



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

Wednesday 6th December 2017, 10.30 am
SNH Field Station, Anancaun

- Attendance**

John Wills (& Mrs Wills)	Grudie (Chair)
Ronnie Buchan	Gairloch Estate
Sinclair Coghill	SNH Wildlife Ops
Doug Bartholomew	Beinn Eighe NNR
Donnie Beaton	Diabaig
Mary Gibson	SNH
Linzi Seivwright	Caorann
Russell Cooper	Slattadale (FES)
Jack Ward	Beinn Eighe NNR
Terry Doe	Torridon & Kinlochewe Community Council
Seamus MacNally	Torridon (NTS)

- Apologies**

Tim Bowie, Eisean Dubh, near Diabaig
 Duncan Mackenzie, Gairloch

- Stag and hind culls to date**

	STAGS	HINDS so far	
NTS Torridon	9	25 (60)	
Grudie	17	(5)	
Gairloch	31	25 (40?)	
Diabaig	10	10 (15)	
Beinn Eighe NNR	43	11	
FES	1	6	
Eisean Dubh	1	(2)	
<i>Total</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>77 (62) = (139)</i>	

Already 7 stags over what the population model suggests, and the NNR will probably take some more from their woodland.

Still a number of hinds and calves to take to reach the group's potential of 140.

- **Habitat monitoring**

From previous minutes:

30 to 60 plots have already been randomly generated for each estate for dwarf shrub heath, and blanket bog which is important on Gairloch.

SNH are in the process of considering making some money available to help with the task of gathering information, or to help produce a plan from results gathered. ADMG will send out information soon on how to respond / apply to this initiative.

Linzi produced a map with habitat impact assessments to date, showing Diabaig and Torridon with low grazing impacts. Beinn Eighe had a similar result from their plots.

Equipment is now available to borrow, to help carry out assessments (GPS, compass, rainproof cover for note-taking etc.). The secretary has it at the moment.

SNH are willing to give each deer management group the sum of £1800 towards the cost of carrying out HIA's (Habitat impact assessments) and having the results analysed. The money has to be claimed before the end of March 2018, with proof of any work completed.

Linzi can help by providing estates with maps of the randomly selected plots chosen for HIA, to make it easier to plan which ones to do.

Some may wish to do all 30 in one year, and then repeat the process every 3 to 5 years, or do 10 plots every year and entering a rolling programme on an annual basis.

Some discussion followed on HIA on designated sites where Site Condition Monitoring had deemed them not to be in favourable condition due to deer. Some deer movements are governed by walkers using the area too.

Woodland provision also discussed, as having this provides deer, especially stags with food and shelter. Without this estates will struggle to keep stags and weights are unlikely to improve.

There is the desire to expand woodland but some estates have encountered some reluctance from the Forestry Commission to subsidise areas where targets are slow or hard to meet. This however is the very ground that should be planted up.

- **Report from Linzi Seivwright**

Member qualifications: Linzi is considering sending out a Survey Monkey to everyone, in the spring, to see where the group stands.

Also there may be some questions about what investments have been made by members in deer management.

SQWV : Scottish Quality Wild Venison scheme, if not a member already it is worth considering becoming one. The fee is based on numbers culled and it is a way of ensuring high standards in stalking and carcase handling.

Liaison with crofters: this is ongoing for some estates.

Deer Vehicle Collisions: members are encouraged to note any DVC's and report them.

Beinn Eighe NNR might be persuaded to hold a Best Practice woodland day, in the summer.

Doug will also look into the possibility of hosting a Food Hygiene course.

Linzi can produce digitised maps showing distribution of hinds only or stags only, based on the count at start of this year.

Also willing to produce a short annual report and put it on the group's website.

A reminder that SNH will be looking at the progress made by the GCU's Deer Management Plan in about a year's time.

- **AOB**

John and Mrs Wills spoke about the Argo vehicle accident which occurred during the stags.

They stressed the importance of having some form of communication that works, when using any vehicle on the hill. Useful items that could be carried in the vehicle include hi-vis vests, coloured sheet of plastic or similar (nylon bothy/bivvy bags come in various sizes to accommodate two people up to ones for 10 or 12, and are usually very brightly coloured).

Also perhaps a strobe light or even smoke flares, capable of attracting the attention of a helicopter .

SPOT locators are used by some estates and incorporate an SOS button which can be used to summon help to that location, in an emergency. They can also be tracked by someone at home using a computer.

GCU Bank details have changed. The new account details will accompany the request for subscriptions later in 2018, or are available from the secretary at any time.

- **DONM**

The next meeting is planned for the **8th May 2018**, a Tuesday, at 10.00am, at Anancaun.