

**Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Group**

**Meeting of Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November 9.30am**

**Invercauld Keiloch**

**Attending**

Angus McNicol	Invercauld (Chairman)
Tom Willis	Mar Estate (Secretary)
Dr Linzi Seivwright	Caorann (Consultant)
Mark Nicolson	Mar Estate
David Frew	Mar Lodge
Chris Murphy	Mar Lodge
Adrian Walker	Allargue
Will Reid	Invercauld
Andrew Salvesen	Dinnet Moor
Edward Humphrey	Dinnet Estate
Arthur Fernie	Mar Estate
Stuart Jennings	RSPB
Richard Greenlaw	Glenavon
Richard Thomas	Invercauld
Merlin Becker	GWCT Auchnerran

**Apologies**

Robin Leslie Melville	Candacraig
Rory Galloway	Savills
Michael Skelly	FCS
Neil Brown	Allargue
Richard Gledson	Delnadamph
Clive Meikle	Glenavon

**MINUTES**

**1. Apologies**

As above.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting**

Updates required to attendees list for the 17 April 2018 public meeting minutes. Subject to this alteration, Minutes approved by Group and to be uploaded onto the website (**ACTION: SECRETARY**)

Minutes of Member meeting of 17 April 2018 approved.

### 3. Action points outstanding from previous minutes

Members to provide, **by 30 November 2018**, an update of activity in the period April 2017 – March 2018 for the 2017/18 Annual Report if desired. **(ACTION: ALL). Secretary then to circulate final draft for comment prior to this being put on the website (ACTION: SECRETARY)**

Secretary to contact neighbouring DMG's to identify any issues and share relevant information. **(ACTION: SECRETARY)**

SSSI's all currently assessed as favourable or favourable recovering although it was noted that site condition monitoring by SNH may be being gradually reduced or phased out.

### 4. DMG health check update and Working Plan

No 'red' failure to deliver scores against the DMG at present.

Consultant noted that the Group is scoring well and has noted a healthy improvement since the 2016 assessment.

Now the Group have reviewed the health check, SNH are to be approached for comment. **(ACTION: CONSULTANT)**

#### Monitor and manage deer impacts

No. 5. – Actions to monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside is currently amber and is to remain a key area of focus for the Group.

HIA report to present the best case possible as the whole of the west area and much of the east area has now been assessed.

The Group can set its own targets for dealing with impacts as long as they are properly justified.

Dinnet to confirm whether HIA took place in 2018. **(ACTION: MERLIN BECKER)**

It was noted that whilst deer densities may be low in the east area, other constraints on the habitat are present such as sheep and mountain hares and management restrictions within SSSI's in the area.

#### Improve ability to store carbon

Mar Estate is currently under contract to carry out a peatland restoration project although are awaiting the contractor to commence work. Invercauld are about to complete a large project. Group will approach CNPA to ascertain an estimate of the total carbon sequestered from all the restoration works carried out to date within the UDD DMG **(ACTION: SECRETARY)**. Estates who have carried out bare peat mulching reported a failure for the mulch to take hold and begin regrowth on the bare

peat areas. Mar Lodge are currently participating in a trial fencing off areas of restored peat to aid recovery. Invercauld have also trialled direct replanting of sphagnum moss.

### Training

Secretary to conduct a review of training and qualifications within the Group.  
Larder hygiene course (North Highland College) to be considered as CPD for Members.

### Public health and wellbeing

Group to consider producing a map of all the core paths within the Group area. Secretary to contact CNPA for a shape file.

### Minimise economic costs

Group to focus on capital costs directly connected to deer only and secretary to collect information from Group via a questionnaire.  
Dinnet Estate have had tenants experiencing substantial crop losses on arable ground and shooting tenants suffering damage to game crops and the Estate are going to quantify this damage. Damage is being mitigated against by the Estate moving forwards.

### Communication

Chairman and secretary to maintain open channels of communication with neighbouring groups via a letter to the respective office bearers to request any issues be raised. Direct communication between the estates involved in any cross-DMG boundary issue is the preferred approach but the UDD DMG can be used for support if required.

Dee Fishery Board to be invited to submit any deer related issue they or their members have experienced.

Group considering a press release, perhaps in Press & Journal covering what has been achieved to date environmentally and in terms of the Public Interest objectives. A focus group is to be set up to progress led by Mark Nicolson, Mar Estate. **(ACTION: MARK NICOLSON)**

### Deer welfare

Group to submit larder weights to be collected via questionnaire. **(ACTION: ALL)**  
Members noted that larder weights had dipped below the historic average in 2018.  
Group to use LTFP data to pull together information on where woodland deer shelter is available. **(ACTION: CONSULTANT)**

It was emphasised that it is important that all members provide the information requested by the Group for the purposes of the forthcoming SNH assessment in April 2019 **(ACTION: ALL)**

## **5. Population model**

Group happy with population model position in 2022 and will carry this forward into a target population density in the Working Plan.

Consultant intends to map densities to see whether it correlates with target culls and how this overlays with HIA data **(ACTION: CONSULTANT)**

Group to submit target spring population, to be collected via questionnaire **(ACTION: ALL)**

## **6. Deer culls (stags and proposed hinds)**

Please see attached appendix.

The main change to previous hind culls proposed for the current season was at Mar Lodge where a cull of 70 hinds is currently envisaged.

## **7. Budget**

2018/19 revised budget was approved by the Group (copy attached).

Members queried whether the apportionment of costs between Members remained appropriate. Chair and secretary to review and circulate proposals to the Group **(ACTION: CHAIR & SECRETARY)**

Funding may be available from CNPA which could be used to fund an initiative such as socio-economic survey.

### Forestry Co-operation Funding

£10,000 Forestry Co-operation Grant discussed which provides funding for an external contractor to assess forestry opportunities for a minimum of 2 estates. Although most Members are operating under their own Long Term Forest Plans, if of interest, Members to express interest to Secretary **(ACTION: ALL)**

## **8. Wild Game Best Practice**

Group discussed the Food Standards Scotland Wild Game Best Practice guidance and the secretary will circulate to those Members who have not seen it **(ACTION: SECRETARY)**

Mark Nicolson noted that Highland Game are doing a good job lobbying on behalf of the venison producing industry.

## 9. AOCB

Secretary to attend the ADMG Regional meeting at Inverness on 21<sup>st</sup> November and report back to the Group (**ACTION: SECRETARY**)

David Frew circulated for comments a Vision and Outline Masterplan document prepared by the NTS.

The next Member meeting, and the annual public meeting, were scheduled for **Thursday 25 April 2018**.