

MULL DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

October Meeting

MDMG meeting held at Salen Hotel

Sunday 13th October 2024

In Attendance

Tiffany Laing (TL)	Rossal	Chairman
James Corbett (JC)	Lochbuie	Vice Chairman
Andrew Holman (AMH)	Kilfinichen	Secretary
Jane Kilgour (JK)	Kilfinichen	Clerk
John Johnson	Scoor/ Argyll Estates/ Beach Forest Estate	
Jan Dunlop	Mull and Iona Ranger Service	
Emily Wilkins	Ranger Service & NTS	
John Maughan	Mull Community Council	
Alex Forrester	Ardnacross Farm	
Jack Forrester	Ardnacross Farm	
Steve Irvine	Ardnacross Farm	
Rupert de Klee	Achnacraig	
Charlotte de Klee	Achnacraig	
Richard de Klee	Achnacraig	
Jasper Heusdens	Ormsaig	
Angus Cheape	Craig	
Mark Horton	Carsaig	
Nancy Horton	Carsaig	
Sam Hird	Carsaig	
Roualeyn Thurlow	Killiechronan	
Tom Corbett	Lochbuie	
Anthony Dod	Lochbuie	
Graeme Sinclair	Pennyghael Estate	
David Johnston	Inverary Castle	
John Johnson	Scoor & Beach - Argyll Estates	
Harrie Burney	NTS	
James Greig	FLS	
Nathan Berrie	NatureScot	
John Lanteri Laura	NWMCWC	

Item

Action

1. Apologies

Apologies were received;

Norman MacPhail, David Hooker, Tom Nelson, Roc Sandford, Andrew Hay, Peter Corbett, John Jackson, Shaun Braid, Bill Bewsher

New members

Kevin Burnett of SWMID will join the group but was not in attendance today.

2. Minutes from the meeting of 12th February 2024

The Minutes of the Meeting 12th February 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record and would be posted on the website.

AMH

Since the previous Minutes were drafted, Emma Morgan has since left Kilfinichen Estate, and the post of Clerk to the Group has been taken over by Janie Kilgour.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Jim Corbett confirmed that he received £200 from the sale of the old van.

Jim also confirmed that he had purchased 10 x gambrels,.

MDMG Constitution - Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) proposal.

Further to the previous minutes, Andrew Holman reported that this proposal was still under review and will be pursued in the coming year.

3. Annual Accounts

a. Cash

The Secretary advised that the annual accounts ran from 1st July to 31st June, advising that as of 13.10.2024 the Bank account stands at £2415.08

b. CapEx

It was noted that at present there were no plans for any capital purchases.

c. Subscriptions

The Chairman requested members pay their levies as soon as possible to assist with cashflow.

4. MDMG Assets

a. Chiller

There are no problems with the chiller to report at present. AMH will liaise with the Rep as to when he is next due over, to inspect and service the unit.

AMH

b. Van & Collections

The Vice Chairman explained that the new van had a suspected fault with a gearbox bearing, however this was yet to be fully confirmed. JC also reported that remedial works had been done on the van, costing approximately £1,200. The van has also been fibreglassed at a cost of £604.

Tommy is requesting that members call him prior to 8.30pm in the evening in order that he can make up his runs for the next day. Same day or next day collections are standard.

It was reported that John Woods is now assisting Tommy in a self-employed capacity. The Secretary will make contact with insurers to make sure that he was insured whilst assisting with the collections in case of an injury occurring. Further it was considered prudent to add John as a named driver of the van in case he needed to step in on occasions.

AMH/JK

5. Game Dealer

a. Collections

Highland Game continue to collect only on a Monday. James Greig noted that the FCS country-wide contract with Highland Game had a further 2 years to run.

b. Pricing

It was noted that Highland Game did pay a premium of £0.40 per kg to SQWV members.

c. SQWV

The Vice Chairman explained to the meeting that SAI Global had increased the SQWV rates for the MDMG from £500 per annum to £2,200, mainly due to the expense of annual larder inspections. JC explained that FAI would be taking over the administration for the scheme from SAI Global and that he had spoken to Helen Macintyre at Highland Game and that the FAI would reissue a new invoice to MDMG and that due to the unusual nature of the Mull arrangements via MDMG it was hoped that a cheaper annual bill could be negotiated going forward. JC reminded members that to avoid paying twice members should not pay any SQWV invoices except those invoiced to estates by MDMG.

d. Lead Ammunition

The Chairman asked for comments on looking at other dealers who would still take lead shot carcasses, due to a number of concerns with using copper ammunition. However, the general consensus was that lead shot carcasses would not be permitted by law to enter the food chain for much longer and any such benefit was likely to be shortlived given that copper was now the standard for supermarkets etc.

6. ADMG matters

There was no ADMG report

7. Counts and Culls

a. Counts & Culls

A general count was taken of culls to date from attendees, however the Chairman noted that the Group was missing input from some of the key estates such as Torloisk, Ulva and Benmore Estate, and it would be helpful if attendees could be in contact with cull numbers and/or proxies if they cannot make the meetings in person.

b. Mortality

Deer stock condition was discussed, and the Vice Chairman reported that he felt the general condition of the deer had improved this year on last, with good weights and strong heads. Less calves were seen but they were in good shape, largely as a result of the good spring weather.

8. Sheep and Livestock Numbers

In general, no changes were reported in reducing or increasing sheep or livestock numbers.

a. Sea Eagles

There were now officially 23 breeding pairs on the island and Mull charters estimated there were up to 150 birds on the island, including juveniles. A number of members had reported seeing sea eagles attempting to take calves.

Dave Sexton has now retired from RSPB and will be replaced in due course. Jan Dunlop reported that due to weather and bird flu, not all chicks had survived recent seasons.

b. Marauding Deer

Ross of Mull: whilst numbers were still high and there was much work still to do in reducing numbers, there were no new issues to report. NatureScot reported no further complaints or issues.

Killiechronan: Roualeyn Thurlow reported some issues, in particular the displacement of deer due to ring fencing at Glenaros Estate. In addition, in the Salen area there were reports of deer being seen now near the show field.

Torosay – reports of deer being fenced out.

In general – 5 reports of RTA's were noted at Pennyghael

9. Forestry/Peatland Restoration/Fencing

It was noted that both Glenforsa and Pennyghael are due to start fencing which will likely displace many and have a material impact on the deer movement in those locations.

10. Deer Management Issues

a. Membership Fees

Tiffany advised that fees would have to be increased as it was necessary to increase available funds to support the future purchase of a van, etc. In addition the collection service was a high cost with Tommy's fees and general running costs.

b. Walker Disturbance

Pennyghael, Scoor edge – reported some issues from walkers and in general some wild campers had been causing issues.

c. Membership

Suggested new members were –

Ian Burnett, Tiroran & Ardura

Murray Finch, MICT – Jim Corbett suggested writing to him

John Addie, North West Mull

11. Ranger Update

Jan reported that another leaflet run was required, and the approximate cost would be £300, and asked if we had funds available to contribute to the leaflet cost as Jan reported MICT would not pay for the leaflet, it would be the ranger service.

Jan also advised that they had picnic tables and benches available to add sponsorship / plaques to at a cost of £200 for a bench or £300 for a picnic table. These were made with ardura larch and were of high quality, and had been purchased at a cost of £500 & £800 respectively.

Emily advised that Jan had just passed a 25-year anniversary with the Ranger Service, (and a big birthday!) Congratulations were offered!

12. NatureScot Update

Nathan Berrie (NB) reported that the Scottish government were experiencing delays over the new Natural Environment Bill, and some key themes were;

- Deer management legislation
- Compulsory powers – over effective deer management
- Deer welfare - skills & competencies
- Changes to the closed season for hinds
- Changes to the regulation of venison – general
- Kept and farmed deer

The government were working from approximately 1,600 responses, representing a good spread of views.

The question of subsidy for culls was raised and NB explained that NatureScot has two pilot schemes running in south Loch Ness & Central, offering a flat rate for Sika deer. £70 for mature female & £35 juvenile. Unfortunately the scheme had had a poor take up so far.

NB explained that helicopters remained the preferred method of counting open hill and in answer to a question over the possibility of another helicopter count across Mull, NB explained that given the last count was done in 2019 Mull was not due another count in the near future. Because as a group MDMG were in general considered by NatureScot to be demonstrating control of numbers and competent culling, Mull was not a priority and the next count would not be likely before 2027.

NB also reminded members that the new open season for stags was entirely voluntary.

13. Mull Community Council

Nothing to report, however a request was made for more new members to come forward, please.

14. Any Other Business

Poaching – one suspected poaching was reported in the Killiechronan area, as bullet damage had been noted in one of the culled deer.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 12:30 on Sunday 9th February 2025, at the Salen Hotel.

Chairman
Mull Deer Management Group