

MINUTES OF MEETING
EAST LOCH ERICHT DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP
AUTUMN MEETING
SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 2015
AT THE OLD LIBRARY, BLAIR CASTLE

Attendance:

James Adamson (Secretary)	Nial Mackinlay (Auchleeks)
Julian Clarke (Atholl)	Bob Pirie (Auchleeks)
Iain Hope (SNH)	Alastair Christie (Corrievarkie & Dalnaspidal)
Kevin Grant (Craiganoor)	Kevin Simpson (Garbruach)
Richard MacGregor (Corrievarkie)	Ronnie Hepburn (Atholl)
Andrew Oliver (Talladh a Bheithe)	Alastair Lyon (North Drumochter)
Alasdair Findlay (Drumochter)	Robert Matthews (Blairfettie)
Robert La Terriere (Dunalastair)	
Andy Chapman (Blairfettie)	

ACTION

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Lord Wimborne (Craiganoor), Jonathan Henson (Craiganoor), Major Hanbury (Corrievarkie and Dalnaspidal), Mrs F. Schwarzenbach (Corrievarkie and Dalnaspidal), Capt Ian La Terriere (Dunalastair), Tom Dodd (Craiganoor), Duncan Fernie (Garbruach), Adrian van Well (Talladh a Bheith), Kees van Well (Talladh a Bheith), Donald Isles (Chairman Blair Atholl & Struan Community Council), Mark Duncan (Forestry Commission Scotland)

2. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15th MAY 2015

- 2.1 NM noted hind cull target to actual table was not on minutes. Secretary confirmed that this was because it had been replaced with a number of more detailed tables following the May meeting as a one off, and would be included in future.

3. REVIEW OF THE 2015 STAG CULL

The interim open hill stag cull at 12th October was 182, with a further 109 expected by members, giving an anticipated 291 at the end of the season. Some stags will be taken out of season (mainly in enclosed woodland).

Estate	Target	At meeting	Expected	Revised	Actual	Variance
Atholl (West of A9)	10	9		9	9	-1
Auchleeks	30	20	12	32	33	3
Blairfettie	8	4	4	8	9	1
Corrievarkie	35	29	6	35	35	0
Craiganoor	80	48	30	78	87	7
Dalnaspidal	40	15	10	25	40	0
Dunalastair	25	9	11	20	30	5
Garbruach	5	3	2	5	5	0
North Drumochter	80	24	15	39	49	-31
FCS T-A-B	0				7	7
Talladh-a-Bheithe	50	21	19	40	40	-10

Total	363	182	109	291	344	-19
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At the end of the season reported figures showed a final cull of 344 (including 14 shot out of season) which is only 19 behind the target or -5%. Given the high winter mortality in early 2015 this is considered reasonable.

General discussions confirmed good weights and body condition on most beasts. Stags were short at the north end of the Group (Drumochter especially and Dalnaspidal) and at Talladh a Bheithe along the lochside. The rut was reported as inconsistent.

Atholl reported a break-in to the Auchlennie Pinewood. The exact numbers are not known but RH confirmed at least 50 stags, hinds and claves were in the wood as a result of a stretch of fence collapsing, but perhaps a much higher number. The fence remains down to try and let some deer out and will be repaired in November prior to hard weather arriving. Group members offered assistance in driving out the woodland if this was deemed necessary – RH to monitor and request assistance if required.

RH/JC

4. 2015 DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN DISCUSSION

The Secretary reported that co-funding from SNH had been approved and that information gathering for a new plan was underway. Owner questionnaires had been issued and mainly return after which some interviewing (probably telephone) would be held with stalkers, probably in November. The plan was to have a draft plan ready in January 2016.

IH reported on the delayed Drumochter Hills monitoring. In 2013 SNH completed Habitat Impact Assessment (HIA) and Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) of the Drumochter Hills designated site. The HIA was published but the SCM was withheld pending clarification of certain matters with the contractor. The SCM report was released to estates in September and like the HIA indicates no substantial changes, but with some improvements and some deteriorations.

IH explained that the SCM would be used in the decision making process over the condition of the site as either unfavourable, favourable or recovering. At present this classification had not been set as the new DMP forms part of the process. The current DMP allowed SNH to classify the site as 'unfavourable recovering' following the previous SCM based on assured management as set out in the plan. This process will repeat.

AF commented that he felt the bar was set high. You could fail on one little thing, but many other things could be good. IH responded that some aspects of the assessment are very technical which makes the process difficult.

On the positive side IH commented on the parity/corroboration between the recent HIA and SCM surveys and the Group's James Hutton Institute repeat survey in 2014. Basically these surveys are saying that things are not improving or deteriorating on any obvious scale. The question is whether or not ScotGov will see lack of improvement as a failure?

5. 2015/16 Hind Cull Target

Estate	2015/16 Target
Atholl (West of A9)	30
Auchleeks	45
Blairfettie	8
Corrievarkie	20
Craiganour	65
Dalnaspidal	150
Dunalastair	30
Garbruach	15

North Drumochter	80
Talladh-a-Bheithe	55
Total	498*

*Plus calves in addition.

The above target is broadly in line with last year which ended with 515 hinds plus calves.

6. DEER COUNT

IH reported that SRDP funding towards deer counting had been withdrawn.

It was agreed that a white ground foot count should be undertaken and Richard MacGregor agreed to be the next co-ordinator. Secretary to forward contact details spreadsheet to Richard. It was confirmed the licence for the ELEDMG Radio Channel had been renewed for a further five year period and if any radios needed programming this can be done at Scottish Communications.

AL noted the shortcomings in the 2015 count and offered ski-bike and personnel assistance to any estate needing help, as did KS.

IH confirmed a change to SNH count tactics, switching from priority sites to a rotational basis as per the old RDC system. Following the meeting IH has confirmed ELEDMG is likely to be counted in 2017/18 (early 2018). On this basis we should continue Group lead counts in the interim.

7. SNH/ADMG UPDATE

SNH

- i. RACCE met recently to discuss progress and the link to the transcript is <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10124&mode=pdf>
- ii. SNH is carrying out a review of out of season and night shooting authorisations. Presently an expert panel is being assembled by Dr Aileen McLeod. The review will be narrow in scope, as it is working within existing legislation, and will focus more on the procedural aspects.
- iii. DMG Assessment – SNH acknowledge that there has been an obvious change in DMGs and most are improving and are actively engaged in the planning process. There has been good uptake of the planning grant. A small number of new DMPs are now complete.

ADMG

Base information about ELEDMG is now contained on the ADMG website at [East Loch Ericht DMG | ADMG](#)

8. AOCB

The rifle shoot has not been held for two years. The shoot committee are keen to keep the shoot going but need better support from members. It is proposed to shoot after the Spring meeting and the shoot committee will consider possible changes to the format.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 6 May, location TBC.

Distribution;
ELEDMG Members
Iain Hope, SNH
ADMG

Sec.

NM

**Community Council
File**

East Loch Ericht DMG

Website: elocherichtdmg.deer-management.co.uk