

Minutes

BIDWELLS

Client: Mid West Association of Highland Estates
Project: Annual General Meeting
Venue: Strathmashie Lunch Hut, Laggan
Date: 21 October 2011
Present: See below

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Distribution: All present

Description	Action
<p>1. Present</p> <p>Hamish McCorquodale, Dunan, Chairman Finlay Clark, RTA / Bidwells, Secretary Lyndsay Sharp, RTA, Bidwells Kirsty Fernie, RTA, Bidwells Sandy Walker, RTA, Killiechonate Roger Millard, RTA, Killiechonate Jamie Hendry, RTA, Killiechonate George Loudon, RTA, Mamore Cameron Loudon, RTA, Mamore Philip Dean, Corroul Donald Rowantree, Corroul Patrick Thomson, Ben Alder Ian Crichton, Ben Alder Ross Dakers, Ben Alder Andrew Feilden, Ardverikie Rob Whitson, Ardverikie Dougie Langlands, Ardverikie Lester Standen, JMT Malcolm Pearson, Cruach Caroline Pearson, Cruach John Carslake, Cruach Ian Sutherland, Dunan John Jackson, FCS</p> <p>In Attendance</p> <p>Iain Hope, SNH Richard Cooke, ADMG</p> <p>2. Apologies</p> <p>Jim Beattie, RTA Mrs Schwarzenback, Ben Alder</p> <p>Hamish McCorquodale welcomed John Carslake, new stalker at Cruach,</p>	

Dougie Langlands now headstalker at Arverikie, Ian Sutherland new stalker at Dunan, Rob Whitson new factor at Ardverikie and also Richard Cooke, chairman of the ADMG.

The chairman outlined that the purpose of the morning's meeting was to discuss the renewal of the DMP and that small working group has been formed to work on this consisting of, Hamish McCorquodale, Finlay Clark, Philip Dean, Ron Whitson and Patrick Thompson.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising which wouldn't be covered in the agenda.

4. 2011 Stag Cull

Ardverikie – 102

Stags in good order, good season, good rut and the weights were up.

Camusericht – 65

Mainly west winds and poor visibility.

Ben Alder – 55

A reduction in decent stags.

Dalwhinnie - 11

Dunan – 56

Slow rut to start, good rut, consistent rut and the stags **were** in good order.

Mamore – 57

Quick rut during the 1 week in October. Will likely shoot another 40 out of season.

Killiechonate – 66

Stags in good condition, the rut was normal and overall it was a reasonable season.

Cruach – 23

Have focussed most of there stalking activities within the Breadalbane DMG as they have entered into a voluntary control scheme. Lack of mature stags.

Corroul – 220

Stags average weight have been up by approximately 1 stone, stags in good condition, defined rut and overall a good season.

JMT – 10

(Out of Season.)

FCS – 20

Nothing out of the ordinary, will likely shoot another 10 out of season.

5. Natural Mortality

Ardverikie – 8 Stags, 15 Hinds and 6 Calves
Camusericht – 4 Stags & 6 Hinds.
Ben Alder – 6 Stags, 6 Hinds and 11 Calves
Dalwhinnie - PT To Confirm
Dunan – 6 hinds
Mamore – 9 Stags
Killiechonate – 11 Stags, 7 Hinds and 14 Calves
Cruach –
Corroul – 4 Stags, 3 Hinds & 4 Calves
JMT –
FCS –

6. Proposed Hind Cull 2011/12

Ardverikie – Approximately 200 will assess as they go.
Camusericht – 65
Ben Alder – 80-110
Dalwhinnie (Hill) – PT To Confirm
Dalwhinnie (Woods) - PT to Confirm
Dunan – 60-70
Mamore –100-150
Killiechonate – 125
Cruach – 50
Corroul – 300-350.
JMT – 20-40.
FCS – 25.

7. Deer Count 2011 – Review

The following comments were made by the count co-ordinates from the following estates.

Ardverikie – Count went well and the photos were good.
Ben Alder – Under the circumstances the count went well, not ideal ground conditions.
Dunan – Happy with the figures received. They felt the count went well.
Mamore –Good weather and good conditions.
Killiechonate – Very impressed with the organisation of the count and the photos.
Cruach – Malcolm Pearson felt they missed some stags in the woodland, approximately 100.
Corroul – Not 100% happy, 14-15 day period between the first and last areas were counted. Weather wasn't ideal as the ground was black.

Iain Hope thanked all the co-ordinators for their help during the count. He reported that it took 5 days to count the whole area during the period 24 March to 7 April. Photographs were taken of groups with 12 or more deer and with

smaller groups a visual count was taken. He reported a meeting was held in Bidwell's offices in Fort William to present the data. In Iain Hope's view he felt the count was reliable and accurate and he said the information was valuable to ensure compliance with the Code of Deer Management.

Iain Hope recommended that the group come up with their own population model based on their target culls.

Iain Crichton of Ben Alder questioned the calving potential; Iain Hope suggested the group come up with a more refined model from specific knowledge and circumstances of the group.

8. MWAHE Deer Management Plan

The current plan is due to expire in 2012. A small sub-group has been formed to deal with writing a new plan with assistance from Ron Rose of SNH. The group consists of, Hamish McCorquodale, Finlay Clark, Philip Dean, Rob Whitson and Patrick Thompson. The sub-group have agreed to meet before the end of November.

9. Ben Nevis SAC and Ben Alder SAC

Ben Nevis SAC

Both RTA and JMT are working on submitting an SRDP application for deer management within the area. A further meeting will be held shortly with SNH to discuss exactly what support SNH can offer.

Ben Alder SAC

Finalised agreement and population model. All parties are to agree with SNH. Iain Hope reported that there has been some progress with the designated sites but would like to move faster with the SRDP applications.

10. SNH Report

The Deer Management Code of Practice was produced as a result of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act. The Code has been approved by Ministers and focuses on social, economical, environmental and sustainability. A copy of the code and a link to the code will be circulated to all members of the association.

11. Reports from ADMG

Richard Cooke took on the role as Chairman of the ADMG in February 2011. He has recently met with Stewart Stevenson, Minister of the Environment and

Climate Change and Andrew Thin of SNH. He feels the perception in Holyrood is that DMG's are dysfunctional. Richard Cooke reported that this may be true of a small number of groups and the industry has 5 years to show that Deer Management Groups can function.

Richard Cooke reported that the Deer Management Code of Practice was produced in 4 months instead of 6 and was put to consultation. He said it is not threatening and not prescriptive and is quite general. It links in well with Best Practice.

He reported that the industry has been given the chance to demonstrate a minimum standard of competence for those who shoot deer and discussions are taking place in relation to Level 1 and Level 2 and whether these can be used as a minimum standard. He reported that occupiers, such as crofters, farmers and foresters will be regulated by way of a general licence.

Richard Cooke outlined in his opinion that the criteria for a DMG is:-

- Commitment
- Communication
- Compromise
- Collaboration.

He also stressed that communication was important. He told the group that other important factors included, having a Deer management Plan in place, addressing designated sites which were in unfavourable condition and ensuring anyone who shoots deer is competent.

Philip Dean asked Richard Cooke how fragile the legislation was to political change. Richard Cooke felt in his opinion he didn't think it was particularly sensitive.

Malcolm Pearson thanked Richard Cooke, Finlay Clark and Iain Hope for all their help.

Richard Cooke informed the group that environmental aspects have become more of a focus on the public's interest and that more of the public are taking an interest in private estates.

12. Cairngorm National Park Authority – Deer Advisory Group

Patrick Thompson reported that Will Boyd-Wallis is secretary of the Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group. He informed the group that a copy of the Cairngorm National Park Policy document can be downloaded from their website. Colin MacLean represents the ADMG on the Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group and they meet twice a year. The group consists of a number of landowners, land managers and community council representatives within the Cairngorm

National Park.

13. Venison Market

Finlay Clark reported that the venison price has improved steadily over the past few years by approximately 10% per annum. He thanked the Scottish Venison Partnership for all their work in promoting Scottish Venison. He reported the two main dealers, Highland Game and Yorkshire Game have been paying £2.00-£2.20/kg for quality assured venison. Unfortunately there is now a shortage of Scottish Venison as a number of estates have reduced their culls. The Scottish Venison Partnership reports that we need approximately 500 deer farms to meet the demand for Scottish Venison. This should be considered as a viable alternative for upland farms.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Monday 22 October 2012.

15. Election of Office Bearers

The office bearers will continue for a further year.

Patrick Thompson was thanked for hosting the meeting.

16. AOCB

There was no further business to be discussed.
