

## **Balquhider Deer Management Group**

### **Notes for Autumn Meeting**

**Balquhider Hall, FK19 8PB**

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October**

**At 7:30pm**

**Apologies:** Ian Dingwall, Malcolm MacNaughton, Malcolm Walker, Juan Arkotxa, Rolf Thornquist

**Attendees:** Mike Luti, Nicola Colquhoun, Tom Turnbull, Alan Sneddon, David Sutherland, Falcon Frost, Alex Caraffi, Jimmy Irvine, Hamish Thomson, Andrew Eadington, Paul Bekier, Richard Eadington, David Lowes, ACW, EP, George Coyne, Alcuin Arktoxa-MacKenzie, Allie Thow, David Thow, Will Diamond, Fraser Lamont, Quintin Lyle.

**Chairman:** Mike Luti welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. He also thanked Fraser Lamont for all his work as Secretary.

**Minutes** from 6<sup>th</sup> June were proposed by Emma Paterson and seconded by Falcon Frost.

**Communications:** Nicola thanked everyone for their prompt reply to emails and information requests. Stag cull returns have been submitted by most.

Action: Remaining Stag culls to be sent to the Secretary

**Subscriptions:** The majority of Subs have been paid, although there are a few outstanding.

Action: Remaining Subs to be sent to the Secretary or paid direct to the Bank.

**Secretary:** It was discussed that the secretary should be added to the signatories on the Bank account so that Subs can be checked and payments to ADMG etc can be made and that she should be paid twice a year. This was agreed by the members.

**Meetings:** It has suggested that the June Meeting was to sort out the culls targets for next season and therefore, need stag and hind culls as soon after the season is closed to allow population models to be looked at. It will also be the AGM, and accounts will be published and the office bearers voted in. The October meeting will be to go through DMP actions & set up any Project Sub-groups that are required and to discuss Stag Cull. It was also proposed that the meetings were moved to afternoons.

**Deer Management Plan:** SNH will carry out another re-assessment of DMGs in April 2019. The recently published "SNH League tables" put BqDMG as 13th (out of 46) for Public Interest and DMG Benchmark. Whilst this clearly shows that we are doing well, we need to keep up this momentum.

The Secretary then took the members present through the Working Plan and comments and actions were added as we went through. This document is appended to the Minutes, which includes the comments; the actions are listed below:

**Secretary** to notify Members when updated Deer Management Plan is on the website.

**Secretary** to look at filtering out forestry culls from Open Range Culls figures (if the fences are sound).

**Secretary** to formulate a table for cull returns for members to fill in.

**All members** should submit their Proposed Hind cull targets as a split ratio, i.e. the number of hinds you are proposing to shoot and the associated number of calves. It is appreciated that an exact number cannot always be given for this but it will be an estimate. The idea is to know what the total number of “mouths” will be culled.

Maps to be updated with correct boundaries and with deer fences (non-porous and porous).

**Members** that have this information as shape files to send them to the **Secretary**.

**Falcon** to send questionnaires he has digitally to Secretary. These can then be sent out to members for updating.

**Jl & PB** to keep members up to date with funding opportunities for helicopter counts in spring 2018.

**Secretary** to follow up LLTNPA Legal Team’s offer of free legal advice on the constitution.

**FES** to share North Katrine HIA report with the Group.

**All other members** with HIA reports to share with Group.

**Secretary** to apply for £1800 for HIA Consultant time.

**Secretary** to set up Goat Sub-Group and organise a meeting.

**Jl & PB** to send out information on feral pig control.

**Members** to inform Secretary of hydro scheme outputs and any planned peatland or woodland planting projects.

**Members** are asked to get in touch with HT directly about the ATV training course at Glen Finglas and any other training requirements (First Aid, Snaring Certificate, DMQ2, and SQWV).

**Will Diamond** to compile a list of DVC in the BqDMG area and a form for Members to fill in to report a DVC or a Near Miss. **Secretary** to circulate form.

**Jl** to give Transport Scotland contact details to Secretary so that we can pass on locations where Members know there are hot spots and areas where vegetation management is required.

**Results from 2017 Stag Cull:** Majority of Members submitted stag numbers very promptly for which the Secretary was very thankful. Prior to the meeting the Secretary had circulated a report on the Population Models from Jl, he said that the stag culls across the group has never resulted in the ‘expected drastic reduction’ that is associated with the current level of stag culls. This suggests that a high number of stags are spending time in the woodland area (or possibly migrating into the group?) and move out into the open range in the rut. FF said that Glenfalloch are going to use the HIA info to target areas that have higher impacts and that it would be a good idea to separate out the woodland culls from the open range culls.

In August there was a meeting to discuss that FES reducing their stag cull and allowing the neighbouring properties to cull more stags. DT said that the proposed 40 stags that he was to shoot were not possible as there weren't enough to shoot – he only culled 10 stags. AAM agreed that there were not many stags in their area. PB felt that August meeting actions weren't followed through.

**Proposed 2017/18 Hind Cull:** The figures for the 2017/18 hind cull have been based on discussions during the August Meeting for Loch Katrine, and what was stated in DMP or last year's cull for all other holdings. If we look at the Population Modelling: The Group has said that they "need" 155 stags and 168 hinds for their sporting requirement in DMP - this cull should be 15% of the population to be sustainable, so this means we need approximately 1000 of each sex to allow this harvest. The 2017 Count showed 642 stags & 1069 hinds. Ideally, a ratio of 1 stag :1 hind is optimal, BqDMG have 1:1.6. It is difficult to know what level of hind cull is required to reach optimal 1:1 ratio when we can't count all the population.

RE stated that FES intends to reach their proposed 225 hind cull on North Katrine as they are looking at planting more trees. AAM asking if FES would fence the march to protect the trees and DT was also happy for FES to erect a fence. RE stated that a fence was not resource efficient and given winter snow conditions, maintenance would be costly. Also high levels of snow would allow deer to walk over the fence, so FES will be culled under a general license.

ML summarised that the majority of holdings had enough mature stags, apart from Ballimore and Muirlaggan. EP informed the Group that hinds from around Lix Toll area (Dochart Woods and Leskine Woods) are coming over the river into silage fields and so they will be culled to protect agricultural crops.

**Sheep:** AAM asked FES for maps and locations of gates and fanks to allow them to collect sheep from FCS North Katrine. However, RE informed the Group that the Infrastructure is no longer suitable. McM has been out to collect sheep from N. Katrine.

**Dear Health Survey:** The Secretary thanked those that took part and apparently we are getting another lot of sample kits for the hinds. So once the Secretary receives these she will organise distribution. AAM asked when we might see the results of the research.

**ADMG Report:** Not everyone has received their assessments for Sporting Rates. TT urged Members to check all the details, such as acreages. Properties with a rateable value under £15,000 should be exempt from rates through the Small Business Bonus Scheme, although this will depend on whether there are any other rateable businesses on the premises. There is concern from ADMG that on landholdings where income is marginal there may be an implication for both stalking activity and employment. ADMG has started to hear reports that some assessments bear little relation to ownership, occupation or acreage as it has been based on the IACS system and information. TT suggested that if you were appealing to get professional advice. Auxiliary buildings such as Larders will be rateable, as they are commercial refrigeration. TT also discussed SNH's Enhanced Approach to Deer Management – this is covered more below in SNH Report.

TT reported to the Group the the Cabinet Secretary has appointed an independent Group to examine deer management issues, following the report by the ECCLR Committee. The Deer Working

Group will run until April 2019, and is charged with making recommendations for change to ensure effective deer management that “safeguards the public interest and promotes the sustainable management of wild deer.” Appointed to the Group are Simon Pepper OBE (Chair), Robin Callander (special adviser), Andrew Barbour, and Jayne Glass. ADMG Chairman Richard Cooke has been appointed as an external adviser to the Group.

**SNH Report:** JI summarised SNH’s ‘Enhanced approach to deer management’ and that SNH will assume a more assertive leadership role on deer management. They will review existing Section 7 agreements and refreshed targets will be put in place. If these targets are not met then Section 8 agreements may be put in place. They will look at the option of putting in place new Section 7 agreements and these will be focused on areas where DMGs are perceived to be underperforming following the 2016 assessments. SNH are to use Section 6a powers to enforce a group to write a DMP. They are also working with deer managers in lowland areas and in areas that are not currently covered by DMGs. They will also be targeting their resource with DMGs that need more support.

JI said that the Re-assessment in 2019 will be looking to see if delivery is happening on a group scales and also at an individual holding scale, and SNH there to help with advice and support.

JI will find out if it is possible to do a helicopter count in 2018 April. SNH intend to have a rolling programme of helicopter counts so that each DMG is counted every 5 years. If SNH doesn’t have funding, FES might be able to fund a helicopter count in spring 2018.

JI has made contact with Blaircreich through AA-M.

**LLTNPA Report:** NC told the Members that they still have a Peatland Action Officer in place so that if anyone is keen to do Peatland or doesn’t know whether there is suitable habitat on their ground then they are to make contact through the Secretary. NC also said that the LLTNPA Legal team might be able to look at our Constitution and update it. She had had this discussion over the I&TDMG Constitution due to Grant funding and the Legal Adviser said the constitution could be updated. LLTNPA are running another training day in conjunction with SAC on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at Montrose Estates near Balmaha.

Action: Members interested in Peatland Projects and HIA training should contact the Secretary.

**AOB:** ACW informed that Members that deer fences have cut on Rolf Thornquist’s ground (Leskine Forest). Fences have been cut on rides, they believe, to allow open hill deer into the re-stock planation. ACW wished it to be known that there are cameras out there and vehicle numbers have been recorded. This is the third time fences have been cut.

EP told the Members that the Benmore gates are being left open at top of Coire Chaorach. There is a padlock with a combination, so it is someone who knows the combination. Green Hydro been told. FES has padlocks on one gate and another is needed on the second gate.

Action: RE to put a new padlock on second gate.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 30<sup>th</sup> May - 2pm - Balquhidder Village Hall