

CAIRNGORMS DEER ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING: 27 MAY 2015

BRAEMAR GOLF CLUB

Present.

Simon Blackett. Chairman
Mike Cottam. CNPA – Secretary
Chris Donald. SNH
Colin McClean. ADMG
Pete Mayhew. Scottish Environment LINK
Colin Shedden. BASC
Will Boyd-Wallis. CNPA
Thomas MacDonell. Wildland Ltd
John Bruce. BDS.

1. Welcome and Apologies.

Apologies: Julian Clarke; Ewan Cameron; Gordon Riddler; Jamie Williamson; Katrina Farquar.

The Chairman reported the recent death of Dick Balharry who had represented ACCESS organisations on CDAG. A potential replacement should be sought with CNPA approval.

There had been a number of changes in CDAG attendees representing various organisations and a review of Standing Members was needed.

SGA should be contacted to determine whether George McDonald was still available for CDAG, and if not who should represent SGA.

Caroline Warburton, Wild Scotland, was no longer available and a replacement should be sought.

ACTION: Chairman and Secretary.

2. Minutes of Meeting 11 November 2014.

The minutes were accepted unanimously as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes of 11 November 2014.

Item 7:

The reference to peatlands offering greater climate change mitigation than woodlands should be changed to reflect the fact that peatland and woodland offer equal benefits, trees in sequestering carbon and peatland in storing carbon.

Item 7:

In response to the comment regarding the need for an economic cost/benefit analysis for peatland respiration it was reported that the CNPA, Peatland Officer was costing restoration on an individual project basis.

4. Progress with DMGs within CNP developing DMPs and the assessment process.

CSDMG were producing their DMP internally with financial assistance from CNPA/SNH/CSDMG funds.

The aim was to have a draft plan by October and an agreed plan by February 2016.

EGDMG operated as 5 sub groups each of which were producing DMPs:

- S/G 3 – Birse Parish already had a good plan developed
- S/G 5 – had identified a contractor and plan was under development
- S/G 2 – had identified a contractor and plan was under development
- S/G 4 – was absorbed into S/G 2
- S/G 1 – Glenshee/Glen Isla were updating their Section 7 Agreement

MDMG had adopted a DMP developed and part funded with SNH. The DMP was based on a strategy of reducing hind numbers, followed by an adaptive management approach following Site Condition Monitoring/Herbivore Impact Assessment.

Questions were raised regarding whether the DMP met the Public Interest requirements defined in the recent assessment process.

It was not yet clear what the parliamentary RACCE Committee might expect from DMPs by end 2016.

All DMPs would be expected to be adaptive, with baseline measures accepted as a basis for moving forward.

CNPA had offered each DMG a £2000 grant towards cost of DMP. To date, only CSDMG had applied for the additional funding. WGDMDG had confirmed at the AGM in April that they would not require CNPA grant aid. CNPA would re-offer the grant to EGDMG through Bell Ingram.

FCS are offering £500 per DMG towards DMP development.

BDS were of the opinion that the adaptive approach must monitor habitat impact from all herbivores (including sheep) especially with the increased movement to use of "tick mops" and changes in Single Farm Payment rules.

SNH would carry out a repeat SCM/HIA assessment of the Cairngorms SAC during Summer 2015, with draft results expected in October/November.

5. CNPA initiatives: woodland expansion, peatland restoration, montane scrub, Cairngorms Nature.

CNPA gave a presentation covering various habitat and conservation initiatives underway in the CNP.

CDAG may consider moving towards a habitat driven organisation, of which deer are an integral part.

Cairngorms Nature (CN) was the CNPA initiative drawing together all conservation activities, including the quality and connectivity of woodlands and wetlands. CN was working with an Action Plan covering 2013-2018.

Woodland Expansion was a major topic within CN and had been in discussion with Glenfeshie since 2006, with a wider involvement on Invereshie/Inshriach and FCS since 2001.

Wildland Ltd. was developing a proposal for 6000 ha of woodland expansion in the south of its land holdings (predominantly willow), without fencing. Dialogue with adjacent Atholl and Dalnacardoch land holdings were ongoing.

CNPA had carried out a survey of established native woodland areas and identified where expansion might occur. Included in the survey were priority areas adjacent to present capercaillie habitat. Scottish Government and FCS had agreed these areas for an additional 12.5% SRDP grant towards woodland planting.

Wetland habitat expansion for the benefit of waders was another CNPA priority.

CNPA had been particularly successful in initiating projects as part of the Green Stimulus, Peatland Fund 2014-2015. At this point in time it remained to be seen whether further funding would be made available for 2015-2016.

RSPB/Wildland Ltd/FCS/SNH/CNPA had established a working group to regenerate and establish montane scrub habitat. An application, along with Ireland and Norway, was being developed for finance from the Horizon 2020, European fund.

CNPA had recently established a moorland partnership with six estates in upper-Deeside and Speyside to encourage an integrated, more diverse management approach, including habitat and raptors.

6. **Caenlochan: Land Management and SNH perspective**

SNH, Wildlife Operations presented a history of the Caenlochan control agreements from establishment of a Section 7 with 8 land units in 2003.

In 2003 there were 11000 deer summering and 9000 deer wintering in the area, with a density of 44 deer per sq km.

Over 2003-2005 a target of 19 deer per sq km and associated habitat targets were agreed. Resources were a problem to achieve any more than maintaining the population, with 2500 deer culled in the first year and 3000 deer culled in the second year. DCS funded an increased cull resulting in deer density being reduced to 20 deer per sq km during 2008-2011. Management then reverted to estates completing the cull on a collaborative basis.

Increased fencing in the wider Grampian area caused an increase of around 1000 in deer numbers in Caenlochan.

During 2013-2014 season over 2000 deer were culled. Agreed targets for 5 habitats were achieved. Section 7 Agreement finished in 2013.

During 2013 discussions were held with all estates to increase the control area to cover all the Caenlochan SSSI and SAC, a total of 1500 ha and to re-focus habitat and population targets, with a focus now on habitat. A DMP was privately funded based on changing deer utilisation and hefting preferences and, in 2014, was used to form the basis for development of a new Section 7 Agreement. Habitats continue to improve with 19 deer per sq km, with damage caused not only by deer but also grazing by hares and sheep, and climatic conditions.

Following lunch a site visit was made to the Caenlochan area.

7. **AOCB**

- 7.1 SNH and the University of Edinburgh had published a booklet covering red deer research on the Isle of Rum and management implications.
- 7.2 On 23 June MDMG would be hosting a stakeholder meeting to present their recently adopted DMP at Alvie Estate.
- 7.3 The purpose of CDAG was raised again

8. **Next Meeting**

October 2015: Glenfeshie. Including review of DMG's, DMP progress.
Spring 2016: Glen Clova