

Draft 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	AP2: Count coordinators – CM asked 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.	AP1: LS
	Heli Count – Ben Carter will pick up on drone counting methodology. DF had investigated costings and for Mar Lodge considered 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.	AP2: BC

<p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9</p> <p>3.10</p> <p>3.11</p> <p>3.12</p>	<p>AP3: Events - LS had been liaising with RHET and will touch base regarding opportunities. Invercauld had been touch with Ballater Primary and Estate that Educate so hopefully something will evolve. LS to check with Mike Cottam whether there might be some match funding within CNPA.</p> <p>AP 4: AM had written to Sandy Bremner, the new convenor of the CNPA, with regards to the Rural Land Use Partnerships and had invited him to the meeting. Sandy 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 the summer and he was aware of the group and its wider remit.</p> <p>AP 5: Wildfire – Bring forward for Wildfire Management Strategy and defer to Wildfire Group</p> <p>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 there is a Nature Festival hub somewhere – if we were to do something jointly next time the hub is somewhere in Deeside – the LMG could do something jointly for that. Another option would be to hold an event outwith the Nature Festival. Fife Arms good at doing festivals – could there be a land management festival? BC to put it to them. AM, LS and BC to do away and investigate further.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>AP 6: Paper was produced for this meeting (Agenda Item 4)</p> <p>AP7: AM had contact CM at CNPA and nothing to report on Dorback.</p> <p>AP 8: New Deer Management Plan has now been published.</p> <p>AP 9: Community Zoom Meeting – will come to later in Agenda under Item 11.</p> <p>AP 10: Press release – will come to later in Agenda under Agenda Item 11.</p>	<p>AP 3: LS</p> <p>AP 4: LS</p> <p>AP 5: LS, BC, AM & MN</p> <p>AP 6: LS</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Culls -stags and proposed hinds</p>	
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Paper 8 includes culls but was incomplete. Last few years culls have been very stable and population has been stable. It is assumed that the hind cull will be in line with previous years unless Linzi is notified by any member otherwise.</p> <p>Mar Estate – target is 85 hinds and calves. Happy with current population. MN indicated a need to keep the population under review.</p> <p>AM pointed out the difference in the recruitment rates from the counts. If counts done in Spring will reflect prior culling.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Population Paper and Working Plan Actions</p>	
<p>5.1</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Counts of stags have hovered between 1700 to 2000 and cull has been consistent at about 400 – so about a fifth. Linzi suggested if the non sporting cull from Mar Lodge was taken out of the equation then the average age of the stags culled would be higher.</p>	

	<p>RC asked if information was consistent.</p> <p>AM- said that the counts are a mixture of foot counts and heli counts. Glenavon have found it difficult to foot count in the past and have only done a few heli counts.</p> <p>LS – having to use the best count information possible and also using HIA to inform the population.</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 data the hind to calf ratio is 40%.</p> <p>AM – urged people to keep an eye on things and report if any anomalies ie deer moving in from outwith the Group.</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. A summary of progress will be covered within the next 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 of negative impacts. 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- noted from a map of DMG’s in Scotland recently circulated by NatureScot that the biggest area that doesn’t have a DMG is south of the Grampian DMG areas. If no coordination of populations in the south these risk continually replenishing Grampian DMG areas including UDD LMG.</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.</p> <p>LS to do a Survey Monkey at the end of March asking for updates for the next 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 noted impacts on peatland restoration from bad 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 and 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>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 DMG – going into detail with data sets and considering land management options. LS is working on producing a map of options for members that had occurred to her whilst putting together the new UDD LMG deer management plans. These would be provided to members in due course for their</p>	<p>AP10: LS</p>

	consideration and with an emphasis that no member is being pressured to follow any particular option.	
7.	Venison and ADMG Update	
	<p>RC referred to the ADMG briefing note which was circulated and which summarises current issues.</p> <p>RC encourage the group to look at the Biodiversity Consultation 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 consultation.</p> <p>LS indicated that there are some quite fundamental changes potentially being proposed to the deer legislation. It 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. 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 the consultation 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>AMSuggestedsetting 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 common ground issues that the group can agree on with regards to a response. LS and AM to draft something and circulate to the Group.</p> <p>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	
	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.	
9.	NatureScot and CNPA Updates including update on RLUP	

Andy Ford joined the meeting by Zoom 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 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 are 5 pilot areas in Scotland of which the CNP is one. Some have started from scratch – what structure is needed? how would go about writing a plan? 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 Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan ('CNPPP')– and the entity looking at the 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. 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 this will go to Ms McCallum for a final decision.

AM noted that the paper had set out that the CNPPP was essentially the Regional Land Use Framework but there is nothing beyond that– that is the output.

AF added that CNPPP is the high level part – but CNPA have identified spatial rural priorities within the plan -woodland expansion, peatlands etc but how they work on the ground is a step down from that and they will use existing partnerships such as the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (ECMP) and work more closely with the Deer Management Groups such as through the 2030 Project, Cairngorms Connect and how maps of Natural Capital data can be used 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 o 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 ECMP in the LMG so that would be the immediately obvious opportunity - then there would be opportunities within the 2030 DMG Work and Dee Catchment would also be an opportunity and then the public land cluster forming around Prosen would be another. There 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.

AM said that the LMG is here and available and hoped that as the LMG covered about a quarter of the National Park with 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 others 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.

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 invitation list for future meetings.

	<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- he did not 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 were no further items under 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
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.	LS
8.	LS to circulate survey monkey in March for next Annual Report information.	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 Biodiversity Strategy consultation.	AM/LS
12.	LMG to consider signing up to the Common Ground Accord.	ALL
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