

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EASTER ROSS DEER  
MANAGEMENT GROUP, HELD ON FRIDAY 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019 AT 2.00 PM  
AT MIDFEARN LODGE, ARDGAY.**

**Present:**

Mr Charlie Brooke	(Chairman)	Midfearn Estate
Mr Callum Beattie		Gledfield Estate
Mr Robert Franklin		Gruinards Estate
Mr Jim Gilmour		Gruinards Estate
Mr Dell Ross		Midfearn Estate

**In attendance:**

Mr David Campbell (Land Consulting Services)  
Mrs Tamara Lawton (Scottish Natural Heritage)  
Mr Gordon Robertson (Secretary and Treasurer)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Alastair Harington Vice Chair (Strathrusdale and Glencalvie Estates), Richard Harington (Strathrusdale Estate), Alex Hunter (Dounie Estate), Sinclair Coghill (Scottish Natural Heritage), Derick Macaskill (Forestry and Land Scotland), Neil Cameron (Gledfield), Robert, Helen and Christopher Franklin (Gruinards Estate), Paddy Meiklejohn (Blervie, Forres), Dr Cathy Mayne (Mountain Environment Services), and Michael Brown (Midfearn Estate).

**2. Chairman's introduction**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

**3. Minutes of Meeting held on 19.04.2019**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 19th April 2019, previously circulated, were approved.

#### **4. Action points from the previous Minutes.**

1. **Potential Woodland creation.** GR had previously circulated, by Email, links to Forestry and Land Scotland's Website which gave information on existing woodlands, grants available, and nature sensitive sites.

TL pointed out that a CO-OPERATION GRANT was currently available which would fund research into the Woodland creation potential for the whole Group. There would be no obligation for any Estate to have to proceed, so all agreed that it would be a worthwhile exercise to complete. GR will contact Helen Webb in Dingwall to initiate. **Action GR**

2. **Peatland Action Fund.** TL offered to forward contact details of the appropriate SNH Peatland Officer who would be in a position to guide the Group on the way forward. **Action TL**

DC reported on the peatland restoration that had taken place on the Alladale Estate. DC would contact Alladale Estate staff who he believed would be happy to demonstrate what had been achieved and arrange an Estate visit.

**Action DC**

All other actions had been dealt with.

#### **5. Deer Management Plan.**

DC circulated a list of the items that required further improvement to help focus efforts. DC and TL post stressed the considerable positive progress that had been achieved.

a. Now that the Habitat Report had been completed by Dr Cathy Mayne, and the Quadrats established, the Report should be sent to Dick Playfair at ADMG for uploading onto the ERDMG Website. **Action GR**

b. The whole Group will work together to ensure that procedures are followed to properly record habitat monitoring.

c. DC will circulate a **Deer Qualification Sheet** to facilitate the Group's recording of staff and owner qualifications. DMQ 1, DMQ 2, Trained Hunter Status and more. **Action DC**

d. DC felt the practical side of Habitat Monitoring was well understood and that the Group were 'up to speed'. Dr Cathy Mayne would be pleased to provide extra guidance if asked to do so.

- e. Carcass handling. To be discussed at the next meeting. All accepted that ERDMG members are in a special position in having Ardgay Game right on our doorstep. Larder sharing not necessary or appropriate.
- f. Review of Woodland Habitats and Woodland creation. In train.
- g. Moorland Management for Deer Grants. Review at October Meeting. The Habitat Report will greatly assist any future Grant Applications.
- h. Training records to be kept on a Matrix.
- i. All currently digesting the Habitat report which will assist the Group in fine tuning its Cull targets
- j. Economies of Scale. Group already working well together.
- k. Demonstration of Group's investment in Deer Management. DC will circulate a Survey Sheet to members. **Action DC**
- l. Public Health and Awareness. Meet with access officer. **Action GR DC**
- m. Further consideration will be given to education opportunities Hill to Grill. Schools. Education Officer. Community Councils.
- n. Deer Welfare Review. Expanded Larder Sheets to be circulated. **Action DC**

## **6. Recruitment and Mortality.**

DC had circulated via email showing the revised Population Model.

Recruitment has been at 24.9%. With 575 deer recruited out of a population of 1,500, this is a reasonable proportion. The exercise will be carried out annually in late April and early May and gives a better statistical overview than a foot count.

This will enable the Group to set its Cull Targets. The aim will be to also carry out a helicopter count every 5 years when any necessary recalibration can take place.

The Mortality information had also been incorporated by DC into his tables.

Whilst the Group's target population is for 2021 Deer (10 per square km), our current numbers indicate a population of 2079 (13.2 deer per square km)

RF stressed that the Habitat Survey clearly shows that, as a Group, we are not overgrazing. The target last year was to shoot 459 deer and the Group achieved 258, mainly due to the bad winter.

## **Proposal for the year ahead.**

**85 Stags. 349 Hinds. 86 Calves**

The individual Estate targets are shown in DC's tables and each estate should contact DC if they feel further adjustment is required.

DC stressed that the Group should focus on the Hind Cull as a priority as we have a ratio of 1 stag to 2 hinds overall.

JG reported that care will be required. Last year produced few mature stags and this year's stags are again likely to be young. As we still are not sure of the exact numbers we should continue to exercise caution.

DC will produce a **Weekly Report Sheet Template** so that every Estate can complete a return of their Hind and Calf culls on a weekly basis. (not necessary for Stags). Reports submitted every Friday will be collated by GR and a whole Group figure will be circulated the following Monday to all. This will also include a Running Total linked to the ERDMG target culls. **Action GR**

## **7. Habitat Assessment.**

This wide ranging subject had been covered in the excellent report received from Dr Cathy Mayne. The report highlighted that the Gledfield Woodlands provided extremely important shelter areas that benefited the whole of the ERDMG.

CB stressed that no changes were planned, that over a mile of deer fencing had been taken down, and that no changes were planned to the current regime. The owners of the Gledfield Estate recognised how important this forestry area was for the deer and were pleased to manage this woodland with deer in mind.

## **8. Scottish Natural Heritage. Tamara Lawton.**

TL confirmed that now that the Formal Assessment by SNH had been completed, a Report on all the DMG's will be sent by SNH to the Minister, Roseanna

Cunningham, in September 2019. TL congratulated the ERDMG on the progress that the Group had made.

TL also confirmed that a wider review of Deer Management in Scotland, including Low Ground Management was under way.

## **9. Finance**

GR confirmed that all accounts, other than the awaited invoice from the Association of Deer Management Groups, have been settled.

Currently the ERDMG has **£1,670** in its RBS Bank Account.

It is expected that the subscription to the ADMG will amount to **£1,152** in total, leaving a **credit balance of £518** in the ERDMG account.

## **10.AOCB**

None

## **11.Date of next Meeting.**

The next Meeting will take place at 2pm on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October at Mid Fearn Lodge'

The Meeting closed at 3.30 pm.

## **ACTIONS**

1. Contact Helen Webb in Forestry and Land Scotland to initiate Application for a Co-Operation Grant in order to evaluate Woodland Creation Potential within ERDMG area. **Action GR**
2. Forward name of local SNH Peatland Officer to GR **Action TL**
3. Contact Alladale Estate to arrange potential visit for Group members to see Peatland Restoration Project **Action DC**
4. Send copy of Dr Cathy Mayne's Habitat Report to ADMG for uploading onto the ERDMG Website. **Action GR**
5. Circulate Deer Qualification Sheet. **Action DC**
6. Moorland Management for Deer Grants. Consider. **Action All**
7. Circulate Survey on Costs of Investment in Deer Management. **Action DC**
8. Meet Highland Council Access Officer. **Action GR DC**
9. Circulate Expanded Larder Sheets to all. **Action DC**
10. Weekly Hind and Calf Report Sheet Template. **Action DC**