

# Minutes for Lochalsh Deer Management Group Meeting held at Attadale, 10.00 m, Wednesday 1st December 2021

Present: Ewen Macpherson - Chair, Linzi Sievwright, Chris MacKenzie, Alec Cormack, Joanna Macpherson - Secretary, Thomas Watson, Donald MacKenzie, & Sinclair Coghill via Zoom

1. **Apologies:** Angus Macpherson, Freddie Macpherson, Nick Wills, Russell Cooper, David Sproule, Craig Macrae, Andrew Slaughter
2. **Approval of minutes of 27th April** passed - NB post meeting, totals for hind cull were wrong. Corrected figures follow:

## 2021 Hind Actual Cull Figures

	<b>Hinds</b>	<b>Calves</b>
Inverinate beat	80	34
Killilan beat	115	31
West Benula	<u>100</u>	35
Total Inverinate	295	100
Achnashellach	26	15
out of season	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
	31	17
Attadale	73	22
Arineckaig	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>
<b>Total</b>	407	145

3. **Chairman's Report** - EAM emphasised points from November ADMG meeting in Inverness including:
  1. The future will see an increasing focus on environmental land use over sporting assets tending to lead to regional land management groups
  2. Two priorities in future with finance available, planting trees and restoration of peat-land. Look at the example of the Couldoran sale to the Woodland Trust for tree planting.
  3. Explained the need to be aware that 83% of Scots live in urban areas and know and care little about the rural situation
4. Linzi gave fuller briefing on **Regional meeting and update on Deer Management Plan**
  1. Emphasised that the Deer Working Group Report had had 92 out of 99 proposals accepted by the Scottish Government - need to recognise the direction of travel
  2. NatureScot no longer wanted to carry out assessments but explained that a potential new assessment would be useful to track progress of individual deer management groups
  3. ADMG had launched a Common Ground Project aimed at conflict resolution, to encourage different interest groups within individual deer management groups to work better together.
  4. The James Hutton Institute is to research the amount of methane generated by herbivores including deer
  5. Pages 6 and 7 of the updated Deer Management Plan were explained in detail showing the extrapolation of the deer population model indicates that the cull was less effective due to migration beyond the Lochalsh Deer Management Group border.
  6. In the absence of Andrew Slaughter, it was agreed that Linzi would arrange an individual visit to Inverinate.

## 5. **NatureScot Report** - Sinclair spoke via Zoom

1. The negative impact of climate change need to be mitigated as wetter winters and drier summers are impacting deer. The growth of grass is delayed in the spring with deer having to eat more heather. There continues to be a disparity between the helicopter counts and those done on the ground. While deer numbers have reduced somewhat between 2016 and 2021, much of this reduction has been delivered by neighbouring groups.
2. Dr Headley's HIA report shows that the Strathglass SAC is being heavily impacted, particularly in the North and West despite significantly increased culls in both Glenstrathfarrar and Affric & Kintail Deer Management Groups. Despite their increased cull in recent years, their numbers remain high indicating that migration from elsewhere plays a part and increased hind culls within Lochalsh DMG were necessary.  
Discussion followed.
3. The Government has accepted 92 of the 99 recommendations in the Deer Working Group Report including setting a maximum density of 10 deer/km<sup>2</sup> for large parts of the uplands. The group should plan for and deliver culls aimed at moving densities in this direction if it is to avoid becoming a target for regulation in the future.

6. **Copper bullets** - All estates except Inverinate now using them after some adjustment.  
Discussion about the risk of ricochet. They do work differently.

7. **Access impacts** - Walker numbers increased after the end of lockdown but on the whole they followed advice on routes. People had appeared in places never seen before.

## 8. **2021 Stag Actual Cull Figures**

Inverinate beat	50	+ 3 sika
Killilan beat	60	
West Benula	<u>50</u>	
Inverinate	160	
Achnashellach	30	
Attadale	55	
Arineckaig	<u>10</u>	
Total	255	

Russell provided the following figures:

Achnashellach South 10 stags      3 hinds, no calves  
3 Roe bucks, 2 does & 2 calves

South Strome  
(not part of LDMG)

## 9. **2022/23 Planned Stag & Hind Cull targets**

Both Attadale & Achnashellach wanted to go with a hind cull similar to previous years. CM said he would try to increase it to 35. TW would aim for 70+.

AS had provided the following targets and his increase was noted:

Inverinate Beat	100
Killilan Beat	125
West Benula	<u>125</u>
Total	350

Sinclair pointed out that if the group does not increase its cull, there will come a time when it is imposed from outside. He had separately circulated indicative cull figures showing what maintenance and reduction culls would approximate to for each estate based on the 2021 count, shown with estates proposed culls below.

Sinclair highlighted that NatureScot had some helicopter cull training time available this winter and could use that in some of the more remote areas if members would find this helpful in cull delivery.

	Estate Proposed hind cull	% Estate Proposed	Maintenance (17%)	Reduction (22%)
Achnashellach	35	13	46	60
Arineckaig	12 estimated	9	23	30
Attadale	70	8	149	193
Inverinate	100	20	85	110
Killilan	125	16	137	177
West Benula	125	22	95	123
Total	467	15	535	692

#### 10. **Treasurer's Report**

Invoices for 2021 membership would go out soon and will also include shared cost of LDMG website hosting and our new Deer Management Plan consultant Linzi.

#### 11. **AOB**

DM as a train driver was able to inform the group that a the large number of deer are killed on the line. Information usually difficult to obtain

Ewen Macpherson resigned as Chair of the group and in the absence of any other volunteers, Joanna Macpherson will be the new Chair. A new secretary will be found at Attadale.

It is hoped that Inverinate may be able to host the next Lochalsh Deer Management Group meeting in the spring

Date of next meeting April 2022: **to be confirmed**