

GAIRLOCH CONSERVATION UNIT

MEETING OF THE GAIRLOCH CONSERVATION UNIT DMG <http://www.deer-management.co.uk>

Wednesday 19th April 2017, 9.30 am
SNH Field Station, Anancaun

- **Attendance**

John Wills	Grudie
Sinclair Coghill	SNH Wildlife Ops
Neil Morrison	Coulin Estate
Donnie Beaton	Diabaig
Linzi Seivwright	Caorann
Seamus MacNally	Torrison (NTS)

- **Apologies**

Sir Paul & Lady Nicholson	Diabaig
Sir Nicholas Bacon	Diabaig
Tim Bowie	Eisean Dubh, near Diabaig
Duncan Mackenzie	Gairloch & Conan Estates
Ronnie Buchan	Gairloch
Russell Cooper	Forest Enterprise Scot.
Terry Doe	Torrison & Kinlochewe Community Council

Changes were noted in local SNH staffing, namely Peter Duncan has now retired, Doug Bartholomew's temporary posting has not been renewed, yet, and John Weir who was the NNR stalker has recently resigned.

- **Finances**

The amount of money within the Bank of Scotland's business account stands at £1,693.31, as at the 23 March 2017. This includes £1,000 paid in by the NTS to go towards the Trust's share of helicopter costs.

Five estates paid last years requested £200.00, with one yet to pay. There will be a similar request for subscriptions soon, for this year.

The Association of Deer Management Groups subscription of £563.85 was paid in August 2016, for the year 2016-17, and then in January 2017 they were sent the sum of £120.00, towards the cost of maintaining the GCU's website.

It should be obvious to all at this stage but SNH have kindly absorbed the cost of the recent helicopter count on the 20th January, and will not be billing estates as a result. This will help with other expenditure including the possible purchase of GPS units to help members complete their habitat monitoring.

- **Working Plan**

Linzi has updated some of the working plan information and included the figures from the helicopter count in January.

When the new count figures are compared to recent culls it confirms that too many stags are being taken and not enough hinds. The population model suggests an overall density of 3.6 is achievable and if 73 stags are culled annually for the next 5 years the stag population will expand.

There has to be an increase in the hind cull to 133 annually (plus calves at 47), which effectively doubles the current cull.

At the end of the 5 year period the summer population will be much more balanced with 627 stags and 625 hinds and 219 calves.

Basically the group has to come to an agreement as to how the stag cull is managed so that everyone benefits to some degree from the results. For example if NTS Torridon reduced its cull to 4 or 5 stags only, this would give some flexibility to Beinn Eighe to take a few more for conservation of their woodland, or it could help Gairloch sustain their cull for sporting purposes.

Action: Shoot the same number of stags as last year but first agree how this is to be done.

SNH have confirmed they will not shoot during the rut.

- **Possible stag and hind culls for each estate for 2017 / 18**

	STAGS	Stags shot previous seasons 2	HINDS	Hinds shot previous years 2	CALVES	TOTAL for YEAR
NTS Torridon	4	30	37	56	20	61
Grudie	15	23	10	0	2	27
Gairloch	30	59	40	44	20	90
Diabaig	10	21	10	4		20
Beinn Eighe	7	127	30	61	5	42
Slattadale	6	14	4	4		10
Eisean Dubh	1	2	2	1		3
TOTAL	73	276 (138/yr)	133	170 (85/yr)	47	253

The above table is based on figures from the population model so that totals are similar; and cull figures submitted to SNH, but the split between estates is open for discussion.

The stags should be as close as possible to the above suggested figures if the group is serious about deer management.

Over the course of the plan i.e. the next five years, the stag numbers will almost double, and the hinds will drop by around 100, giving the group a more stable platform from which to plan future strategies.

- **SNH Review**

During this review Deer Management Planning was criticised for not achieving all of its objectives and one of these concerned the amount of environmental work carried out, or not. For the GCU this means more effort is required to do habitat impact assessments. The basic training has been done, and it is just about the commitment now.

The government committee concerned with this is likely to recommend a much more legislative approach to deer management as they are not convinced the voluntary one is achieving enough. Cull numbers could be dictated and habitat monitoring become more onerous.

Within the GCU the areas that require most monitoring are the ones with designated sites. Native woodland is already quite well represented, and a proposal by Grudie to encourage more is welcome.

Action :The habitat monitoring should be done around this time of year i.e. NOW ! Most places are concerned with dwarf shrub heath, and Gairloch has blanket bog to consider.

30 to 60 plots have already been randomly generated for each estate for these habitats.

Action: Sinclair will try and put all the random plots on a map of the group area and take it along to the next meeting. (from previous minutes)

Action: The group is encouraged to monitor fences and report if they are good, or are they porous, and any implications.

Action: Deer Vehicle Collisions should also be monitored with members noting those on their ground, so that a brief report can be produced for the group.

Action: Members to speak to crofters associated with the GCU to encourage their membership, and also to see what deer are being shot so that this can be fed into the population model.

Action: Can members please send their larder figures i.e. weights, ages, sex of calves etc, to Linzi who is willing to collate these into a report.

- **Training**

Is there any training that group members require which might be organised to benefit all concerned?

- **DONM**

The next meeting is planned for the 4th **October 2017**, a Wednesday, at 9.30am, at Torridon or Anancaun.