

**Black Mount Deer Management Group
Deer Management Plan Review Meeting**

Friday 11th August 2017
10:30am at Black Mount Lodge

Richard Schuster (RS)	Chairman, Glenstrae	Luke Smith (LS)	Glen Etive
Susanna Thomson (ST)	Secretary	Colin Fraser (CF)	Dalness
Finlay Clark (FC)	Black Mount/ADMG	Mark Brown (MB)	Glenstrae & Crunachy
Calum Proctor (CP)	Black Mount	Alasdair Ross (AR)	Glenkinglass
Robin Fleming (RF)	Black Mount	Andrew Servant (AS)	Glenoe
Johnny Macdonald (JM)	NTS	Hazel White (HW)	Peatland Action,SNH
Stephen Sloss (SS)	FCS	Ali MacDonald (AM)	Black Mount
Steven McDowell (SM)	Black Mount	Torquil McAlpine (TM)	Dalness
Cathy Mayne (CM)	SNH		
Davy Thomas (DT)	Black Corries		
Mark Shone (MS)	Glen Etive		

1. Apologies

Graeme Taylor	SNH	Sophie Handley	
Philip Fleming	Black Mount	Dorothy Fleming	Inverleiver
Sarah Troughton	Ardchattan	Niall Rowantree	Auch Castles
Scott McCombie	NTS	Peter Huddleston	
John Jackson	FCS		

2. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 30 March 2017

The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising from previous Minutes

The Chairman emphasised this meeting is to focus on Deer Management Plan actions as discussed at the previous meeting in March.

4. SNH Update

Cathy Mayne provided an SNH update on behalf of Graeme Taylor who was attending another Deer Management Group meeting. CM was satisfied that the group was working together to address actions in the plan. Progress and plan amendment is encouraged. SNH focus on:

- Management of designated sites
- Extension of group into Appin
- Peatland Action
- Habitat Assessment

- Woodland expansion and native woodland condition

CM highlighted that there is pressure to meet targets which are very challenging.

Commercial or native woodland expansion is to be encouraged. Delivery of the plan is critical.

Hazel White of Peatland Action highlighted there is £8 million funding available for peatland restoration. Anyone who is interested should speak to SNH. Funding does not provide profit but covers cost of works. The application is easy, this year's deadline is October.

FC requested SNH to comment on any areas of concern regarding deep peat, CM did not think there was much for the group to do but will follow up with more information.

SNH are happy for either group applications or individual applications.

5. ADMG Update

FC updated that there has been a lot of recent ADMG activity. The recent SNH report has challenged the sector and the ECCLR Committee has realised the complexity of the deer management sector. Obligation is placed on SNH to be more proactive and to direct resources towards groups performing less well. There is a mandate from the Scottish Government (SG) to SNH to utilise the statutory powers they have towards the deer sector. Now there is a focus on the delivery of plans, with SNH also under scrutiny from SG. The group is well placed and focused on delivering the plan but cannot afford complacency.

ADMG regional meeting to be held in Glenfinnan on 15th August 2017. FC confirmed that ADMG are committed to assisting struggling groups with delivery.

6. New Planting Potential

The Chairman highlighted that the plan states the group will plant approximately 500ha by 2021 and asked for any updates on woodland expansion. Those areas currently in the plan were confirmed to be on track. CF advised Dalness have planting proposals for approximately 180 ha of native woodland. Others also confirmed they were looking at woodland potential. A plan was presented looking at plantable areas within the group showing that a significant portion of those areas at an altitude suitable for trees were already planted.

CM commented for SNH, stating the focus is on designated sites and native woodland, acknowledging that there are many sites in smaller ownerships and that here domestic livestock are commonly the issue. CM advised that Ardtrillichean's potential issues are solved with FGS in place. SNH are happy to support efforts, but reminded that the

Forestry Commission control the grant scheme. The group were requested to continue their efforts to liaise with owners within the geographical area of the group where there are native woodland issues.

7. Habitat Management Results

The group agreed to provide grid references and condition status for each sample plot in order for a map to be constructed showing plot conditions across the group.

CM reminded that any woodland which is open to deer should be included.

8. Proposed cull figures for 17/18

ST advised that the group are on track with the population model laid out in the plan.

With the comparison as follows (does not include FCS culls):

2016/17	PLAN	ACTUAL
Stags	279	287
Hinds	403	437

CM felt that the intended cull rates, on a similar basis to last year, were on track to achieve the longer term deer population target in the Deer Management Plan.

FC highlighted that in the east of the group the population is reducing, partly due to the Breadalbane Section 7. MB commented stag numbers are lower at the south of the group compared to previous years but with average age increasing again; he is thinning out in the south of the group to address RTA issues.

Black Corries recognised high calving rates and aims to increase cull to 80 hinds this year to compensate.

AM confirmed culls have been increased on Rannoch Moor in recent years by about two thirds.

AR commented that he is not seeing an increase in deer population at Glenkinglass.

MS confirmed he is increasing Glen Etive cull due to deer being displaced.

CF confirmed Dalness are aiming for 50 hinds and a maximum of 18 stags.

CM was happy with the culls and that everyone is adjusting the cull based on what is seen on the ground and in accordance with designated sites.

9. Any Other Business

FC asked SNH of the position on count funding. CM advised funding in SNH is uncertain and is likely to be directed at struggling groups. FC recognised that group count is due as it is 3 years since the last helicopter count. Chairman asked the group to aim to do a

foot count of the whole area in the same timeframe when conditions are right in January/February 2018. CM encouraged this and was happy with this approach. The Chairman also encouraged the group to share information on sporting rates when it comes.

It was agreed a sub committee would form to discuss Rannoch Moor SSSI comprising relevant landowners (Black Mount and Black Corries) and SNH.

Vote of thanks given to Black Mount for hosting.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman suggested that the next meeting and AGM be held in November (date to be confirmed) with the following meeting in May 2018 unless it was felt that any extra meetings were required in the intervening period.