



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

Wednesday 5th October 2016, 9.30 am
SNH Field Station, Anancaun

- **Attendance**

Sir Paul & Lady Nicholson	Diabaig
John Wills	Grudie
Duncan Mackenzie	Gairloch & Conan Estates
Sinclair Coghill	SNH Wildlife Ops
Peter Duncan	Beinn Eighe NNR
John Weir	BE NNR
Doug Bartholomew	BE NNR
Mary Gibson	SNH
Linzi Seivwright	Caorann
Seamus MacNally	Torridon (NTS)

- **Apologies**

Tim Bowie, Eisean Dubh, near Diabaig
Ronnie Buchan, Gairloch
Russell Cooper, Forest Enterprise Scot.
Terry Doe, Torrison & Kinlochewe Community Council
Neil Morrison, Coulin Estate
Charlie Hill, Ben Damph Estate

- **Finances**

The amount of money within the Bank of Scotland's business account stands at £1,813.31, as at the 15 August 2016. This includes £1,000 paid in by the NTS to go towards the Trust's share of helicopter costs in the near future.
Five estates have paid this years requested £200.00, with one yet to pay.
The Association of Deer Management Groups subscription of £563.85 was paid in August 2016, for the year 2016-17.

- **Proposed stag and hind culls for each estate**

	STAGS	Stags to date	HINDS	
NTS Torridon	10-15	5	45	
Grudie	15	4	5-10	
Gairloch	20	7	25	
Diabaig	10	3	?	
Beinn Eighe NNR	40	V.few if any during the rut	30	
<i>Potential number</i>	<i>100</i>		<i>110</i>	

Last year the number of deer culled within the unit (2015-16), including Forest ES, Slattadale, was 111 stags (incl.6 sika), and 87 hinds and calves, plus 16 others (roe and sika). These figures are remarkably similar to the number taken in 1996/97, and then, as of now, the group are probably shooting too many stags and not enough hinds, which is food for thought.

The NNR will continue to night shoot in their high priority zone. They are planting 10,000 trees this year, a similar amount to what was planted last year.

Gairloch carry out a small amount of night shooting to protect a particular piece of woodland.

- **Helicopter count**

This is still planned for the coming winter and it would be good to have someone from each estate (although not compulsory!) to be on the helicopter when counting that particular ground. It is usually organised so that there is a navigator, a camera person, a recorder and another counter.

Areas of woodland with good fencing may not require counting and this would reduce flying time.

A bit of a discussion followed about the possible future use of drones and Infra-Red imagery.

- **Habitat monitoring**

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

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.

There is some reluctance on the part of estates to commit to the time to do these plots, especially if they already have data gathered through other schemes such as hydro works. Torridon has done 10 plots over a couple of days this summer, but the ideal situation would be if everyone committed to doing at least 10 at the same time of the year, around late spring, for example, when browse of heather could be judged

before fresh growth makes this more difficult. The data gathered would then be more compatible.

One suggestion to achieving the monitoring is to have the assistance of students staying at Anancaun.

The long term trend is more important than the actual method used to gather data.

The analysis of this data is probably the trickiest part to do. The ultimate aim is to have one map showing the impacts for the whole group.

The benefit is that it shows doubters that estates are informed about their own habitats.

- **ECAF**

The Environmental Cooperation Action Fund next round of applications has not opened yet but will hopefully do so this winter.

Linzi was successful in a couple of bids in the previous round, for other DMGs, and is willing to assist the GCU do something similar.

It is time critical and as soon as the process opens again the group must decide (via email) to commit to asking Linzi if she can make an application on its behalf.

There was some discussion about costs and benefits.

ECAF will for example help with:

- 50% of the funding to allow a facilitator to analyse data from the group (e.g.habitat monitoring results)
- In the creation of more woodland
- Determining the condition of present native woodland.

As a group the GCU could use it to look at what grants might be available e.g. towards helicopter costs in the future.

- **AOB**

This is Peter's last meeting as he announced his retirement is soon. He wished the group all the best for the future, and hoped it would consider taking more hinds to allow more stags to become established.

John thanked him for his contribution to the DMG and wished him a happy retirement.

- **DONM**

The next meeting is planned for the **19th April 2017**, a Wednesday, at 9.30am, at Anancaun.