

WKDMG Meeting Minute 17 June 2019

Venue: Camusrory

Present: Elisabeth (Barisdale), Luise (Bhraomisaig), Richard and Paddy Martin (Sandaig) – welcome these new faces. Jim Brown, Iain Biggart, Rupert Soames, Andrew McMaster, Ally Macaskill, Iain Wilson, Rob Cooper, Grant Holdroyd, Fred Rous, Tom Chetwynd, Linzi Seivwright, Cathy Mayne.

1. Apologies

Amy Dow (KF Ranger) Nicky and John Abraham, John Gordon, Charlie Mills, Rick Rhode, Jamie Lindsay, Eric Delwart.

2. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes circulated for comment prior to approval; minor points picked up –

- Camoch Bridge update from RC. Road upgraded, 40m span bridge being delivered next week, assembled shortly thereafter. Huge reduction in walkers as a result of no bridge, but it should be up by mid-August.
- JMT working on existing sea end of existing fences – getting prices. Intention was to put in temporary electric fencing. JMT will keep informed of situation as it evolves; others keen to know how this goes.
- Shelterbelt at Kilchoan – south side has been felled but not yet restocked.
- Signs of boar – none since October last year. Those shot in 2018 look to have been the culprits for damage seen (maybe one litter, all the same age, all males?).
- Goat population shows very low or no recruitment – 3 kids in 2019, none in 2018 – thought to be being predated by WTE. AMcM to ask how the Rhum goats are faring. **AMcM**
- Update to cull data noted in Minute:

Cull data 2018-19

Property	Stags	Hinds	Calves	OOS	Total
Barisdale	16	11	1		28
Camusrory	14	17	5		36
Kilchoan	34	125	54		213
Knoydart Foundation	61	69	35	10 (S)	175
Inverguserein, Sgamadail	6	9	4		19
Li and Coire Dhorcail	15	12	3		30
Lochourhead	0	0	0		0
Total	146	243	102	10	501

3. Reports from the Chair and the Treasurer; report from SNH (new rep, Andrew MacMaster)

Assessment outcome (CM and AMcM); only 4 out of 101 criteria amber, 97 green. Progress really good. Clear that the framework is good. Stick to Action Plan, population model and HIA, then all will be good in the future.

Membership (RS) a few smaller properties have not paid, and one larger property.

SNH (AMcM) – real progress in the group, good to see Chair and Vice-Chair role. Consistency of SNH rep not assured!

4. Mechanisms to manage deer

Approve new draft DMP – available on the Visit Knoydart webpage for consultation. Count information (circulated). Consider the population model and aspirational densities to set cull targets for 2019/20. Adjust if required – discussion. Count went well, weather was good. JMT counted 5-6 days later, coordinated with Fred and Jim. Danny did Camusrory. Map of count data and densities. Camusrory reporting very low density due to significant (30+%) of hinds moved to Kilchoan. This is seen as a positive move allowing the habitats to recover. Kilchoan has been shooting quite hard and has shown a decrease in population so hinds from Camusrory may have moved elsewhere (Dessary?). Camusrory verified its count 2 weeks later to be certain the low hind numbers were correct.

LS – population model could do with being updated with a W and E DMGs count. GH – how can we ensure that the helicopter count is helpful, rather than causing upset as in 2014? RC – can the helicopter count be done at the same time as the foot count? GH – interrogate the data to explain the anomalies?

Ally MacA – 3-year DCS study to look at error terms and helicopter and foot counts are both about 10%.

RS and EBvB – do we actually need a helicopter count? LS – would allow both groups to get a whole population and start back modelling to verify our population models with great accuracy.

Outcome – SNH does have whole Knoydart down for a count for 2019/20. **AMcM to request this for spring** so it can be directly compared with the foot count. Will co-operate on that basis. Contribution likely to be requested; will not happen without clarification.

Cull targets – see pop model. Have another look at model re hinds and bring to AGM for hind numbers **CM and LS to action**.

5. Delivery of designated features into favourable condition

Report from Barisdale on current position re the SSSI and woodland exclosures; habitat monitoring, any ongoing action or support needed. Woodland HIA to be repeated by Fred in July. Fences checked, fixing them and shooting if required (FR). Update again in November.

6. Manage deer to retain and improve existing native woodland cover

Are there potential actions to protect currently open woodlands with high impacts? Map of NWSS impact classes available (appendix 4.16 of 2019 DMP).

7. Contribution to woodland expansion target

Confirmation of extent of woodland exclosures from Barisdale, Lochourhead, Camusrory.
 GH - Proposals for new woodland – 5 schemes in the pipeline of 40-50 ha each over next 4 years covering Inverguserein, KF and Kilchoan. First scheme due winter 2019/20. 240 ha of plantation at Follach providing excellent shelter for deer above Inverguserein; plan to not fell in next 10 years or so to provide essential shelter. Not insignificant woodland regen on Kilchoan, in spite of high deer density. Dynamic is clearly more complicated than we think. We tend to focus on browsing as major factor in regen but fail to account for seed source and ground disturbance (only sig disturbance is actually deer) – but cattle also present on Kilchoan. IW – human traffic will probably also be helping with areas where woodland regen is happening outside fences.
 Luise – Bhraomisaig fence needs repairing so looking at that from Grant. Keen to plant more.
 RS – Camusrory starting soon to look at some new plans, including removal/management of bracken and to re-examine the issues of woodland. Some areas which may be appropriate for new woodland and/or regen. Update in November. Much or most of the good ground is now covered by dense bracken. RC - 5 acres with backpack blower and mister done in 1 day now providing significant improvement in grassland and herb species. Needs to be done in dry weather and little wind. Using Round-Up. Also flailing behind the quad with good results; mulches the bracken back down into the grass. EBvB asking what the issues might be around the use of Round-Up from a conservation point of view? **AMcM to ask for guidance**.
 GH – the other way to do it is to plant trees.

8. Monitor and manage deer impacts

HIA reports discussion (reports appended); what actions are required in 2019 in terms of HIA work and should the cull be changed to reflect HIA results?
 Jim – done the same as always. 5 day work.
 Iain B – happy but keen to look at putting something in around the 3 straight burns. JB has just done 2019 so maybe for 2020+.
 Barisdale – FR – co-ordinates provided from SNH/CM. Aiming to get to grips with that in due course.
 Ally MacK – JMT happy with their plots. SNH have provided assurance. Long-term plots so not keen to change. Ally can see the comparison between inside and outside the fences and can make that assessment from afar.
 Camusrory – LS – plots in for 5 years now. Rotational basis for revisit. 10 BB and 35 DSH plots. Higher impacts and quite low deer density but due to low heather cover, impacts are high. Culling pressure on the areas of high impacts over 3 years are now seeing habitat response which is helpful. Habitat assessments are still being made all the time. Looking to put in some control plots with exclusion (Harris fencing) or electric fencing eg, should allow us to see what the potential is like. Carnoch was also part of the cattle droving – cattle were shod here for onwards movement to Falkirk. Sheep came on in 1820-1830. 12-17,000 in Knoydart – up to 10,000 on Camusrory. Sheep were put on the ground for wool for the textile mills, then meat during the War.
 HIA browsing targets are: 10% or less high and 30% or less medium over 3 years. Current results that exceed those targets for one year are:

Property	Low	Medium	High	Total sample
Camusrory	52%	25%	23%	44
Kilchoan	50%	45%	5%	40
Li & Coire Dhorcaill	45%	53%	3%	38

Camusrory has also started to address the above by reducing deer density. Think that 2019 figure for high impacts is already down to 17%.

9. Ability to store carbon through ecosystem health

Consider peatland feasibility for Camusrory as the only remaining area of Importance 1 peatland not yet covered by a feasibility study. LS - Camusrory has only 2% BB, low impacts mostly, some peripheral areas of higher impacts but doesn't warrant full feasibility study – one drain for blocking.

10. Reduce and mitigate invasive non-native species

Any reports of sika or hybrid animals? Mostly in KDMG. Occasional on Inverguserein. Feral pig sightings? No.

11. Protect designated historic/cultural features

12. Deliver higher standards of competence in deer management

Training needs – potential to offer DSC2 to 2 members? RC doing his now. Fit and Competent register for 2 members. DSC Approved Witness within group?

13. Contribute to public health and well-being

Nothing to report.

14. Economic costs and benefits associated with deer management

Need to capture more information on this element. Members are asked to bring data on numbers of people employed in the deer sector and the capital investment in relevant infrastructure. Costs – please consider what would be relevant to capture here. **CM to send out a document to capture this.** Data will not be available on an individual estate basis – the only data made public will be the for the whole group. Consider forestry, habitat management, deer-related tourism, etc. ADMG has a standard survey form.

15. Effective communication on deer management issues

Note updated website with Visit Knoydart. Action Plan 2019 on website? Assessment to be published. Update AP and publish. **CM – update website via Steph and get portrait orientation maps reset to landscape.**

16. Deer welfare at individual and population level

Mechanisms for understanding condition in winter and thresholds to trigger appropriate action. What should that action be? Unresolved. **Discuss again at next meeting.**

17. AOB

Richard Martin – asked who shoots goats? Would prefer not to shoot. JB - no nanny shooting for the past couple of years, 3 billies last year, 1 billy this year. Plastic rubbish collection net apparently trapped one of the billies. Recruitment very low or absent.

ADMG – RS asked about group membership of ADMG. Financial constraints are paramount but RS may join in a personal capacity to support lobby work for DMGs. Barisdale, Kilchoan and Camusrory all agree that ADMG would be beneficial. JB, IW, GH – no problem if ADMG want to come and talk to us in due course. LS – pitch for ADMG. EBvB – keen to join. GH – happy to talk to ADMG to find out how they can allow us to help shape their policy. **Action – CM to invite ADMG to attend the next meeting.**

18. Data Protection

19. Review of action points

20. DONM

AGM, Inverie, 25 November 2019 maybe (RS to check). Venue – Kilchoan? **IB to confirm.**