

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WEST ROSS DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP
HELD AT ACHNASHEEN HALL, ACHNASHEEN RAILWAY STATION
WEDNESDAY 30th AUGUST 2017**

Present:	Randal Wilson Alasdair MacDonald Brian Fraser Ruari Matheson Jordan Hagan Hendrik Jan van der Hoeven Jake Buckthorp Gary Ross Norman Kelman Craig McIntosh Ronnie Ross Donald MacLeod Patrick Creasey	Chairman Dundonnell Eilean Darach Fannich Fannich Foich Foich Gruinard Heights of Kinlochewe Inverbroom Lochrosque, Cabuie and West Fannich Lochrosque, Cabuie and West Fannich Strathvaich
----------	---	---

In Attendance:	Ken Bowlt Sinclair Coghill Ndurie Abah Natasha Hutchison Colin Morrison	Secretary/Treasurer SNH SNH (Peatland Action) West Ross Biosphere Angus Davidson Ltd
----------------	---	--

Apologies:	Maurits van Dedem Hendrik Van Beuningen Roddy Legge Andrew Oliver George Seligman Mark Seligman Edgar Seligman Willie Lamont Derick Macaskill Mary Gibson	Fannich Foich Letterewe Letterewe Strathbran Strathbran Strathbran Forest Enterprise Forest Enterprise SNH
------------	--	---

The Chairman, Randal Wilson (RW), welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited each attendee around the table to introduce themselves for the benefit of any newcomers.

The meeting then went on to discuss the following:-

Item/

Item	Notes	Action
1.0	<u>Minutes of Meeting held on 23rd March 2017</u>	
	The Chairman asked if there were any comments on the Minutes of the meeting prior to the AGM. There being none, the Chairman moved on.	
2.0	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
	The meeting agreed that there were no matters arising that would not be dealt with through the Agenda items.	
3.0	<u>Proposed Revisions to Deer Management Plan</u>	
	The Chairman took the meeting through the changes which were proposed to the Deer Management Plan clause by clause, as previously circulated to Group members, as follows:-	
3.1	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 3.1.6 – Delivery of Designated Features into Favourable Conditions</u>	
	The meeting agreed the changes proposed after some discussion on whether to use the word “impact” or “pressure”. The meeting agreed to retain the word “impact”. Sinclair Coghill (SC) indicated that funding may be available to appoint a consultant to visit each estate, to review what each estate is doing, to review current impacts and what could be done. Agreed that SC would move forward with this.	SC
3.2	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 3.4.2.1 – Retaining Existing Native Woodland Cover</u>	
	After some discussion, it was agreed to move the paragraph “members have also confirmed that the Group’s Woodland Map No 7 within this Plan is fully up to date as at August 2017” to clause 3.4.3. Acknowledged that it had been an error including it in the proposed change to clause 3.4.2.1. SC suggested that Clachan, Inverbroom, Cadha Buidhe, Gruinard, Heights of Kinlochewe, Forestry Commission Scotland Strathbran, Forestry Commission Scotland Corriemoillie, Corriemoillie, Inveran and Tournaig may have native woodlands within their land which has been categorised as having high or very high herbivore impact. As a result, it was agreed that Map No 7 from the Deer Management Plan (DMP) together with the relevant part of the Group’s questionnaire would be circulated to these landholdings. It was agreed that the Group would also seek out a sensible methodology for the survey of these native woodlands and KSB agreed to ask Dr Ben Lennon (Bowlts’ Head Forester) if he could help with this.	KSB

Item	Notes	Action
3.3	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 3.4.3 – New Woodlands</u>	
	<p>The changes to clause 3.4.3 in connection with new woodlands were agreed, subject to including the paragraph mentioned above.</p> <p>SC proposed that the words “the Group will look at what scope there is for woodland expansion and consider where the Group is lacking shelter” be added. There being no objections, it was agreed that this could be inserted in the DMP.</p>	KSB
3.4	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 3.5.5 – Carbon Sensitive Habitats</u>	
	<p>The changes proposed to the carbon sensitive habitat wording within the DMP were agreed by the meeting.</p> <p>In the discussion on carbon sensitive habitats, RW confirmed that his property had been admitted to the Peatland Action Project.</p>	
3.5	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 3.7 – Habitat Types and Monitoring</u>	
	<p>The changes proposed were agreed.</p> <p>RW queried who the four members were who had forwarded survey data and KSB listed them as Eilean Darach, Heights of Kinlochewe, Inverbroom and Lochrosque and Kinlochewe.</p> <p>Therefore, it was acknowledged that we are still awaiting data from Dundonnell, Fannich, Foich, Gruinard, Letterewe, Forestry Commission, Strathbran, Strathvaich and Tournai.</p> <p>There was some discussion within the Group on which methodology should be used, with SC advising that SNH’s more detailed methodology was only being used on designated sites. In the course of this discussion, Patrick Creasey (PC) outlined the issues of fine-tuning the targets being set in terms of habitat impacts/pressure.</p> <p>After an extensive discussion, it was agreed that for the Group, best practice methodology is the way forward for non-designated sites.</p> <p>SC suggested that we should add the words to clause 3.7.12 “the Group will analyse the data” and this was agreed.</p>	KSB
3.6	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 3.10 – Public Access</u>	
	<p>These changes were agreed.</p> <p>There was some discussion on the use of signage to encourage people to remain on paths and Donald MacLeod (DM) made mention of the signs being used within the Cairngorm National Park.</p> <p>SC mentioned that there was the possibility, albeit limited, for funding for car parks, paths, etc.</p>	

Item	Notes	Action
3.7	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 4.5 – Deer Welfare</u>	
	The proposed changes were agreed by the Group.	
3.8	<u>Proposed Changes to Clause 4.6 – Non-Native Species</u>	
	The proposed changes were agreed by the Group. SC suggested that the Group should insert “and their numbers and impacts should be controlled” to the end of the second paragraph of 4.6.2 and this was agreed.	
4.0	<u>Priority Actions Arising from DMP</u>	
4.1	<u>Carbon Sensitive Habitats</u>	
	Ndurie Abah (NA) of SNH outlined how the Peatland Restoration Grant Scheme operated and invited any members interested to make contact with her.	
4.2	<u>Habitat Monitoring</u>	
	The meeting noted that most members had their programme of habitat monitoring now well established and subject to ensuring that all the data was collated by the Group secretary, RW confirmed that he considered the Group was delivering on this action.	
4.3	<u>Deer Population and Population Model</u>	
	RW confirmed that we have spring foot count data, Gruinard apart. SC confirmed that SNH will do a helicopter count early in 2018. This would be a fully classified count with tracker and camera. RW asked SC to outline for the Group exactly what he thought the Deer Population Model would entail. SC advised that the first steps would be to ask each estate what it required in terms of cull. Put simplistically, you would then multiply the cull required by seven times to arrive at the number of stags and broadly the hind:stags ration should be 1:1. He explained that this was a very simplistic approach but that was the starting point. PC queried the lack of Lochluichart Estate and whether this would impact on the development of the Deer Population Model. RW suggested that it probably wouldn't, given that the data from Lochluichart in terms of deer management would all be available.	

Item	Notes	Action
5.0	<u>Signing of Constitution</u>	
	<p>Having previously circulated copies of the new Constitution to Group members, it was agreed that RW and KSB could sign on behalf of the Group, thereby formally creating the Constitution. KSB confirmed that he would arrange to have this uploaded on the Group's website.</p>	KSB
6.0	<u>SNH and Funding Update</u>	
	<p>RW asked SC to bring everyone up to date on the position with SNH.</p> <p>SC advised that SNH had only recently heard from the Cabinet Minister, Roseanna Cunningham, and the main thrust of her directive to SNH was as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Minister would be looking for SNH to be testing existing legislation; • the Minister would be looking for control agreements where there might currently be control schemes; • the minister would be encouraging SNH to create and enter into control agreements where they thought it necessary; • the Minister would be encouraging SNH to use their powers to demand that Deer Management Plans be put in place and also demand that deer culls be implemented, where appropriate. <p>The general thrust was that the Minister was looking for SNH to be a little more assertive in the deer management arena.</p>	
7.0	<u>Wester Ross Biosphere</u>	
	<p>RW welcomed Natasha Hutchison (NH) to the meeting and thanked her for coming along to introduce the Group to the Wester Ross Biosphere.</p> <p>NH explained that in 2016, Wester Ross joined a network of 669 biospheres around the world (only two of which are within Scotland) which have been accredited by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) as model areas which demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature. The Wester Ross Biosphere seeks to facilitate partnership dialogue both within the local area and beyond in order to promote the sustainability of our communities and environment. The Wester Ross Biosphere currently has 85 members and when they had an AGM recently, some 55 people attended.</p> <p>NH suggested that anyone seeking more information should either look online at www.westerrossbiosphere.com or contact her direct on natasha@westerrossbiosphere.com.</p>	

Item	Notes	Action
	<p>Brian Fraser (BF) raised a query on aquaculture, having particularly in mind the damage to wild stocks being caused by fish farming, and NH confirmed that she would be happy to try to facilitate a discussion. RW welcomed this and suggested that no-one appears to care about our migratory fish and anything that NH could do to raise this issue would be much appreciated.</p> <p>RW thanked NH for her attendance and for updating the Group on the biosphere status.</p>	NH
8.0	<u>Any Other Business</u>	
8.1	<u>Scottish Deer Moredun Institute – Scottish Deer Health Survey 2017-18</u>	
	<p>RW explained that Moredun, in partnership with Edinburgh University and the deer sector in Scotland, was undertaking a deer health project, jointly funded by the Scottish Government and the Food Standards Agency. He explained that Moredun is an independent research institute that conducts world-class scientific research to improve animal health and welfare through the prevention and control of infectious diseases of livestock.</p> <p>He explained that the Scottish Deer Health survey had been launched at the ADMG meeting at Glenfinnan earlier in August and its objective was to assess the prevalence of E.coli O157 and chronic wasting disease in Scottish deer population, all species including upland and lowland.</p> <p>RW acknowledged that this was an important piece of work and was grateful to everyone for assisting in terms of submitting samples to Moredun. They were looking for each Group to complete ten sample packs from stags and ten from hinds.</p> <p>The following agreed to assist:-</p> <p><u>Stags (two each):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jake Buckthorp - Foich • Ronnie Ross – Lochrosque and Kinlochewe • Patrick Creasey - Strathvaich • Brian Fraser – Eilean Darach • Alasdair MacDonald - Dundonnell <p><u>Hinds (two each):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruari Matheson - Fannich • Gary Ross - Gruinard • Craig McIntosh - Inverbroom • Norman Kelman – Heights of Kinlochewe • Donald MacLeod – Lochrosque and Kinlochewe 	

Item	Notes	Action
	RW explained that if any additional packs were required, contact could be made with Tom McNeilly – tom.mcneilly@moredun.ac.uk or Beth Wells – beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk or by telephoning 0131 445 5111.	
9.0	<u>Date of Next Meeting</u>	
	It was agreed that the next meeting would probably be in late November/early December.	

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

KSB/AM 0025
12th October 2017