

Draft Minutes of Upper Deeside and Donside Land Management Group

Invercauld Estate Office on Friday 5th April at 2.15pm.

Present (in person)	Present (by Zoom)	Apologies
Angus McNicol (Chair & Invercauld) Dr Linzi Seivwright (Secretary) David Frew (Mar Lodge) Andrew Salvesen (DWT) Arthur Fernie (Mar Estate) Chris Murphy (Mar Lodge) Adrian Walker (Allargue) Andrew Young (Edinglassie) Will Reid (Invercauld Baddoch) Richard Thomas (IC Home Beat) Callum Pearson (Edinglassie) Sean Dillon (Edinglassie)	Capt Mark Nicolson (Mar Estate) Ben Carter (IC Home Beat) Iain Hope (NatureScot) Richard Cooke (ADMG)	Gavin Hannam (Invercauld/ Gairnshiel) Craig Barnett (DWT) Iain Wilkinson (DWT) Hal Salvesen (Tullich) Stuart Jenkins (RSPB) Robin Leslie-Melville (Candacraig) Edward Humphries (Dinnet LG) Rory Kennedy (GWCT) Ross McLeod (GWCT) Richard Gledson (Delnadamph) Mike Cottam (CNPA)

Item	Action
1. Welcome and Apologies	
1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. All present and online introduced themselves.	
2. Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 9th November 2023 – Paper 3	
2.1 Minutes were approved. Proposed by Andrew Salvesen Seconded by Angus McNicol.	
3. Matters Arising from Meeting held on 9th November 2023	
<p>Actions</p> <p>Counts: Count co-ordinator Chris Murphy reported the count wasn't in ideal conditions, and no surprises. Should be accurate account. BC said no difference in cost using a drone compared with helicopter. IH was asked about drone technology- he explained a body of work is being done, but there is a limit to the distance the drones can be away from pilots, set by the Civil Aviation Authority. AM said maybe more use on low ground areas. BC agreed.</p> <p>Events: AM said DF had an idea about a venison event at Ghillies Larder (Farm shop), suggest a demonstration with Tim Maddams. AM mentioned Braemar Nature Festival week. Public meeting still to be considered. Annual report, make a positive story as we can.</p> <p>Wild Fire consultation would be discussed later.</p> <p>Mapping: Habitat Heat Map from LS still in production and opportunity mapping LS has been working on it, out by the summer hopefully, AM asked that we try and get out by the summer, impact on grazing etc.</p> <p>Peatland Sub group AM to set up shortly, let LS know if interested.</p> <p>Common Ground Forum LS said if everyone in agreement she will sign the group up.</p> <p>It was agreed that it would be useful for National Park Authority to be at the meeting.</p>	<p>LS to follow up.</p> <p>LS to complete Habitat Heat Map & Opportunity Mapping</p> <p>LS</p> <p>AM/LS contact CNPA</p>

4.	Culls, Counts and Population Model	
4	<p>LS was still waiting on some culls coming back. LS asked to circulate Microsoft forms as it is easier to collate information.</p> <p>Count information: 4051 total (last year 4432). CM – Mar Lodge seemed to be a couple of hundred light, WR light on stags. AM asked LS to refresh population forecast, 3-year projection. Is anyone doing calving percentages? LS asked members for information on recruitment, calving in the summer (as other places are showing a reduction in pregnant hinds this winter). Widespread not looking good, drought, wet weather, vegetation etc.</p> <p>IH said over past 2 years Glenfiddich, Cabrach, Glenlivet have undertaken substantial culls so NatureScot would be looking to get count done at short notice due to money becoming available in tail end of financial year. AY said not seeing big numbers. AM asked if IH would share the data, and he agreed it would be far better if there were better communication links. No Deer Management Group as such. Stakeholders want to meet more frequently than in the past. Would be interesting to know where deer are being encountered where they haven't been before. Would be good to have better communication links. AM asked if IH could pass his details onto someone from those three Estates. Discussion about movement during the night.</p> <p>LS indicated that she was still to get count information from a couple of Estates.</p> <p>RC would it be a good idea if a representative from the Cabrach area were asked to sit in on our meetings, AM asked if group happy to invite, AM to make enquiries with Johny Willet?</p> <p>MN said it would be helpful to have count information from all our neighbouring groups, so we know where we are. AM agreed. DF asked if that information was available on ADMG website. LS said annual reports go on and minutes, population information at DMG levels, it relies on other groups updating the information and how they report it. Once counts are uploaded, we can look at any information. LS to put something together.</p> <p>AM talked about other areas, West & South Grampians down in numbers so same trend. LS said overall density is about 9.7 in the SDNA Group.</p> <p>The proposed venison subsidy scheme for CNPA was discussed. LS said details were still being finalised but it would require achieving 110 -150% of your 3 year average hind cull, in order to claim an amount per carcass. Details would be circulated in due course.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>IH</p> <p>LS</p> <p>AM</p> <p>LS to get info from other groups</p> <p>LS to circulate</p>
5.	Habitat Impact Assessment	
5.1	<p>AM- Season coming upon us, DF due to do it in 2025, late due to covid. AM said they do a 3 year cycle, some do 3 some 5. AM said heat map is important. There were no requests for training. LS to check where everyone is in the schedule of monitoring.</p>	LS to check HIA schedule
6.	Venison Update & ADMG Update	
6.1	<p>RC said Scottish Venison Association (SVA) and Environment Link had put a joint proposal to the Minister to ask for a venison subsidy scheme on the basis that if payment was made in venison sector everyone would benefit and money trickle down right through out sector. Deer managers that operate at a loss shooting hinds would get something back.</p> <p>CNPA said they would do a pilot scheme, but there were concerns as he doesn't think this was the right place, and it's a disincentive to those not in the CNPA. SVA had recommended the scheme be extended beyond the red deer on the open hill to lowland situation which is far more in need of it. Scottish Government also looking at a Sika scheme, undecided on area. Possible 3 pilot schemes. MN said Scottish Government had been given good advice and have chosen not to take it, and thanked RC for explanation.</p> <p>Scottish Venison been treading water for a long time, quality assurance scheme is beginning to add value but is taking a long time, if we want to get a better price for venison we need to do a lot more promotional work. A simpler approach was being taken to raise funds away</p>	

	<p>from the current levy scheme and ADMG had agreed to make a contribution of £40,000 which it is able to fund in the first year, with the possibility of raising subscriptions in the future. ADMG subs are currently at the same rate they have been for 8 years. In discussion with principal game dealers as to what their contribution will be and talking to food team at Scottish Government, providing funds for specific projects.</p> <p>ADMG and Scottish Land & Estates had met with Lorna Slater last week, strongly made points against deer management restoration orders and Section 10 proposals. Deer sector has worked fine under the voluntary system without Nature Scot having to enforce.</p> <p>ADMG had submitted a detailed consultation response to the Managing Deer for Climate and Nature Consultation prepared by LS. Key area of concern was the move to use enhancement or restoration as a trigger for regulatory action. MN thanked RC and ADMG for summary.</p> <p>LS highlighted a new consultation out this week- 30 by 30 with a government target 30% of land protected by 2030.</p> <p>IH -Nature Scot just published their corporate and business plan, includes a focus on partnership planning, new deer legislation will be central to all of this.</p>	
7.	Subscriptions 2024/25 Paper 4	
	<p>LS talked to the paper. The subscriptions proposed were agreed. It was agreed to use the surplus in the account to pay for this year and next ADMG subs. LS left the room, group discussed secretariat costs. It was unanimously agreed to continue with Caorann’s secretariat services. LS was advised of this by AM on her rejoining the meeting. Budget approved, AM ran through numbers. LS will be sending Invoices for Secretariat direct to members as a business cost.</p>	
8.	NatureScot and CNPA Updates	
	<p>There was nothing to add from NS that hadn’t already been covered. There was no representative present from CNPA.</p>	
9.	Communications	
9.1	Draft Annual Report 2024 – Paper 5	
9.2	Press Release – Paper 6	
9.3	Consultation Responses	
	<p>AM asked group members to send a small summary to LS about what has been done in last year for the Annual Report, LS to recirculate survey. RC said good you have changed to LMG from DMG as it touches on everything. LS said when doing DMG plan had been really useful to go through all the previous Annual Reports to summarise the work of the LMG.</p> <p>AM said all good stories to go out. AM had redrafted a press release following comments from the last meeting with the theme of “Collaboration Works”. MN suggested removal of reference to sporting stalking and promote deer as an asset. AM said he will fine tune when count numbers have been finalised.</p> <p>The Group discussed historic deer numbers and although RC didn’t have the exact figures he felt the order of reduction has been more than half. MN thought big culls were in the late 70’s early 80’s.</p> <p>AM to add photograph to report. Hand over to Dick Playfair (ADMG) for circulation. To be circulated now with another next summer, group agreed. Mention paths and access in next report.</p> <p>LS tried to draft a response from the LMG on the Scottish Government’s ‘Managing Deer for Climate and Nature’ consultation concentrating on areas of consensus. LS said minister only stayed an hour at the recent DMRT meeting but everyone around the table agreed the need for proper support and subsidies for deer management. It’s very difficult to see where they are going to get the money from, but they need to find it.</p>	<p>LS recirculate Survey</p> <p>AM to make changes to press release</p>

	<p>AM- Should we as a Group be responding to consultations? How do we balance different views? We have to be very careful how we present it. If putting response in from group we have to accept compromise, but if all happy then it was agreed we should respond. DF It has to be a consensus or a clear opt in or out process.</p> <p>Wildfire Consultation: AM suggests listing pros and cons- it should be more about us trying to help ensure the decision-making body has a full understanding of the implications of proposals, good and bad. Discussion about how many fires each estate is having, no one appears to be sharing that information.</p> <p>AM says group response to bylaw should not be just “yes” or “no”, bylaw could be built upon. DF said he felt they were at their highest risk just now because stage of regeneration. Discussion about byelaws. AM to circulate draft consultation response to everyone.</p>	<p>AM to circulate Wildfire Consultation draft.</p>
10.	AOCB	
10.1	<p>Bike tour implications- 2000 bikes. Would be useful to have consultation with landowners if it is to become an annual event.</p> <p>Next meeting date – subsequent Doodle Poll confirmed 14th November at 2pm</p>	

Summary of Action Points from Meeting on 5th April 2024

1	LS to organise to follow up community engagement	Section 3
2	LS to complete Habitat Heat Map	Section 3
3	LS to sign Group up to Common Ground Forum	Section 3
4	AM Contact National Park	Section 3
5	LS to get cull info from some properties	Section 4
6	IH to pass Chairs contact information	Section 4
7	LS to get count info from some properties and other groups	Section 4
8	AM to get in touch with Johnny Willet	Section 4
9	LS to circulate venison subsidies	Section 4
10	LS to circulate HIA schedule	Section 5
11	LS to circulate survey	Section 9.1
12	AM to make changes to press release	Section 9.2
13	AM to circulate Wildfire Consultation Response.	Section 9.3