**Minutes of meeting of the Lochalsh Deer Management Group at 10.00 am on Tuesday 7th December 2016 at Attadale**

**1. Present:**

Ewen Macpherson Attadale

Andrew Slaughter Inverinate

Thomas Watson Attadale

Chris Mackenzie Achnashellach

Joanna Macpherson Attadale

Soeren Hoejlund Attadale

Russell Cooper FCS

In attendance:

David J Sproule Achintee Crofters

Audrey Sinclair Councillor

**Apologies:**

Nicholas Wills Achnashellach

Gordon Macpherson Arineckaig

Donald MacKenzie Arineckaig

Tom Watson Attadale

Alec Cormack Attadale

Sinclair Coghill SNH

Biz Campbell Councillor

Kristine MacKenzie Developm’t Officer

Lochcarron

Donald MacKintosh Inverinate C.C.

Willie Nicholson Camus Luinie Crofters

Ian Blackford MP

MSPs Kate Forbes and Gail Ross had also been invited

**2. Approval of minutes** of meetings on 1st June and 1st July

Fence still down at Ardnaff due to council contractors’ work on bypass road. RC explained more work will be done on this fence in 2017.

Achnashellach – Chris had done a summer deer count for his own interest

**3. Chairman’s Report**

EAM welcomed David and Audrey to the meeting.

He summarised the response of members at the ADMG meeting at Inverness to the SNH report to RACCE and mentioned the apparent discrepancies between the main content of the SNH report and its final conclusions. He pointed out the nature of the land in the LDMG which spreads from the Munros down to the sea which means deer migration is particularly noticeable between winter and spring. He stressed that it was the quality of the habitat that mattered rather than the number of deer per hectare at any one time.

He emphasised the need for regular habitat surveys and asked Soeren to update the group.

**4. Habitat Surveys**

SH went through the results of the completed Spring surveys for the two types of habitat available in LDMG which are Blanket Bog and Dwarf Shrub Heath. He emphasised the need for accurate results to be recorded regularly for possibly five years to create an accurate benchmark for future comparison, and thereafter less frequently. It is also difficult to distinguish between grazing by different herbivores.

Group results (excluding Forestry Commission) for Browsing pressure:

Dwarf Shrub Heath: Light= 51%, Moderate= 37% and Heavy= 7%

Blanket Bog: Light= 69%, Moderate= 26% and Heavy= 5%

SH explained the excel spreadsheet provided by SNH had limitations which were corrected manually as far as possible by Stephanie Hosie, Attadale’s environmental intern, who will not be here next year. He hopes SNH will provide an improved version for 2017

Next year all results should be forwarded to Susan Jones for adding to the Deer Management Plan

**5. Stag Culls**

Inverinate Total 150 stags,

Inverinate 40, Kililan 45 WB 50 Crofts & Forestry 15

Sika 7

Roe 1 stag, 2 does

Achnashellach 8 stags

Attadale 55 stags on hill

8 in the forestry

Arineckaig 12 stags

Forestry Commission 13 stags, 9 hinds 7 calves

Achnashellach South 1 roe doe and 1 Sika stag

(added later)

**Treasurers Report**

EAM explained there was no bank account for LDMG as too complicated. All membership dues have been paid for this year’s membership.

£120 is owed for hosting the LDMG website page with ADMG which will be paid out of remaining monies from the breakup of original large South Ross Deer Management Group held in Attadale Estate account.

**Any other business**

EAM invited questions from our guests.

Russell gave an interesting brief update on future developments at FCS.

Next meeting will be held in late May or early June 2017.

*For all your records, if required:*

PC N0962 Daniel Sutherland, Wildlife and Environmental Crime Coordinator.

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