

Draft Minutes of Upper Deeside and Donside Land Management Group

Keiloch, Invercauld and By ZOOM on Wednesday 16th November 2022 at 2.30pm.

Present (in person)	Present (by Zoom)	Apologies
Angus McNicol (Chair & Invercauld) Richard Thomas (IC Home Beat) Arthur Fernie (Mar Estate) Adrian Walker (Allargue) David Frew (Mar Lodge) Andrew Young (Glenavon) Alex Young (Edinglassie) Dr Linzi Seivwright (Facilitator)	Mike Cottam (CNPA) Iain Hope (NatureScot) Rosanna Fraser (Glenavon) Ben Carter (IC Homebeat) Ian Wilkinson (DWTP)	Will Reid (Invercauld Baddoch) Stuart Jenkins (RSPB) Robin Leslie-Melville (Candacraig) Richard Gledson (Delnadamph) Capt Mark Nicolson (Mar Estate) Andrew Salvesen (DWTP) Rory Kennedy (GWCT) Chris Murphy (Mar Lodge) Louise de Raad (GWCT) Richard Cooke (ADMG)

Item		Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.	
2.	Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 25th March 2022	Paper 7
2.1	Minutes were approved by DF and seconded by RT.	
3.	Matters Arising from Meeting held on 25th March 2022	Paper 7
	1. Meeting still to be arranged at Auchnerran. 2. Glenavon to confirm if a count was conducted in 2022. Count had not been undertaken but will do in Spring 2023. Whole Group agreed to do a foot count. Mar Lodge would be counting by helicopter ideally in February and agreed to let group know so that a foot count could be coordinated at the same time if possible. Chris Murphy to be approached to act as count coordinator. 3. AM to write to Richard Greenlaw to thank him. Actioned 4. AM to speak to Ballater School to discuss possible education event. AM was meeting with Countryside Learning Scotland and will continue to follow up Ballater event. Edinglassie had held an Estate that Educate event last year. 5. Group members to feedback any access issues to LS. None had been received. 6. LS to update the population model with revised count figures. Covered later in Agenda . 7. LS and AM to investigate Rural Land Use Partnerships. Mike Cottam updated that Fiona Holmes had moved on. CNPA had been approved as a pilot and with the National Park Plan having been approved this was being viewed as an appropriate mechanism. The tools were in place for a RLUP with the Upland Advisory Board and links with local communities being in place and this was as far as this was likely to go with regards to the pilot. The question was asked whether there would be wider consultation and it was suggested that the LMG Chair write to the CNPA Convenor indicating that the LMG would wish to be involved in further development. 8. Group members to ensure that HIA training and work undertaken – seek assistance from LS if required. Covered later in the Agenda. 9. LS and AM to review subscriptions in advance of Spring meeting next year.	AP1: LS AP2: LMG Members AP3: AM AP4: AM AP5: LS & AM
4.	Culls – stags and proposed hinds	
	Mar Lodge: 104 sporting stags with 120 likely to be culled before the end of the season. 100 – 120 hinds proposed. It has been a good season and weights were up. Mar Estate: 54 stags and 85 hinds proposed. Good season with early rut but less hinds on the ground. Homebeat: 40 stags and 40 to 50 hinds proposed. Baddoch: 45 in total (29 sporting). Hind target yet to be confirmed	

	<p>Glenavon: 60 in total (32 sporting) and 60 hinds (plus calves) proposed. Lots of young stags around.</p> <p>Edinglassie: 11 stags and 2 hinds shot so far.</p> <p>Candacraig: 5 stags</p> <p>DWTP: 6 stags and 30 hinds proposed.</p> <p>Allargue: 1 stag (0 in 2021) and very few hinds on the ground. AW reported that a large group of hinds had come onto the ground from the Glenlivet direction possibly as a result of woodland being felled but had returned to Glenlivet as there was nothing to hold them.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Draft Plan Refresh</p>	
	<p>LS had circulated a draft of the plan prior to the meeting.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the inclusion of reference to Wild Fire Prevention methods and that it would be useful to have a strategic map to understand where the gaps and natural breaks were, should fire break out. It was something that the Moorland Forum had been discussing in detail and had been collating all available data on muirburn – a paper was due to be published 15th November to feed into the NatureScot committee. It was suggested that Jos Milner (East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership) be contacted about this.</p> <p>It was proposed that the draft plan include a paragraph in reference to the issue but that the practicalities were likely detailed elsewhere. Grouse Moor Licensing would likely need a plan to be in place.</p> <p>There was a discussion about red deer densities within the park and it was confirmed that the target of 5-8 deer per km² was intended to be at the DMG scale and not property scale. The question was asked why the Park had agreed on a different maximum recommended figure when the Deer Working Group had indicated 10 deer per km² as a maximum. MC confirmed the target for the Park was to have densities of 5-8 deer per km² by 2030.</p> <p>Edinglassie indicated that there had been a wider count conducted of the Carbrach area and that it was likely that numbers would be reduced across the area. Technically Edinglassie could sit in either group and it was up to the estate to decide.</p> <p>The Group discussed livestock grazing highlighting that it was important to consider the impact of grazing of both sheep and deer on moorland habitats. The following sheep figures were confirmed:</p> <p>Glenavon: 1306 blackface ewes, 306 blackface gimmers, 1365 wethers and 1182 lambs. There was 7-800 sheep on hill in April with the majority on by the end of May and off in November.</p> <p>Allargue: 600 breeding in summer (250 + tenant grazing) reduced to 250 in winter.</p> <p>Mar: 500 breeding</p> <p>Edinglassie: 2500 Livestock Units</p> <p>It was also suggested that it would be useful to have a reference to hares in the plan and that the Group will undertake to monitor the population.</p> <p>The Group were asked to get comments on the plan back to LS by 19th December and that a revised plan would be available for consultation by Christmas. Consultation would run until the end of January. The plan would be made available on the ADMG website with links to be put onto local Facebook pages and notes sent to Community Councils.</p> <p>AM noted that within the plan there were a number of good news stories about what the Group had achieved over the last five years and that a plan should be developed to publicise these. AM indicated he would draft a Communications Strategy.</p>	<p>AP6: LS</p> <p>AP7:LS</p> <p>AP8: LS</p> <p>AP9: LMG Members</p> <p>AP10: AM</p>

	It was noted that the “Actions” identified in the plan were perhaps better described as Objectives. Whilst individual estates would be delivering their own actions it was hoped that identifying cooperative actions in the plan would add value.	
6.	Habitat Impact Assessment	
	<p>LS indicated that the data from all estates had been collated in a section in the plan. It was noted that the areas of high impact identified on Gairnshiel would be attributed to sheep. The chair asked whether a heat map of livestock could also be produced for sheep.</p> <p>The Group would be looking to focus on Blanket Bog in 2023.</p>	AP11:LS
7.	Venison Update and ADMG Update	Paper 8
	LS had circulated a full report from ADMG prior to the meeting. The key messages were that Deer Management Groups and Land Management Groups should continue to work together and maintain momentum, despite the Deer Working Group downplaying their value.	
8.	Financial Position	
	LS updated the Group on the current financial position and that the current Balance was sitting at £10413.50. The Group agreed to pay the 6-monthly Secretariat fee and 75% of the plan costs as well as the ADMG subscription.	
9.	NatureScot and CNPA Updates	
	<p>NatureScot reported that the Strategic Deer Board were currently working through the 96 recommendations from the Deer Working Group Report through 4 workstreams – Legislation, Regulation, Incentives and Operational Delivery. The Board is made up of the Scottish Government and the Agencies – Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland, Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate, National parks and NatureScot. Although the Board had met 3 or 4 times it was still early days. The Board would be thinking about changes to both primary and secondary legislation that would affect a number of areas including the use of night sites and use of non-lead ammunition. It was hoped that whatever was being agreed would be publicly available and well communicated. It was noted that the different Agencies would be looking to their own corporate plans as well as the outcome of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy consultation to frame how members will address the various tasks.</p> <p>CNPA: MC provided an update to the Group. The park places great value in the DMG structure and wanted to work with the established groups, seeing the strength of these established groups. It was also recognised that there were challenges in managing deer in the south of the park which had led to the park securing funding from the National Lottery through the Heritage Horizons project which was being directed to 3 groups currently to develop Strategic Land Management Plans taking a more holistic land management approach. There were currently 3 different groups of consultants working to develop what this might look like. The contracts were due to finish at the end of March 2023 with a view to applying for follow up funding to help groups in developing the plans to a delivery stage in Autumn 2023 to 2028.</p> <p>All three groups were at different stages and taking different approaches. West Grampians Group has drilled into fine detail and have collected a huge amount of data. South Deeside North Angus Group were looking at identifying opportunities and risks associated with land use change. South Grampians were currently awaiting the outcome of discussions on a Section 7 agreement being progressed with Nature Scot to determine how the Heritage Horizons project might be progressed.</p> <p>It was discussed that it was important that Groups were continuing to collect data and information and were able to justify what they were doing in light of how fast things were moving, particularly in response to Biodiversity challenges and the Climate Emergency.</p>	
10.	Communications	Paper 9
	LS indicated that contributions to the monthly bulletin were always welcome.	

	LS had circulated a Draft Annual Report and asked that members get back to her with any additional information for the Activity Report by 19 th December.	
11.	AOCB	
	<p>There had been discussion at the Cairngorms & Speyside meeting recently about concerns relating to an ingress of deer. A representative of Glenavon agreed to pick up communication with the C&S Group.</p> <p>MC indicated that there had been a number of issues relating to venison towards the end of the season, mostly as a result of restrictions in being able to sell to the European market which is where most of the rut stags go. Cairngorms Connect and Creag Meagaidh had been exploring opportunities to sell venison locally . Mar Lodge indicated that they do sell locally but that there was an issue regarding the volume that could be processed locally.</p> <p>There followed a discussion about venison production within the park and whether there might be merit in trying to look at opportunities. AM agreed to send a letter to other Chairs to gauge interest. Would need to look at business models and it would be dependent on scale but it might be something that the Park could support.</p> <p>The Group agreed to look at possibilities of running an estate event to coincide with May Big Weekend events.</p>	<p>AP12: AM</p> <p>AP13: ALL</p>

Summary of Action Points from Meeting on 16th November 2022

1.	Meeting to be arranged at Auchnerran.	LS
2.	Group to try and collate a foot count in Spring 2023 and coordinate with Mar Lodge if possible.	LMG Members
3.	AM to speak to Ballater School to discuss possible education event.	AM
4.	AM to write to CNPA Convenor to request involvement with Rural Land Use Partnerships project.	AM
5.	LS and AM to review subscriptions in advance of Spring meeting next year.	LS and AM
6.	LS to contact Jos Milner re wildfire arrangements/information	LS
7.	LS to update plan with wildfire paragraph.	LS
8.	LS to include hares in the plan.	LS
9.	Group members to provide feedback on Draft Plan and Annual Report by 19 th December	LMG Members
10.	AM to draft Communications Plan	AM
11.	LS to develop a heat map for livestock	LS
12.	AM to write to Chairs of other DMGs to gauge interest in local venison production business	AM
13.	Group to look at opportunities for a LMG/ Estate event	LMG