

Moidart Deer Management Group
Minutes of Meeting
Glenfinnan, Monday 11 May 2015, 5 pm.

Present: Alistair Forbes, Nino Stewart, Robert Clegg, Suzanne Stevens, Jane Cheape, Colin Lees Millais, Hugh Cheape (in the chair).

Apologies: Tim Leslie

The meeting opened with thanks to those attending and for information supplied in advance of the meeting. The chair said that the meeting had been called to discuss the compilation and completion of the MDMG Deer Management Plan [DMP] which was now urgent. The Cairngorm & Strathspey DMP which is at www.csdmg.co.uk was recommended as offering an example of a completed DMP that is in the public domain. This, current issues for DMPs and the availability of grant-aid and contract help were the topics at the ADMG Chairs and Secretaries Meeting at Birnam on 20 March 2015 which the chair reported on to the meeting, stressing the urgency of completing local DMPs for the beginning of 2016. The contracting out of the DMP and costs were discussed. It is evident that the expectations for DMPs have changed considerably since the process began in 2011-2012, especially in regard to 'Habitat Monitoring' and 'Delivering the Public Interest'.

- A. Habitat Monitoring: co-operation is at a premium since this must be a Group activity. Plots must now be identified and the chair reported that plots had been fixed at NM 828760 and NM 800730. Plots for habitat monitoring should be identified for different habitat types and baselines established. All agreed to undertake this. This should ensure a selection (to scientific standards) of different types of ground cover and vegetation, that plots should be random (not be contrived), baseline information collected, and the plots re-visited for further observation, noting changes and analysing reasons for change. Baseline data should reflect 'impact' of deer and effect of other livestock such as cattle and sheep. It was decided that in addition to individual inputs, statements about monitoring and results should come from the Group as a whole. The matter was raised that there are areas carrying deer in the Moidart peninsula that are outside the MDMG area, such as housing sites with shooting 'out of season' and little or no scrutiny of deer welfare.
- B. 'Delivering Public Benefit': response to criteria of public interest is now obligatory and the responsibilities of each member of the Group were discussed. Though issues of 'Public Interest' or 'Public Benefit' might seem difficult to define, the matrix for 'Delivering the Public Interest' (which had been forwarded to members of the Group) made it clear that this was defined in terms of the protection of designated sites, the expansion of woodlands, and public safety and welfare issues connected with deer. The matrix provided by SNH includes 14 Benchmarks and 56 Action Points and the chair urged all members of the Group to give urgent consideration to this and complete the matrix in part or in whole in order to formulate the required 'Delivering the Public Interest' section of the DMP.

Count and Culls: the chair reported on the deer count and costs. Comment was tabled and discussed on the recent increased hind cull. MDMG Minutes 16.05.13 record: 'it was agreed that efforts should be made to reduce the hind population', but it was stressed that age and condition were the criteria for cull selection.

The meeting agreed to complete DMP core information revision and habitat plots by 8 June.

Date of next meeting: week beginning 17 August 2015 (to be confirmed).