**Minutes of Lochalsh Deer Management Group**

**Held at Attadale at 10.00 am on Friday 14th June 2019**

Present: Ewen Macpherson, Thomas Watson, Chris MacKenzie, Alec Cormack, Sinclair Coghill, Joanna Macpherson, Andrew Slaughter, David Sproule, Donald MacKenzie, Ross MacMillan, Susan Jones, Isabelle Campbell

Soren Hoejlund for part of meeting

1. **Apologies**: Nick Wills, Angus Macpherson, Freddie Macpherson, Russell Cooper, Linzi Seivwright, Ian Blackford MP, Kate Forbes, MSP, the Police were unable to send a representative but were invited
2. Approval of minutes from 2nd November - David Sproule pointed out that Simon Pepper had died
3. **Chairman’s report**

EAM briefly emphasised the continued need to progress and invited Susan to take the group through the relevant areas needed to progress the deer plan

4) **Update on Deer Management Plan**

Susan went through the specific action areas that required more progress:

Action 3 & 4 - **Native woodland improvement and woodland expansion** showed that much better conditions had been achieved than had been recorded previously. Forestry Plans could be done by larger estates, and Sinclair explained it did not have to happen all at once. Inverinate does have a 20 year forestry plan but some areas are difficult to deal with as very rocky. Andrew Slaughter can share their plan.

Action 5 - **Habitat Impact Assessments** - Three years have now been tracked and mapped. Susan’s graph layouts showed very effectively the progress that had been made across the group. 90% of the survey is at least moderate and low.

Next assessment will be held in Spring 2020.

Different dung should be noted & SH will go back through previous notes to see where sheep/cattle etc had made a difference.

Susan invited members to note where heavy grazing was & attempt an explanation eg where a lick was positioned.

Sinclair noted that the mapping & analysis had been well done by this group.

Action 6 - **Peatland Restoration** - TW will progress when time allows as the West Coast is a different place geographically than even Achnasheen.

Action 7 - Goats continue to be a pain and to be culled by Inverinate, despited eating Biz’s tulips. No more wild pigs have been spotted - yet.

Action 9 - Members were encouraged to share opportunities to train in such areas as first aid or quad bike use.

Action 10 - Mobile phone numbers should be noted on the website for ease of communication, not just home telephone numbers.

Action 14 **- Population modelling & larder data** - Culls for three years have been recorded, in fact for as many as 30 years in some cases. The template is affected by the mortality and doesn’t work properly for the situation here where winter helicopter counts in the snow differ markedly from the spring counts on the ground.

Other subjects discussed in some detail were:

Land Management Objectives of group members - agreed EAM, JMM & Susan would come up with proposed content to be shared with others.

Deer Density Target - finally agreed never to be more than 13 per km2 - *is that right?*

5) **Hind Culls 2019**

 Hinds Calves

Achnashellach 17 3

Arineckaig 1 3

Attadale 48 10

Strome 18 10

FLS (Forestry & Land

 Scotland)

6) **Spring Counts**

Stags Hinds Calves

Achnashellach 117 293 71 ??

Arineckaig 36 23 5 done in June

Attadale 527 ??? when

Inverinate 861 1579 431 - done in December

7) **Stag & Hind Cull Targets 2019/20**

 Stags Hinds

Achnashellach 20 35

Arineckaig 8 6

Attadale 40 50

Inverinate 115/120 120/130

8) **Treasurer’s Report**

Alec explained that after slight confusion everyone had paid their dues for membership. New invoices would go out more promptly this year.

9) **Any other business**

Sinclair updated the group. Assessments were better across the board. SNH had to report to the Scottish Government by September

The Deer Management Group had been delayed for various reasons and would also present their report to the Scottish Government in September.

He also reminded members that there are grants available for forestry funding but with conditions attached.

The next helicopter count will be held in Spring 2020

Ross MacMillan introduced himself and explained how responsibility was spread across Ben Eight, and Strome etc. Christopher MacKenzie had been impressed by Keir’s prompt response about the state of the fence at Achnashellach. Ross explained he was based at Balmacara.

Susan will send out the two page assessment of our plan from SNH for everyone to have a look at - remember there are two pages to it on the Excel spreadsheet.

EAM - asked others to let him know about prices for venison. He’ll negotiate with Highland Venison in July about a price for the season. Andrew pointed out that it still varies over the season.

*Kept this in so JMM can try to find it*

\*\*Discussion followed about deer movement across South Ross. Russell informed group that his father had done a study with others about deer migration in the 1960s, which will be sought from Edinburgh University.

10) **Next meeting** will be held in early November at the end of the season, date to be confirmed