

# **CAIRNGORMS DEER ADVISORY GROUP**

**Minutes of meeting held on**

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011**

**at**

**Sherramore Lodge, Glenshero Estate.**

## **Present**

Will Boyd-Wallis (Minutes), John Bruce, Ewan Cameron, Brian Eardley, Kirsty Fernie, Gareth Taylor, David Greer, Michael Hone (Chair), Justin Irvine, Stephanie Lindsay Smith, Colin McClean, Josephine Pemberton, Colin Shedden, Patrick Thompson, Paul Timms, Jamie Williamson.

## **1. Welcome and apologies.**

Apologies received from:

Dick Balharry, Simon Blackett, Iain Hope, Willie Lamont, George MacDonald, Richard Wallis.

## **2. Action points and Matters arising from last meeting– 11<sup>th</sup> Nov**

All action points carried out or covered later in the meeting, except Action 7 on developing deer management interpretation – which is to be kept on the agenda. The intention is for this to be being pioneered by the East Grampian Deer Management Group which is waiting on the outcome of the pilot Heading for the Scottish hills website.

## **3. Deer Framework**

It was agreed that WBW is to take advice from CNPA communications people on how best to launch the framework to get maximum exposure. The issue of the purdah period up to the elections was noted and a date for launch in late May was advised.

The following distribution list for hard copies of the framework was agreed as important:

- CDAG
- MSPs
- SNH – key individuals and offices
- MLURI – key individuals and offices
- CNPA Board
- LLTNP
- CNP Estates owners, agents and stalkers
- CNP Community Councils

#### 4. Sika Deer – future priorities

Josephine Pemberton presented an update on current research into hybridisation between red deer and sika deer in Scotland. 3 main areas have been studied:

- *North of Scotland – sample of 512 deer*  
Assortative mating (i.e. reds with red, sika with sika) highly evident.
- *Kintyre*  
To the south, almost all sika. To the north almost all red. In the middle there is a big mix with a lot of hybridisation. It is possible that only a small number of 'hybridisation events' could lead to high numbers of interbreeding hybrids. A first generation hybrid is very rare.
- *Western Cairngorms – sample of 125 deer*  
Miniscule evidence of hybridisation - but study was limited to east of the River Spey.

Hebrides are completely sika free.

A large area of Scotland known to contain large numbers of sika to the west of the CNP has not yet been surveyed.

Most hybrids are difficult to spot – they look either like red or sika deer.

The 1997 DCS document *A Policy for Sika Deer in Scotland* has now been superseded by the *Scotland's Wild deer a National Approach* which contains the aim to *minimise the further spread of sika on the mainland through active local management.*

It was noted that sika are valued in some areas as an alternative stalking quarry but it was agreed that vigilance in the National Park (East of the Spey) has kept immigrant sika stags in check and that this needs to continue.

**Action I:** WBW to draw up a plan and budget with JP for further sika research in the Monadhliath region.

#### 5. Special Areas of Conservation legal issues

Brian Eardley provided a summary as to how Natura designations came into being and how this affects management obligations. Special Areas of Conservation and Special protection Areas are EC Directives which are then managed according to UK/Scottish Regulations

Natura Conservation Objectives are:

*To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and*

To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- *Extent of the habitat on site*
- *Distribution of the habitat within site*
- *Structure and function of the habitat*
- *Processes supporting the habitat*
- *Distribution of typical species of the habitat*
- *Viability of typical species as components of the habitat*
- *No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat*

In some areas, SAC designations have led to deer control agreements e.g. Section 7 at Mar Lodge. It was agreed that where a Section 7 agreement affected neighbouring interests there is a need to ensure neighbours are consulted and involved in the delivery of the agreement.

## **6. WANE Bill and Deer Code**

It was noted that the WANE Bill has been passed and that The Deer Code is in preparation. It was also noted that Section 1A of the Act included the withdrawal of the conservation status of non-indigenous deer.

## **7. Joint Working update.**

Iain Hope unable to attend, update deferred.

## **8. AOCB.**

### **Standing members of CDAG:**

It was noted that, whilst attendance to CDAG meetings on the whole has been consistently good, a number of standing members have either never attended or rarely attended. There is still a need for a CNPA Board Representative. It was suggested that a 'green tourism' representative would be helpful.

**Action 2:** WBW to contact members of CDAG that have wavered and check their willingness to continue.

**Action 3:** WBW to get agreement on a CNPA Board rep.

**Action 4:** WBW to investigate a green tourism rep.

WBW informed CDAG that Richard Wallace is no longer able to attend on behalf of FCS but Willie Lamont will be continuing. Paul Timms is leaving SNH and will no longer continue on CDAG. The Chair expressed his thanks to Paul for his commitment.

## **Haggis**

WBW reported that the Cairngorms Brand has been applied to "Venison Haggis" made from National Park sourced venison. Only venison meeting the acceptance

criteria for use of the brand can go into the haggis. This is a positive step in promoting the value of sustainable management of deer in the National Park.

**9. Date of next meeting**

29<sup>th</sup> June – Glen Tanar suggested as a venue.