

Minutes



Client: Mid West Association of Highland Estates
Project: Annual General Meeting
Venue: Strathmashie Lunch Hut
Date: 18 October 2009
Present: As Below

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Distribution: As below

Description	Action
<p>1 Present</p> <p>Hamish McCorquodale, Dunan, Chairman George MacDonald, Camusericht, Vice-chairman Finlay Clark, RTA / Bidwells, Secretary Kirsty Scott, RTA Bidwells Lyndsay Sharp, RTA Bidwells Sandy Walker, RTA, Killiechonate Roger Millard, RTA, Killiechonate Roger Mitchell, Corroun Philip Dean, Corroun Donald Rowantree, Corroun Major Hanbury, Ben Alder Patrick Thomson, Ben Alder Ian Crichton, Ben Alder Ross Dakers, Ben Alder David Rankin, Dunan Lord Pearson, Cruach Andrew Fielden, Ardverikie Rhoderick Noble, Ardverikie Dougie Langlands, Ardverikie Mike Daniels, JMT Colin Lavin, FCS</p> <p>2 In Attendance</p> <p>John Milne, DCS Iain Hope, DCS</p> <p>3 Welcome</p> <p>Hamish McCorquodale thanked Ben Alder Estate for the venue for this year's AGM and also welcomed Professor John Milne of DCS to the meeting.</p>	

4 Apologies

Mrs Schwarzenbach, Ben Alder
George Loudon, RTA, Mamore
Nicholas Thexton, Cruach
Iain MacDonald, Dalwhinnie & Strathmashie

5 Minutes of AGM – 19 October 2008

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting held on 19 October 2008.

6 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that would not be covered later in the agenda.

7 2008/09 Hind Cull

The group were in agreement with the hind cull figures prepared by the secretary which had been submitted earlier in the year. There was one amendment to be made to the number of calves culled on Corrou, it should be changed from 5 to 98.

8 2008/09 Stag Cull

The stag culls reported to the group by the Estates present are as follows.

Ardverikie – 134

Camusericht – 55 + 6 in enclosed woodlands, 2 Sika in enclosed woodlands, 1 Sika open hill, and 7 Roe buck in enclosed woodlands, average weight of hill stags was 13 stone 13lbs, heaviest stag 18 stone 4lbs.

Ben Alder – 62

Dalwhinnie – 10

Dalwhinnie woodland – 5

Dunan – 45

Mamore – 15 plus 1 WGS

Killiechonate – 42

Cruach – 23

Corrou – 310 culled to date, going to shoot 350 (rest will be out of season)

JMT – 8

FCS – 60 Stags to date. Will continue cull till 31 March. Proposed 23 @ Leanachin, 40 Glen Righ & 70 Glen Nevis.

A discussion took place in relation to Sika Deer. D. Langlands of Ardverikie reported that he had noticed an increase of Sika on Arberarder, D. Rowantree of Corrou also reported that he had seen a Sika stag at Loch Ossian. Iain Hope confirmed that an authorisation can be issued by DCS to control sika if they are being seen to cause damage. Prof. John Milne of

DCS told the group that he would encourage the shooting of sika. Finlay Clark of RTA reported that they shoot around 60 sika on Glenshero Estate and this is probably why Ardverikie are seeing an increase in sika.

Iain Hope of DCS informed the group that the Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA) are particularly concerned over the number of sika within the park and are carrying out a study to work out a baseline of true red deer within the park. He reported that it was early days but he would speak with the CNPA to see whether the study could be extended into the MWAHE area.

George MacDonald of Camusericht asked Colin Lavin of FCS whether sika were being seen in the Pitlochry area, Colin Lavin reported that there is not yet any evidence of sika in this area.

9 Natural Mortality

Ardverikie – 5 stags, 7 hinds & 9 calves
Camusericht – 3
Ben Alder – 7 stags, 2 hinds & 3 calves
Dalwhinnie -
Dunan – 1 stag, 3 hinds & 6 calves
Mamore –
Killiechonate – 12 stags (including knobbers)
Cruach – 0
Corrour – 14 stags, 8 hinds & 8 calves
JMT – 0
FCS – 0

Iain Hope of DCS confirmed that these numbers didn't raise any issues and that they are in line with the rest of the country.

10 Proposed Hind Cull 2009/2010

Ardverikie – Approximately 200 will assess as they go
Camusericht – 55-60 plus calves
Ben Alder – 100 then re-assess
Dalwhinnie – 20
Dunan – 60 plus calves, weather dependent
Mamore – 10-12 deer forest, as many as possible in WGS
Killiechonate – 70 hinds plus calves
Cruach – 35 plus calves
Corrour – 280, bulk from the East of the railway & approx. 40 Bheinn a Bric
JMT – 20 plus calves
FCS – Approximately 40 plus calves

11 Deer Count

Finlay Clark reported that there had not been a comprehensive helicopter deer count since the helicopter count in 2006 and he said it was up to the members to decide when and the format of the count.

Donald Rowantree of Corrou confirmed that he was in favour of a count taking place in early 2010 after Corrou's three year reduction cull. Both Andrew Fielden & Dougie Langlands wish to count on Ardverikie this year.

A discussion took place in relation to the most effective way to do the count as there were difficulties with the photography last year distinguishing between stags and hinds. DCS confirmed that the photography equipment has been improved since 2006.

George MacDonald highlighted that they need good snow cover for a count and Dougie Langlands expressed his concerns over disturbance caused by the helicopter, but stated that its better to use the helicopter so the results can be compared with the helicopter count of 2006.

Iain Hope confirmed that DCS would assist as much as possible with photography equipment and co-ordination of the count, however they could not assist financially as the budget has already been committed for 2010. Hamish MacCorquodale asked whether it was worth waiting until 2010/11 to do a count when there could be financial resources available. Prof. John Milne of DCS said there may be a possibility of the group doing a count this coming year and receiving the funding next year as DCS are under pressure to reduce there carbon output by 4% and this method may fit in line with the Scottish Governments Carbon reduction strategy as counts are a significant cause of carbon.

Patrick Thompson of Ben Alder reported that Mrs Schwarzenbach of Ben Alder will be testing thermal imaging technology this year at Ben Alder using a helicopter rather than the plane which was tested last year. The method may be able to count deer. Major Handbury agreed to talk with Mrs Schwarzenbach in relation to this and Patrick Thompson to report back to the group in due course.

Rhoderick Nobel of Ardverikie expressed concerns over using an inexperienced pilot or using a different technique which may not be effective.

In summary it was decided to set up a sub group to organise a count for February / March 2010. It was highlighted that this group should include a Stalker and it was decided that this would be George MacDonald. The subgroup will consist of Finlay Clark, Iain Hope, Philip Dean, Patrick Thompson, Roderick Noble and George MacDonald.

Patrick Thompson

12 Reports from ADMG

Finlay Clark reported that 2009 had been a very busy year for the ADMG. He reported that ADMG had worked closely with its members during the consultation of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill and made representation on behalf of its members along with the SGA, SRPBA and BASC. ADMG had also been involved with the Public Services Reform Bill. Finlay Clark stated that Robert Balfour of ADMG forms part of the merger board and confirmed that the DCS SNH merger is likely to go ahead in mid-late 2010 with the expertise of DCS staff still being in place, post merger.

ADMG have contributed £5,000 to the Venison Working Group which has been used to help promote Scottish Venison with a website www.scottish-venison.info and an Eat Venison Day to help raise the profile of venison.

The National Access Forum along with the Stalking Sub Group have developed signs to be used to inform access takers of stalking taking place on estates. A website has also been developed, based on the Heading to the Scottish Hills document. DCS is currently leading a pilot study of the system.

ADMG are about to meet with the National Trust for Scotland to discuss their Deer Management Policies.

The next ADMG Regional Committee meeting is to be held on 4 November in Bonar Bridge.

13 DCS Report

Prof. John Milne reported that the first reading of the Public Services Reform Bill would be in December, if this was passed then it was likely the merger would take place with effect from 1 July 2010.

He confirmed that DCS staff would be kept as one group and form part of a Wildlife Management Group within SNH. The board of DCS have proposed they form a sub group to the main SNH board and provide advice to senior staff of SNH.

Prof. Milne also updated the meeting on the Wildlife & Natural Environment Bill. He reported that DCS had given the Minister advice back in early January. This then went out to consultation and the Scottish Government are currently looking at the responses and he hoped a decision would be made by Christmas. Prof Milne anticipated the bill having a place before April with a view to it going through the last session of parliament prior to May 2010.

Prof. Milne confirmed that DCS are very much "business as usual." They have been following "Scotland's Wild Deer a National Approach" which focuses on the Environment, Economic & Social aspects of the deer industry, Prof. Milne confirmed that DCS are currently on track to meeting their target of having 95% of designated sites in favourable condition by 2010 with 93% of this already achieved.

DCS have also been involved with the Eat Venison Day and 2 recent venison events at the Scottish Parliament, Prof. Milne confirmed that there has been a strong demand for Scottish Venison and the pound against the euro has helped the export market.

DCS have also been working on a campaign to decrease the number of Road Traffic Accidents caused by deer. DCS are working to raise awareness of deer on roads especially in areas where there is a high density of Roe Deer, this has seen the introduction of activated speed signs.

Ian Hope of DCS reported that they are currently working with Estates to run a pilot study of the Heading to the Scottish Hills Website. He also confirmed that a Best Practice Event would be held at Strathconnon Estate on 28 & 29 October.

Andrew Fielden of Arverikie asked if John Milne would still be involved with the group, John Milne confirmed that he will not be continuing as chairman and that no board members would attend meetings unless specifically asked.

The Chairman thanked Prof. John Milne on behalf of the group for all his hard work during his time with the DCS.

14 MWAHE Deer Management Plan

Finlay Clark reported that the group was now coming to the end of year 3 of the plan, he reported that next year the group would have to think about the next plan. He suggested that the Ben Alder and the Ben Nevis SAC's be taken into account when the plan is drawn up.

Patrick Thompson of Ben Alder reported that the survey of both sites would take place in March and these would be carried out by Victor Clements of Scottish Native Woodlands, this would involve assessing past surveys and visiting estates within the Deer Management Group, it was confirmed that SNH would be providing funding for this exercise.

Ian Hope of DCS confirmed that he would assist where possible. It was agreed that the plan would be reviewed after the count and after the survey results had been produced.

15 Cairngorm National Park Authority

Patrick Thompson of Ben Alder confirmed that Michael Hone of Glen Tromie Estate is now chair of the Cairngorm National Park Deer Management Group. He confirmed the group did not make a response to the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill because of the diversity of the group so individual Estates made separate responses.

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16 Venison Market

Finlay Clark confirmed that the venison market was relatively strong with Quality Assured venison achieving £1.60/kg up until 8 October.

17 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting would be 17 October 2010 at Strathmashie Lunch Hut.

18 Any Other Business

It was brought to the groups' attention that new office bearers would need to be elected at next years Annual General Meeting.

The Chairman thanked the group for there time and the meeting closed.
