

## **SOUTH PERTSHIRE DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP**

### **Minutes of the 23rd Annual General Meeting Held on Wednesday 24 May 2017 At Abercairny Venue, Crieff**

<b>Present</b>	James Duncan Millar	Chairman, Remony
	Michael Aldridge	Secretary, Drummond Estates
	Iain Hope	S.N.H
	Jamie Hammond	S.N.H
	Phil Lowe	Abercairny
	Daniel Parker	Abercairny
	Stewart McIntosh	Scone Estate
	Chris Gordon	Logiealmond
	Phil Robinson	Glenturret, Invergeldie and Glenogle
	Ronnie Kippen	Garrows
	Alix Whitaker	Auchnafree
	Neil Campbell	Ardeonaig
	Robert O'Neil	Dunira
	Leif Brag	Griffin-Tilhill
	Andrew Duncan Millar	Remony
<b>Apologies</b>	Ian Duncan Millar	Wester Tullich
	Alex Baillie-Hamilton	Kinnell
	Ron Smith	Dunira Woodland
	Bill Drummond Moray	Abercairney
	Jack Whitaker	Auchnafree
	Brian Kaye	Lochan
	Miles Montgomerie	West Glenalmond
	Donald Ogilvy Watson	Urlar Estate
	Martin Robb	Carroglen
	Kevin Peters	FES – Forest Enterprise Scotland
	Ralph Peters	Murthly
	Jimmy Anderson	Lochearnside
	Vincent Brigode	Fordie/Eighton Estate
	Mike Thompson	Glenalmond
	Malcolm Sinclair	Glenalmond
	Robert Smith	Balmuick

#### **1. Minutes**

The minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> AGM held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May and the minutes of the Summer Meeting held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August, both at Fordie, were accepted as a true record.

#### **2. Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

An oversight had led to the Annual Subscriptions not being demanded prior to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The subscription demands had since gone out and thanks were expressed to those who had paid quickly. Consequently no 2016 subscriptions are included in the 2016/2017 accounts income, which is largely made up of the Deer Management Plan Levy and Scottish

Natural Heritage funding towards the Deer Management Plan. Expenditure comprised payment for the Deer Management Plan and the ADMG subscription, with chairman's and secretarial expenses being held over until subscriptions had been collected. As a result there is a deficit of £4,458.15, compared to a surplus from the previous year of £3,230.25. This is largely due to the funding arrangements for the Deer Management Plan. The Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 shows total assets less liabilities of £2,876.47, which allows for both unpaid subscriptions and expenses, and demonstrates cash reserves equivalent to one year's current subscriptions.

The budget is drawn up on a break even basis and takes account of the proposed ADMG subscription rises of £3 to £4 for stags, £1.50 to £2 for hinds and £0.75 to £1 for calves and other species. This is the first rise in ADMG subscriptions since 2013 and comes after a period of intense activity by ADMG on behalf of its members. To cover that increase it was proposed that group subscriptions rise from £4 to £5 for stags, £2 to £2.50 for hinds and £0.75 to £1 for calves and other species. This was accepted. Both the accounts and budget were approved.

### **3. Election of Office Bearers**

#### **Chairman**

James Duncan Millar had agreed to take on the role for two years and consequently will be looking for a replacement in a year's time.

#### **Secretary**

Michael Aldridge, Drummond Estates, after some 20 years of acting as secretary, had indicated that a replacement should be appointed. Alix Whittaker agreed to take on the role, but in six months' time due to current work load. The meeting acknowledged the very considerable work done by Michael over the last twenty years.

It was agreed that the treasurer's post would continue to be merged with the role of secretary.

### **4. ADMG matters**

The political agenda has dominated ADMG activity over recent months, with the parliamentary review of deer management by the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLR) following the SNH Review on Deer Management in Scotland. The general content of the SNH report gave evidence of progress being made by DMGs but the conclusions drawn seemed overly critical and unrealistic. The Chair of ADMG is on record as saying that he was pleased with the progress of most DMGs to date in terms of creating DMPs and having a presence on Facebook etc. However it was stressed that we should all move on and make the Plan work in the forthcoming days and months. The current priorities are introducing wide spread use of habitat impact assessments and the impact of and control of deer in woodlands and on agricultural land in the upland/lowland fringe.

The next review of the deer management system will take place in 2019, which is not that far away.

### **5. SNH Matters**

Iain Hope, who is well known to the group from previous involvement, is taking over responsibility for the group from Jamie Hammond due to a realignment of areas.

The ECCLR report was critical of SNH and made a number of recommendations. Currently SNH and the industry are awaiting the minister's response to both the report and the committee findings.

The next joint SNH helicopter count for the group will be in February/March 2018. Heli counts are now generally on a five year cycle.

In response to question on road accidents, it was stated that deer related RTA's are collated from data from a number of sources. On major routes deer are now considered by the road operating companies and thought has gone into the planning for deer and their impact on the A9 improvements and dualling. All members are asked to report any known road kills.

## **6. Deer Management Plan**

The chairman reviewed the action plan and the following notes summarise, progress made and changes required.

### **a) Contacts List**

A contacts list, which is not on the website, is circulated with these Minutes. Please review your contact information and send updates to Drummond Estates Office.

[jackie\\_smith@drummondstates.org.uk/01764681257](mailto:jackie_smith@drummondstates.org.uk/01764681257)

### **b) Action Plan 1.1, area and boundaries**

Chris Gordon mentions that some of the Estate's boundaries shown in the Deer Management Plan are not quite correct and a few Estates' may need some amendments. The sub-group boundaries are acknowledged as not being ideal but were endorsed for the meantime.

The chairman had met with the Dunkeld Deer Management Forum, which is active in managing fallow deer. This group wishes to remain as they are for the meantime but are keen to have co-operation with the SPDMG. We will continue to liaise with them.

### **c) Meetings**

The Northern Sub Group "Lairds Meeting" would continue for the meantime. Other sub groups are encouraged to have their own meetings prior to August to set their annual deer culls. The wider membership are all encouraged to become full members and participate in meetings and the counts.

The possibility of an early November meeting was discussed and 1<sup>st</sup> November suggested.

### **d) Date and Evidence Gathering – Counts and Culls**

Count and Cull figures are still shown on the old sub group basis for comparison. These are to be revamped in line with the new structure. The 2017 count figures, other than in the old western sub group are very patchy and all are encouraged to participate. The position in

the eastern sub group is very interesting where large numbers are being culled and counts are sparse.

SNH cull requests have not been sent out. Looking at the 2016 figures there is a significant under declaration of roe deer whilst most red deer are reported through the group. The spring count continues to be made on the second Tuesday in March. It is recommended that a recruitment count is carried out in the second week of July as a snapshot to estimate the calving percentage. Returns should be made to Drummond Estate Office by the end of the second week of July. It was suggested that an estimate of mortality is added to the cull return sheets. It was also suggested that recording carcass weight gives a good indication of wellbeing and the availability of grazing and improvement or decline of habitat. In discussion of the imbalance between cull and count date, it was agreed that the population model should be updated once the result of the next heli count was known.

e) Data and Evidence Gathering – Habitat Monitoring

The habitat day will take place on 13<sup>th</sup> June, which will equip individual estates with the skills necessary to carry out their own habitat assessments. This becomes more useful as the years pass, with the establishment of a data set and the possibility of monitoring trends. (The day was postponed due to the offer of a funding package to include help with follow up work on farms and estates)

f) Competence

DMQ Level 1 is the minimum standard stated for deer management. Disquiet was expressed from professional deer managers that DMQ1 trained amateur stalkers do not show the expected level of competence. It is the ADMG's view that all professional stalkers and especially those taking out and supervising guests should aspire to achieve DMQ level 2 status.

g) Venison Marketing

Take up within the group is very poor. It was felt that this was largely due to inadequate price incentive to join the SQWVA scheme, when compared to the costs of compliance. The benefits of the scheme were explained, particularly in light of food safety challenges. It may also be possible to use membership as a lever in the forthcoming rates debate.

h) Public Interest Outcomes

Both the benchmark and public interest criteria will be re-assessed to monitor progress towards the 2019 review. Habitat assessments, native woodlands expansion, disease control and public access were identified as our key areas.

i) Designated Sites

Iain Hope will confirm whether there are any issues with SSSI's and where anything can be realistically be done about it by the group. Estates were asked to notify the chair of any problems or concerns.

j) Carbon Storage

It was noted that there is new woodland planting in Strathbraan and that Remony Estate has planted 100 acres. Some plans are in place at Remony to restore some peatland sites.

Other estates were asked to share details with the group of new or proposed plantings or peatland restoration work

### **7. Land Management Issues**

The demands for sporting rates are still awaited, although it seems that no information on assessments will be forthcoming for a further six months. There was a suggestion that deer management is providing a public service and that in some instances culls should be defined as habitat protection. It was also thought that membership of Scottish Quality Wild Venison should be taken into consideration.

### **8. Any Other Business**

Tayside and Central Moorland Group will meet on the last Sunday of August (27<sup>th</sup>) at Amulree.

Ardeonaig asked that their activity definition should be amended to “deer stalking to mixed farming and deer”.

### **9. Date of Next Meeting**

November Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017, location to be confirmed.

The next AGM will held in 23rd May 2018, location to be confirmed.

Sub Group Meetings to be arranged.

The Western Sub Group normally meets early in August.