Minutes of Lochalsh Deer Management Group

**Held at Attadale at 10.30 am on Thursday 13th June 2018**

Present: Ewen Macpherson, Thomas Watson, Soren Hoejlund, Chris MacKenzie, Donald MacKenzie, Andrew Slaughter, Russell Cooper, David Sproule, Derek McLeod, Sinclair Coghill, Joanna Macpherson, Clara Bossu as observer

1) **Apologies**: Nick Wills, Isabelle Campbell, Kate Stephens, Susan Jones, Angus Macpherson, Linzi Seivwright, Alec Cormack

2) **Chairman’s report**

EAM reported his brother Gordon’s recent death, emphasising how much his analytical and financial skills will be missed. His son Angus will be taking over Arineckaig.

EAM & Thomas had attended a useful meeting organised by ADMG at Kingsmill Hotel on 7th June.

EAM stated that a deer management plan is now a full land management plan as it continues to require additional information. He stressed that it is vital all actions and progress are shown in the plan and recorded both in the minutes and in the plan.

Best practice is now only available online.

Derek McLeod spoke briefly on sporting rates to emphasise that the assessors are overwhelmed and most landowners have appealed.

3) **SNH repor**t

Sinclair confirmed that all Deer Management plans would be checked next April or May 2019 by SNH and it will be about delivery as already emphasised 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 which includes Simon Pepper, Robin Callendar, Andrew Barber and Jane Glass will be reporting back to the Scottish Government in April 2019. It has a wide remit and it has consulted with Richard Cooke of ADMG.

Russell mentioned that in Norway, which is heavily forested making deer counting difficult, they monitor deer weights rather than deer numbers to provide evidence so any sustained decline indicates over-population. The group thinks we could collect larder data which is easily available over many years for future study.

4 **Update on Deer Management Plan**

1. Meeting of the South Ross Deer Management Groups at Strathconnon will be held on Friday 22nd June, where the main issue is deer movement across the area and its impact on population modelling and cull targets
2. A free health check of the deer management plan is available by Linzi Seivwright so that will be organised for July. She will also take Thomas & Soren through population modelling and mapping

ii) **Forestry plans** are being developed across the LDMG to recreate native woodland with fencing going in and harvesting of mature timber

Attadale already has a forestry plan in place

Inverinate is currently working on a 20 year plan.

South side of Achnashellach there is planned fencing of natural woodland

FCS on South side of Achnashellach is also fencing native woodland.

iii) The completion of three years of **Habitat surveys** has established a data base. It can now be monitored every three years, Sinclair agreed. Results showed very little change in the quality of habitat. Mapping will also be part of Linzi Sievwright’s contribution when she comes over in July

iv) Thomas had been to 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 how it progressed. The West is much wetter than the East which may have implications. The rest of the group would wait to hear the outcome.

Funding for peat restoration had been offered but had to be in by the end of May, so that deadline has passed.

v) **Competence update** - still need for training to be completed - Andrew has three men who have completed stage 2.

Donald is working to get approval as a witness and then Thomas can get the Stage 2 qualification. There is a shortage of people to witness this on the West

Andrew asked how often both First Aid and Quad BIke qualifications needed to be redone. Could be organised for the group in interests of economy.

vi) **Deer welfare** - EAM asked if any feedback from research into ecoli etc from carcasses, none received yet.

Due to long hard winter and spring, there had been significant losses.

**Mortality**

 **Stags Hinds Calves Total** **Calf survival**

Achnashellach 21 4 26 8%

Arineckaig 7 10 16

Attadale 163 13% Inverinate 86 46 76 (+ 45 Goats) 8-10%

6) **Cull figures for hinds for 2017/18 Target in ( )s**

 **Hinds Calves**

Achnashellach S. 40 (35) 14

Arineckaig 11 (15) 11

Attadale 90 (85) 39

Inverinate - Open hill 495 (400) 246

 - Crofts & Forestry 8 2

+ Sika 3

 Roe 2

Strome FES 1 5

7) **Stag and Hind Cull Target figures for 2018/19**

 **Stags Hinds**

Achnashellach 15 15-20

Arineckaig 8-10 6

Attadale 65 75

Inverinate - as no helicopter count, still have to do foot count & will then confirm

8) **Treasurer** was absent.

£1800 had been allocated for assistance from Linzi Sievwright, held by Attadale Estate account and ring-fenced for LDMG

9) **AOB**

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.

No wild boar had yet been seen in the area.

10) **Next meeting** will be held on Friday 2nd November 2018