**Minutes of Lochalsh Deer Management Group**

**Held at Attadale at 10.00 am on Friday 2nd November 2018**

Present: Ewen Macpherson, Chairman, Thomas Watson, Soren Hoejlund, Chris MacKenzie, Derek McLeod, Sinclair Coghill, Linzi Seivwright, Aaron Matheson, Susan Jones, Joanna Macpherson, Secretary

1. **Apologies**: Nick Wills, Isabelle Campbell, Angus Macpherson, Freddie Macpherson, Alec Cormack, Donald MacKenzie, Andrew Slaughter, Russell Cooper, David Sproule
2. Approval of minutes of meeting 13th June, 2018
3. **Chairman’s report**

EAM briefly emphasized the continued need to update and execute the DMP and welcomed Linzi joining the group and providing a health check on the DMP.

4) **SNH report**

Sinclair confirmed that Deer Management plans would be assessed next April 2019 by SNH and it will be about delivery as already emphasized by the Chair.

There are 101 criteria in all but there are 35 key issues which must be addressed.

There are grants available for forestry funding but with conditions attached.

The helicopter count has been delayed and will now be held in 2020

The Deer Working Group set up by the Scottish Government was also mentioned again. It includes Simon Pepper, Robin Callendar, Andrew Barber and Jane Glass and will be reporting back to the Scottish Government in April 2019.

5) **Update on Deer Management Plan**

1. A free health check of the deer management plan by Linzi Seivwright has now taken place with EAM & SJ. She went through population modelling and mapping with Soren at the same time. She has provided a template for population modelling which we should apply to our spring counts and then analyse the results
2. Native woodland & **Forestry plans update -**LS had produced maps of estates, as a desk exercise using results from the FES reports from 2006-2013, which show significant red areas, each estate should check against the actual situation as in several cases, the red areas are in places now fenced off as regeneration zones. CM indicated plans at early stage for new fencing and removal of old, consulting with FES.
3. The completion of three years of **Habitat surveys** have now been plotted on maps by SH, and Aaron passed him the 2018 data for Inverinate so he can now complete the maps for 2018. It will now be monitored every three years. SC recorded his thanks to LS & SH and was pleased with the results. The maps when completed will be posted on the website.
4. Thomas had visited Achnasheen to check out the possibility of **peat restoration**. There is a major upfront cost involved before repayment. It was agreed that a few sites beyond Loch Calavie at Attadale would be investigated to see if it could be taken further. The West is much wetter than the East which may have implications. The rest of the group would wait to hear the outcome.
5. SC confirmed further funding for peat restoration will be offered but time slot will be small and challenging to complete in time.
6. **Competence update** - still need for training to be completed - Inverinate have several to complete Stage 2 and TW too. Suggested that an approved witness is found so everyone can be done together, (Inverinate & Attadale).
7. **Deer welfare** - Due to long hard winter and spring, there had been significant losses and impact can still be seen. Hinds were generally in poor condition and fewer calves. SC suggested that a note should be made of yearling hinds annually so results/variations can be analysed.

**6) 2018 Stag Cull Figures**

 **Stags**

Achnashellach 18

Arineckaig 6

Attadale 45

Inverinate 105

**7**) F**igures for Hind Cull Targets for 2018/19**

Much discussion ensued about need for a coordinated approach to a spring deer count in absence of South Ross helicopter count.

AM said Inverinate going to do deer count very soon to help plan.

LS to alert group on dates planned by surrounding deer management groups in attempt to get more accurate picture

 **Hinds**

Achnashellach S. 5-8

Arineckaig less than 10

Attadale 40

Inverinate after deer count on foot

Strome FES

8) **Treasurer** was absent.

Membership invoices will be sent out soon having conferred with Helen at Bell Ingram to avoid any misunderstanding and confusion.

9) **AOB**

Derek McLeod provided interesting update on road conditions in Wester Ross

10) **Next meeting** will be held on Friday 31st May 2019