

## Minutes of Upper Deeside and Donside Land Management Group

Invercauld Meeting Room and by zoom on 16<sup>th</sup> December at 2pm.

<p><b>Present (in person)</b>                  Angus McNicol (Chair &amp; Invercauld)                  David Frew (Mar Lodge)                  Chris Murphy (Mar Lodge)                  Ross (Mar Lodge)                  Richard Cooke (ADMG)                  Mike Cottam (CNPA)</p>	<p><b>Present (by Zoom)</b>                  Capt Mark Nicolson (Mar Estate)                  Iain Hope (NatureScot)                  Dr Linzi Seivwright (Secretary)                  Andrew Young (Glenavon)                  Andrew Salvesen (DWT)</p>	<p><b>Apologies</b>                  Kevin Peters (FLS)                  Arthur Fernie (Mar Estate)                  Edward Humphrey (Dinnet Estate)                  Will Reid (Invercauld Baddoch)                  Ben Carter (Invercauld Home Beat)                  Hal Salvesen (Tulich)                  Andrew Ford (CNPA)                  Colin Maclean (CNPA)                  Gavin Hannam (Micras)</p>
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Item		Action
1.	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	
	Mr McNicol (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	<b>Minutes of the previous Meeting</b>	
	The minutes of the last meeting, on 14 <sup>th</sup> November 2024, were proposed for approval by AS and seconded by DF . The minutes were therefore adopted without alteration.	
3.	<b>Matters Arising from Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024</b>	
	<p>Mr McNicol ran through the action points in the meeting and the following were noted:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Glenlivet Contact- ASM spoke to Strutt and Parker – is doing a DMP for that corner. IH Chair for an informal group in that corner including wider Cabrach area. Dinnet/Allargue end – no change and no contact with Glenlivet. Meeting with Digby (keeper) and Joel (manager)and Allargue – plans a foot to reduce.</li> <li>Venison Subsidy Scheme- ASM wrote to CM from CNPA saying not eligible. MC updated that 3 years ago when had fuding for development phase – decided to focus on 3 DMGs to south in areas of higher densities. SDNA have not done anything, Best uptake has been West Gramps. Offered again this year to 3 – on agreed target. West Gramps have a DMP with a hind cull plan which is what is being used. If they hit that – come in for new subsidy - £100 per carcass. Limit last year but not this year. Would apply to this Group – if someone interested – need to expresss an interest and agree a target with CNPA. Culls have been fairly steady – so what sort of uplift would be expected. West Gramps – last year increase of 20%. That sort of level. If total for DMG is met then</li> </ol>	ASM

	<p>all will qualify. Works back to being paid 85% of total. LS provided an update on deliberations within the Natural Environment Bill.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Alastair Storey – RC had followed up discharged.</li> <li>4. &amp; 5 LS was still working through the collection of data – would be useful for the working plan and for the Annual Report. Item 4</li> <li>5. Balmoral Shoot and Non-Lead Ammunition– trial didn't happen. Simpsons moving to non-lead next season. Is there a need for a keepers day? Things have moved on quite a bit.</li> <li>6. HIA – Agenda item.</li> <li>7. Environment Link and ADMG Letter.</li> <li>8. Subscriptions – LS to circulate in the New Year.</li> <li>9. Publish Annual Report – discharged.</li> <li>10. Press release – Paths Agenda Item</li> <li>11. WES and Richard Cooke</li> <li>12. Spring Counts – Discussion under Agenda Item 4.</li> </ol>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Working Plan including Culls, Counts and Deer Movements</b>	
	<p>First suitable Monday after the end of the hinds with the next Monday as a back-up. West Gramps doing heli count in Spring. Would be advantageous to slot in with that. Intention to do it in white ground conditions- function of snow and heli availability. Helis are funded by CNPA but with NatureScot team to support. Lot of input at W Gramps as to how count is done. Would like to think there would be discussion about what area might be included. MC – money has been allocated so might need to consider if more resource required. No discussion yet about extending it. Movements between Fealar and Forest Lodge – Mar Lodge doing one anyway. Will be paying regardless – would contribute budget. Makes sense to coordinate at the same time. Invercauld planning Home Beat this year. Glenavon – Richard doing a combined heli count with Invercauld. If was shared three ways – Mar Lodge, Home Beat and Glenavon. Would Mar want to do by heli too? ASM to speak to MN. Would be helpful for key people to work through sooner rather than later – NatureScot planning team will need input from funders and those contributing. Would CNPA be willing to help fund the gaps – Baddoch and Mar? ASM to send an email to MC. There will be a count regardless of snow cover. Corndavon eastwards would do a foot count at the same time. NatureScot to liaise with MC about count coordination. IH happy to help in any way he can.</p> <p>Planning meeting required with NatureScot, CNPA and folks on the ground needed asap. MC to speak to Chair of West Gramps. ASM to contact Jimmy Irvine at NatureScot. ASM to contact MC regarding funding.</p> <p>LS talked through the use of the working plan to collate information on peatlands, woodland (new and natural regeneration). Spring will be a good time to do this and coincide with the Annual Report. Need to be able to demonstrate to others about how this Group is being able to deliver multiple objectives with the sort of deer numbers we have. Could provide reassurance to others.</p> <p>Core Paths – would just use a total amount and not by individual estate.</p> <p>CPD – use of copper ammunition. Robo Digger and Mulcher – as alternative to muirburn. Nothing specific that people want to see.</p>	<p>LS</p> <p>MC, IH &amp; ASM all to coordinate</p>

	<p>Natural regeneration of woodland and moorland important.</p> <p>Observation – would be good to do a better coordinated count. Mar Lodge – count figures show an uptick in counts and holes in the data. Are we comfortable that we are on top of deer numbers?</p> <p>Culls for season ahead – question posed if anyone planning anything different. Suggested that possibility that deer numbers could be increasing when look at the 2025 count – important to keep on top of culls.</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Habitat Impact Assessments</b>	
	<p>Mar Lodge have done theirs this year. Results – no big surprises – still mostly in the low/moderate. Possibly some slight changes – might be attributable to fencing in the west which has changed movement. Wind clipped heath on the south – sheep coming over from Fealar.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Venison and ADMG Update</b>	
	<p>LS provided an update on the Environment Bill. Introduction of extension of occupier rights</p> <p>RC- Executive Committee met 10 days ago – SQWV is up and running. John Fortieth is expanding the membership. Marketing and new website with recipes. Also looking at education – lots of initiatives being done – looking at a way to take it into classrooms.</p> <p>Already have a Scottish Venison Strategy which delivering. 3 new demonstration larders – Morayshire, West Coast and Borders.</p> <p>Game Dealers Licence will be abolished – but not until there is something better to replace it with.</p> <p>Venison price hasn't moved which is a concern. Need an across the board scheme which is supported per kg – compensates those shooting at a cost. If have subsidy for beef etc then why not for venison. Currently £1.60 a kilo.</p> <p>Could potentially be less venison in the future.</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>NatureScot &amp; CNPA Updates</b>	
	<p>IH- all has been covered.</p> <p>MC – National Lottery Funding - identified agricultural damage. Larders were installed from January this year – Pitlochry and Glenkillry. 2.5 tonnes of venison to schools, food banks etc. MC pushed forward requirement on two more – one at Glen Clova with commitment for venison for community benefit. Collab with Glenkillry. Lot of culling at Atholl so will install a new unit at Atholl – their contribution would support Country Food Trust to be distributed across the Park.</p> <p>There is a third one being considered but would like to see more commitment from Estates within the Park. CNPA is keen to do this – but on the third project need more assurance that will be supported from Estates in the park. SDNA have questioned whether right way to go. SDNA – did they want to extend their own larders? Should be more done on the market and a business plan? MC working through this.</p> <p>Next year the CNPA will start producing a Partnership Plan for 2027 – might be more teeth in light of the Natural Environment Bill.</p>	

<b>8.</b>	<b>Communications</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Draft Annual Report 2026</b> LS to pick up in early spring.	
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Press Release</b> Will review this once we have the data from annual report.	
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Consultation Responses</b> Nothing in the pipeline. Fire Bye law on 1 <sup>st</sup> April.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>AOCB</b>	
<b>9.1</b>	Everyone except Glenavon are members of the Wildfire Group. CNPA has an integrated fire management plan – good document. Only 5 estates represented at meeting – point of observation.	