

Minutes of Upper Deeside and Donside Land Management Group

Victoria and Albert Halls, Ballater and By ZOOM on 9th November at 2.30pm.

<p>Present (in person)</p> <p>Angus McNicol (Chair & Invercauld)</p> <p>Dr Linzi Seivwright (Secretary)</p> <p>David Frew (Mar Lodge)</p> <p>Chris Murphy (Mar Lodge)</p> <p>Capt Mark Nicolson (Mar Estate)</p> <p>Gavin Hannam (Gairnshiel & Micras)</p> <p>Richard Cooke (ADMG)</p> <p>Stuart Jenkins (RSPB)</p>	<p>Present (by Zoom)</p> <p>Ben Carter (IC Home Beat)</p> <p>Rory Kennedy (GWCT)</p> <p>Calum Pearson (Edinglassie)</p> <p>Andy Ford (CNPA)</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Richard Gledson (Delnadamph)</p> <p>Rosanna Fraser (Glenavon)</p> <p>Craig Barnett (DWT)</p> <p>Iain Wilkinson (DWT)</p> <p>Will Reid (Invercauld Baddoch)</p> <p>Richard Thomas (IC Home Beat)</p> <p>Andrew Young (Glenavon)</p> <p>Robin Leslie-Melville (Candacraig)</p> <p>Edward Humphries (Dinnet LG)</p> <p>Andrew Salvesen (DWT)</p> <p>Iain Hope (NatureScot)</p> <p>Arthur Fernie (Mar Estate)</p> <p>Louise de Raad (GWCT)</p> <p>Leslie George (Candacraig)</p> <p>Michael Bennet (Delnadamph)</p> <p>Sandy Bremner (CNPA)</p>
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Item		Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.	
2.	Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 28th April 2022	
2.1	Minutes were approved. Proposed by MN Seconded by DF.	
3.	Matters Arising from Meeting held on 28th April 2022	
3.1	AP1: LS was to liaise with Louise de Raad – if there are events coming up that members might be interested in, she will let us know.	
3.2	<p>AP2: Count coordinators – ask if we could make sure have up to date contacts for our own group and confirm those who would be coordinating in other groups. LS to make contact with other groups and find out who is coordinating and then see if a single point of contact could be appointed to coordinate dates and count data for all groups. Start with Mike Cottam. Could we have our own list circulated to Chris – LS to circulate list as we have it and identify gaps (including telephone numbers). Most are on a shared radio channel.</p> <p>Heli Count – Ben carter will pick up on drone counting methodology. DF had investigated costings and there would be no cost saving and unlikely to be as effective. NTS Torridon had done this and it had worked but scale issue there. IC will likely join in the heli count with Mar Lodge and AM to check with Glenavon. Mar Lodge reported some movement this year with Glenavon – not sure what the cause. AM had spoked with Colin McLean and no Major change being reported at Dorback. Mar Lodge were aware of some estates in that corner having a change in emphasis- so might explain movements. Count for Glenavon last year was fairly low but normally have quite a bit of movement seasonally. Deer in forestry in Donside? – even with the forestry in Invercauld – can be challenging to know what is there. East of Corndavon deer fence much fewer deer and less impetus to count. Sometimes taking more of an educated guess. February/March but will try and coordinate the heli counts with the foot counts.</p>	<p>AP1: LS</p> <p>AP2: BC</p>

3.3	AP3: Events - LS had been liaising with RHET and will touch base regarding opportunities. Invercauld had been touch with Braemar and Estate that Educate so hopefully something will evolve. LS to check with Mike Cottam whether there might be some match funding within CNPA	AP 3: LS
3.4	AP 4: AM had written to Sandy Bremner with regards to the Rural Land Use Partnerships and had been invited to the meeting. He has put Andy Ford in touch with us and he would be joining the meeting at 3pm. A summary paper had been circulated to the Group. LMG keen to be involved. AM met with new convenor in March and he was aware of the group and our wider remit.	
3.5	AP 5: Wildfire – Bring forward for Wildfire Management Strategy and defer to Wildfire Group	AP 4: LS
3.6	Nature Festival – a few of the members did something (Mar Lodge did some guided walks). Didn't do anything as a group this year but next year will try to hold an event to promote the diversity of the Group. It was agreed that these things are challenging and running events can dilute the attendance at other events – so while good initiative, it would good to investigate other opportunities. Need an event to get across that land management objectives intertwined – presented as one. Usually a festival hub somewhere – if we were to do something jointly next time the hub is somewhere in Deeside – could do something jointly for that. Maybe something for next year do something out with the Festival time– one event. Theme could be diversity -possibly in July? Fife Arms good at doing festivals – could there be a land management festival? BC to put it to them possibly at the Fife Arms Burger Bar using venison at a hook. AM, LS and BC to do away and investigate further.	AP 5: LS, BC, AM & MN
3.7	RC suggested that this might be a good group to promote the “Land Management Group” concept – but would be good to hold an event for the rest of the deer sector to show how it is possible to have lots of objectives being achieved. Integration of land uses important. AM to form a little sub-group and come up with ideas and proposals by the end of January.	AP 6: LS
3.8	AP 6: Paper was produced for this meeting (Agenda Item 4)	
3.9	AP7: AM had contact CM at CNPA and nothing to report on Dorback.	
3.10	AP 8: New Deer Management Plan has now been published.	
3.11	AP 9: Community Zoom Meeting – will come to later in Agenda under Item 11.	
3.12	AP 10: Press release – will come to later in Agenda under Agenda Item 11.	
4.	Culls -stags and proposed hinds	
4.1	Paper 8 include culls but was incomplete. Last few years culls have been very stable and population has been stable. Will just assume that this will be the case unless hear differently. Mar Estate – 85 hinds and calves. Happy with current population. MN indicated a need to keep the population under review. AM pointed out the difference in the recruitment rates from the counts. If counts done in Spring will reflect the culling regime.	
5.	Population Paper and Working Plan Actions	
5.1	LS emphasised the fact that the population model had never worked and that it is clear there is immigration which people will react to on the ground. Invercauld – Homebeat same as last year, Baddoch will depend on what moving back and forward. Counts of stags have hovered between 1700 to 2000 and cull has been consistent at about 400 – about a fifth. Thought it should be about a 7 th . If took non sporting cull from mar Lodge out of the equation – then average age of the stags would go up. Rc asked if information was consistent.	

	<p>AM- counts a mixture of foot counts and heli counts. Glenavon find difficult to foot count and have only done a few heli counts. But generally have a good analysis.</p> <p>LS – having to use the best count information possible and also using HIA to inform the direction.</p> <p>MN- all looks within the tolerable statistical margin for error. Many years ago the population looked very different and the recruitment was between 15 and 20% with huge mortality. The picture now is so different. Understand that always people say can do more but seem to be doing more than many. Would be good if this was acknowledged.</p> <p>AM- from 5 year cull – then the hind to calf ratio is 40%.</p> <p>RC – seemed to have a complete set of data.</p> <p>AM – urged people to keep an eye on things and report if any anomalies ie deer moving in from somewhere.</p> <p>CM – not seeing the same amount of deer coming from west and not same pressure.</p> <p>AM- highlighted the Action Plan summary. Will tie in a summary of progress with actions with the Annual Report. HIA was an action and AM suggested we should coordinate.</p> <p>DF- Mar Lodge does every 5 years – monitor everything. Last one 2021. DF has an opportunity to do this in 2025 to get back into original cycle.</p> <p>AM- LS to produce a heat map for the latest data to identify if there any hotspots. Need to pull together up to date information and then produce a map. Foot counts and annual review of movements - reiterate that would be good to know if there are any directions that deer coming from. Would be good to be coordinated if possible.</p> <p>MN- asked about any local Section 7 agreements. LS not aware of any but that there was a focus on pockets of deer in Deeside.</p> <p>AM- biggest area that doesn't have a DMG is south of the DMG areas. If no coordination of populations in the south will keep replenishing the DMG area.</p> <p>RC- discussion now is that big densities of deer are in woodlands and are now exporting problems. Talk about a million deer – but only information we have is that there are 300,000 deer in uplands so question about.</p> <p>LS to do a Survey monkey at the end of March asking for updates for the Annual Report. The group agreed that Survey monkey was useful but that owners/managers could be more engaged in providing information.</p> <p>AM also suggested following up with a scheduled call for those who are not responding.</p> <p>LS agreed to circulate in March -everyone asked to participate.</p> <p>MN -asked if information could be shared about peatland damage as information seemed to change constantly.</p> <p>DF – impacts from weather over the last few weeks. Overall got off quite lightly but potential damage to current restoration project. Had asked about Peatland Code – where do properties sit? If damage occurs that out with property's control – what happens.</p> <p>AM suggested that a Peatland Subgroup be set up to discuss. AM suggested it would be useful to share experiences.</p> <p>RC suggested that Group could apply for a monitoring system could be put in place and put in proper analysis.</p> <p>DF – there are already many monitoring projects underway. Bits and pieces overall seeing successful peatland restoration but localised impacts e.g. seeing that deer will pick dams as paths. Seeing improvement and monitoring going on in a huge way an DF happy to share. Validation also inconsistent. Whole thing is quite new so not surprising.</p> <p>DVCs – will pick up in end of year questionnaire.</p> <p>RLUPS – will see what can identify as potential projects.</p>	<p>AP7: LS</p> <p>AP8: LS</p> <p>AP9: AM & LS</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Opportunity Mapping</p>	
<p>6.1</p>	<p>LS updated the group that through some of the work doing with SDNA – going into detail with data sets and progressing all the time. Another bit of work to do to identify where there might be potential for woodland expansion but clipping out areas for deep peat. Might flag up areas where can go back to CNPA to ground-truth potential Ares. Project will just flag up possible polygons where further discussion might be required. Identifying areas for example on marches where there might be opportunities for land use change or joint projects. Still a discussion landowners need to have regarding for example planting on moorland and trade-</p>	<p>AP10: LS</p>

	<p>offs with carbon and biodiversity. Every land management decision will potential have to make these trade-offs. Essentially this is risk mapping to help decision making.</p>	
7.	Venison and ADMG Update	
	<p>RC – ADMG briefing summarises current issues. RC encouraged group to look at the Biodiversity Consulation and make representation if they felt this was appropriate. Environment Bill is the next thing coming down the line and ADMG put in a response to the 99 recommendations that came from the Deer Working Group at the time but was not part of an official consolation at the time. Important that Groups will with ADMG to ensure that concerns reflected.</p> <p>LS indicated that there are some quite fundamental changes potentially being proposed to the deer legislation. Will be important to scrutinise the implications of these in detail as this will have a bearing on the context of how the new legislation is implemented and applied. Asked for clarity on all of this at the Deer Management Round Table in particular what some of the targets mean in practice - for example what is the definition of priority woodland for example. Is this existing protected woodland or new woodland coming under the proposed 30x30 project. No one seems to know the answer. Feels like we are going into consolation half blind which is a concern. We will ask for clarity where there is an opportunity.</p> <p>RC- deer are an easy target every time. Everything is going in the right direction anyway. But reality is that we have to deal with it- 10 deer per km2 is something we will have to deal with like it or not.</p> <p>AM- set cull levels at appropriate levels sounds potentially interventionist. The group agreed that we should put in a group response however being mindful that other organisations will be putting in their own response. Danger that response of this group could be watered down so much that may be meaningless. Depends on nature of response. Important that group has made a response.</p> <p>LS – as important to look at the details of what some of the changes might mean -for example one of the recommendations was to change wording in Section 1 of the Act to simply “promote” deer management as opposed to having to “further” it. Similarly in the same paragraph welfare had been dropped completely. So there may be things that the group ca agree on with regards to a response. LS and AM to draft something and circulate to the Group. RC suggested that the opening paragraph should focus on how well this group was functioning and performing.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the changes to the secondary legislation. ADMG had recognised that for some people deer were an opportunity but for some they were a threat and therefore perfectly legitimate that some may want to use the changes to the secondary legislation as tools. However, these changes were optional and there were many who would not be using them.</p> <p>MN highlighted there were areas where the deer industry could take a stand.</p> <p>RC updated the meeting on the Finding the Common Ground Forum – will be well tested when the Environment Bill comes forward but hopefully starting from a stronger place. Currently groups and organisations signing up to the Common Ground Accord which was a simple document but highlighted that more to be gained from working together. UDD LMG to discuss signing up to the Accord. Better if representations are made to Government jointly. RC highlighted the various events coming up – ADMG AGM on 13t March and an online Regional Meeting in December.</p> <p>RC also updated the group on a proposed venison subsidy. CNPA have also proposed a scheme within the park. Discussion about how this might help address the additional deer cull required of 50,000 deer a year.</p>	<p>AP11: AM/LS</p> <p>AP12: LMG</p>
8.	Financial Update	
	<p>LS provided an update to the Group on current balance which included a payment from Savills from the closure of the client account several years ago. LS indicated that subscriptions would be circulated in the coming week.</p>	
9.	NatureScot and CNPA Updates including update on RLUP	
	<p>Andy Ford joined the meeting and provided an update on the status on Rural Land Use Partnerships. The Chair had previously contacted the CNPA new convenor to ask how the</p>	

LMG could get involved in the evolution of the new Rural Land Use Partnerships and new land use plan. AF had sent around a briefing note providing a summary. AF thanked the group for the opportunity to come along. There were 5 pilot areas in Scotland- actively encouraged to take the approach best for their area. Scottish Government looked at pros and cons of different areas. Some have started from scratch – what structure needed? how would go about writing a plan? and developing an advisory body. Some built on structures they already had so Local Authorities for example have used existing committees but don't have spatial plan so have concentrated on that. For CNPA- framework would be the Park Plan – and the partnership looking at plan and how it would be delivered would primarily be the CNPA Board with advice, input and expertise from all the various forum that CNPA work with, i.e community and land management expert opinion side of things. Basic approach and framework and the stage it is at is that the pilots have ended and have all fed back evaluation to Scottish Government – within next few weeks will go to Ms McCallum for final decision.

AM noted that the paper had set out that the Park Plan was essentially the Regional Land Use Framework but nothing beyond that – nothing else on it's way – that is the output.

AF added that PP is the high level part – but CNPA have identified spatial rural priorities within the plan woodlands, woodland expansion peatlands etc but how they work on the ground is a step down from that is how they will use existing partnerships such as the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (EGMP) and working more closely with the Deer Management Groups such as through the 2030 Project, Cairngorms Connect – will work with those to say how will this look on the ground using maps of say peatland, River Dee Catchment etc – and how use maps of Natural Capital data and use to help shape land use decisions. There is a layer below that and have recommended to Government that they are in a good place to develop that next iteration and show to Government what it looks like. Particularly pitching it at the Bute House agreement so for example with Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill going through – how can landscape scale partnerships show what mapping of 40cm deep peat looks like on the ground and what a muirburn plan looks like on the ground will hopefully help shape the Bill.

AM asked if there would be an opportunity for this Group to be part of that process?

AF said that there were members of the EGMP in the LMG so that would be the immediately obvious opportunity - then there would be opportunities within the 2030 DMG Work but Dee Catchment would also be an opportunity and then the public land cluster forming around Prosen, would be another. Will be lots of these partnerships and projects that are taking a natural capital data driven approach which is essentially what the regional land use framework is, and if it comes to allocating resources, if it not a devolved budget then will go back into the Board for a core budget.

AM said that the LMG were here and available and hoped that as the LMG covered about quarter of the National Park and although not a great turn out at this meeting – there were a lot of members (17 in total) – so keep in mind and the LMG happy to feed in from the bottom up.

AF thanked the Group for the offer – there are some groups better placed than other and the more examples can be given to Government about what these partnerships can do, the more likely they are to come out the other end as something we want. So it is a really good opportunity and AF will kick it back to the group and say that if the LMG has any ideas, eg peat depth mapping etc with an outcome that want to achieve – then under the banner of this the CNPA can support. Only word of caution is that already have a number of landscape scale partnerships so how do we get them all aligned – that is a question for us all to resolve together.

	<p>AM thanked AF for attending and said that had been extremely useful. Happy to come along to meeting as and when and good to be involved. AM offered to keep AF on the meeting list for future meetings.</p> <p>There followed a discussion about the various projects being undertaken under the 2030 Project. AM suggested that the Group should investigate what funding opportunities might be available in the delivery phase. Each group had an opportunity to mould what they would like to see in a development phase. Delivery phase has been applied for and CNPA will know in December if they have been successful. The current DMP should help the Group align with this if the Group wanted. If there was something useful in the plan that we wanted to pitch for, we should apply. AM agreed to take this away and make further enquiry. Didn't think that the pot of funding had yet been allocated.</p> <p>LS had circulated a map showing new NatureScot areas and area representatives.</p>	AP13: AM
10.	Communications	
10.1	Community – need for a community engagement event. Proposing to have an evening ZOOM meeting for Community Councils in early December. Annual report will be presented as a short presentation.	AP14: AM& LS
10.2	Draft Annual Report 2023- this would be circulated as draft in due course.	AP15: LS
10.3	Draft Press Release – it was agreed that this should be redrafted, possibly with the help of ADMG PR Consultant. Headline is that what group is good at is that we have multiple objectives are being met. This has been going on a long time. Couch in language that the general public will understand. One of the first groups to be a Land Management Group.	AP16: AM
11.	AOCB	
	Here was no AOB.	

Summary of Action Points from Meeting on 9th November 2023

1.	LS to circulate contact list for LMG count and identify coordinator for other groups	LS
2.	Ben Carter to look at use of thermal drone technology for counting	BC
3.	LS to liaise with Education Providers and check with Mike Cottam if there might be match funding from CNPA	LS
4.	Group to make contact with Wildfire Group	LS/AM?
5.	Form a small subgroup to meet by January to discuss possible LMG event in 2024	AM,LS,DF,MN
6.	LS to liaise with regards to an ADMG event with UDD Group next year	LS
7.	LS to produce a heat map of HIA and see if a coordinated approach can be aligned with Mar Lodge.	AM
8.	LS to circulate survey monkey in March.	LS
9.	Peatland Subgroup to be formed to discuss shared experiences.	AM & LS
10.	LS to present opportunity mapping at next meeting.	LS
11.	LMG to prepare a response to the consultation.	AM/LS
12.	LMG to consider signing up to the Common Ground Accord.	DMG
13.	LMG to consider possible projects for 2023 Heritage Horizons project	AM
14.	Set up Community Council meeting	LS
15.	Circulate draft annual report	LS
16.	Redraft Press Release	AM

