order.
3. We will require to consider habitat impact assessments and this is being dealt with purely anecdotally. However, all members were responsive to training on this matter and agreed that facts and figures would be helpful.
4. It was also agreed that within the reports we produce, we should give average weights and age classes in bands.
5. The public benefit aspect is more difficult to assess in that we have very limited of blanket bog within our management area.
6. The website is now up and running and needs to be kept current and up dated.

4. CULL RESULTS:

The cull results for 2015/16 had been previously circulated. This shows a cull of 65 stags as against a budget of 75 and 260 hinds against a budget of 300.

There was an in-depth discussion about where the target cull should be, particularly with reference both to the counts and previous records as well as the population modelling. Following this discussion, it was agreed to keep the stags at 75 and hinds at 300 with the allocation as before. However, we will hold regular interim culls and if there is a shortage of deer a stop may be called. In order to have to keep better records, we should record:

1. Weights – as the beast comes into the larder with the head on ie hill weight.
2. Broad ageing – 0- 24 months; 2- 4 years; 5 – 7 years over 8 years.

5. DEER COUNT:

Ali McNaughton was thanked for arranging the deer count and it was agreed that a further count will take place at around the same time next year.

6. TRAINING:

Continuing training is vital for all deer management groups. The audit of those at the meeting were as follows:

Findynate – Level 1 and Level 2
Derculich – Level 1
Edradynate – Level 1 and Level 2
Farleyer – Level 1 and Level 2
Lick – level 1 and Level 2
Cluniemore – Level 1

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Tom Turnbull addressed the meeting and explained that there had been 12 cases of ecoli and that this is seen as a continuing threat by Food Standard Scotland. Points to consider are:

- Game larder
- Drag bags
- Chill temperature
- Scottish Quality Wild Venison Status

In addition, there has been an alert of chronic wasting disease in Europe and it is within two cases found in reindeer. It is recommended that anyone stalking from abroad is given specific instructions to clean all their equipment. A leaflet on this is available through the British Deer Society.

8. AOCB

It was noted that all estates would be heather burning this season and these notes form notification of that fact.

The meeting regretted the absence of SNH at the meeting.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Sunday 20th August 2017 at a time to be agreed. Ali McNaughton will arrange the foot count.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.