

CAIRNGORMS DEER ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 10th August 2010 at Braemar Castle

Present

Dick Balharry, Will Boyd-Wallis (Minutes), Simon Blackett, John Bruce, Ewan Cameron, Alasdair Colquhoun, Richard Cooke, Michael Hone (Chair), Iain Hope, Justin Irvine, Willie Lamont, Fran Potheary, Colin Sheddon, Patrick Thompson, Paul Timms, Jamie Williamson.

The meeting was preceded by a brief look around the castle and explanation of the *People, Hill and River* exhibition.

1. Welcome and apologies.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from George MacDonald, Josephine Pemberton, Sue Walker and Richard Wallace.

2. Minutes of the last meeting – May 2010

Agreed

3. Action points and Matters arising from last meeting

All action points except the last one (developing an exchange scheme) have been followed up. A few matters arising:

- DCS incorporated into SNH on 1st August.
- IH indicated that in future deer count information will be published on the SNH website.
- Greater public awareness of estate boundaries can be useful, because public then know who to contact if necessary. Benefits both ways. Important that if estate boundaries are ever published that it is made clear they are “indicative” rather than “definitive” as they may not be 100% accurate.
- It was acknowledged that the whole deer mortality issue is not straightforward and is *not* simply a factor of *either* poor weather *or* high density, but also the availability of shelter, health condition in the months leading into the winter period, period of time between snowmelt, wind levels etc all play their part.
- On the subject of an exchange scheme, it was noted that this year’s *Archnetwork* Norway visit had been highly successful and CNPA should continue to promote.

Safari club International was also recommended as a possible avenue to assist keepers to share experiences overseas.

4. Deer Framework

There was a lot of discussion about how best to involve members of DMG groups in the drafting of the framework. It was agreed that the next draft should be sent by the chair in hard copy to each DMG chair in the National Park with a letter encouraging them to get comments from their members. An emailed copy would also be sent out to make it easy to disperse.

There was a general consensus that the Deer Framework is on the right lines i.e. is sufficiently visionary and long term to move the deer debate forward in the National Park and yet is not so controversial as to be objectionable to deer managers.

SNH indicated that given the financial circumstances and recent DCS changes, some of the actions would cause them some difficulty, but rewording shouldn't be a difficulty.

It was noted that with a section on the 'economic value of deer' and the cultural significance of deer' there should be a section on the importance of deer to the natural heritage.

A wide range of comments were noted by WBW who will redraft accordingly.

Any further detailed comments are to be sent to WBW by **3rd September 2010**.

Action 1: All to send any detailed comments to WBW by 3rd Sept 2010

Action 2: WBW incorporate comments made during meeting and sent by email.

Action 3: MH send out next draft Deer Framework to DMG chairs encouraging involvement from members.

Action 4: WBW to send redraft to Phil Ratcliffe (ex CDAG chair) and Colin McClean (ex CDAG Secretary) for interest/comment.

5. Interpretation/signage

This subject was introduced because the East Grampian DMG are thinking of updating their signs. In the discussion it came to light that there are in fact 4 types of sign that are relevant...

1. Temporary signs: indicating where and when stalking is taking place on a very local basis. A template for these may be obtained from CNPA
2. Estate signs: An example for Invercauld was produced which conforms with the National Access Forum guidance.

3. Deer Management Group signs: with a map showing the estates and with general access information and a summary of deer management policy in that area.
4. Wider more general interpretive signs: e.g. in Braemar that may include a reference to deer management.

It was noted that with all these different signs there is a danger of overload and that it would be best to minimise the information onto few signs if possible. It was also noted that signs are not always effective and that face to face interaction is usually best if possible. If signs are used they are best placed where people linger rather than pass rapidly through.

It was agreed that a National Park wide approach to interpretive signage about deer and their management would be beneficial as it would help to reinforce key messages.

It was agreed that there is potential in the Cairngorms National Park for signage to be done in a way which others may follow as a good example.

Action 5: SB and/or RC to meet with Andy Ford (CNPA) to discuss interpretation for the EGDMG.

6. Joint Working update.

IH provided an update for the group on developments aimed at ensuring European designated sites are properly cared for. Of particular note is a number of newly developed Collaborative Uplands Habitat Management Plans. Glen Feshie estate, now that the Section 7 agreement has run out, has entered into a voluntary partnership agreement. Mar Lodge Estate is close to getting into a deer control agreement with SNH.

7. Date of next meeting

Next meeting 11th November. Venue to be confirmed, but the intention is the Atholl area.

Next meeting in the New Year: 23rd March 2011.

8. AOCB.

It was suggested that a gauge of the level of private investment into the National Park would be of value, particularly in light of public funding being stretched.

Action 6: WBW to explore further with CNPA colleagues the idea of repeating estate surveys previously undertaken by the Cairngorms Partnership.

It was suggested that the complex issue of accreditation for land/deer management should be considered at a future meeting.

It was noted that there is a lot of crossover between the Deer Framework, SNH's work to provide a Code for Deer Management and Macaulay "knowledge transfer" work.

Action 7: WBW and JI to follow up and ensure links continue to be made in particular with Pete Mayhew from the Cairngorms Speyside DMG about mapping estate objectives.

Summary of Action Points

- Action 1: All to send any detailed comments to WBW by 3rd Sept 2010
- Action 2: WBW incorporate comments made during meeting and sent by email.
- Action 3: MH send out next draft Deer Framework to DNH chairs encouraging involvement from members.
- Action 4: WBW to send redraft to Phil Ratcliffe (ex CDAG chair) and Colin McClean (ex CDAG Secretary) for interest/comment.
- Action 5: SB and/or RC to meet with Andy Ford (CNPA) to discuss interpretation for the EGDMG.
- Action 6: WBW to explore further with CNPA colleagues the idea of repeating estate surveys previously undertaken by the Cairngorms Partnership.
- Action 7: WBW and JI to follow up and ensure links continue to be made in particular with Pete Mayhew from the Cairngorms Speyside DMG about mapping estate objectives.

Carried over from last meeting:

- Action 8: Invite Josephine Pemberton to the next meeting to discuss further potential for Sika work.