**Caenlochan Section 7 Agreement**

**Monday 27th June 2024 @1030 in Glenisla Hall**

**Meeting minutes**

**Present:**

Colin Macphail (Chair) NatureScot

Jamie Gammell, James Davidson Alrick

Nicholas Gibb Glenisla House

Angus MacNicol Invercauld Glenshee & Glencallater

Andrew Reid Invercauld Glencallater

Chris Walker Bachnagairn (Balmoral)

John Thomson & Kevin Peters FLS – Glenprosen & GlenDoll

Mark Mitchell Bell Ingram (Glenhead/ Damph)

Bruce Cooper Glenhead/ Damph

Brian Smith Clova

Isla Martin NatureScot Corrie Fee

Victor Clements SGDMG Secretary/ Treasurer

Graeme Taylor & Jimmy Irvine NatureScot

Colin Maclean CNPA

**Apologies:**

Liam Donald (Glenshee)

Gary Coutts & Richard Gledson (Bachnagairn)

Florian Kuehnle (Tulchan)

Major John Gibb (Glenisla House)

Doug McAdam (SGDMG Chair)

\*Some members arrived late due to a breakdown in communication, relevant points were covered twice in order that all members were involved in discussion.

1. **Welcome and apologies**

CM welcomed all to the meeting and requested apologies (as above).

1. **Review October 2023 Minutes & Action Points**

The minutes from the October 2013 meeting were agreed as accurate reflection of discussion.

AP1: JI requested and circulated culls at regular intervals.

AP2: JI has continued to map and gather deer management information for areas south of Alrick & Glenisla House. Cull info shared.

AP3: inviting wider SGDMG properties to the Section 7 meeting. NOT ACTIONED – further discussion during meeting (see below).

AP4: GT shared final SCM report.

AP5: ongoing – Invercauld & Balmoral to share HIA information with NatureScot. NatureScot to request from other properties for HIA results.

AP6: JI did not carry out a deer count for the area south of Mount Blair. This is rolled over to the 24/25 period.

1. **Season 23/24 review**

GT summarised the cull information that was shared as per the Caenlochan Section 7 summary (June 2024) – the overall deer cull target was achieved with an overall final total cull of 1980 red deer. Whilst cull targets on some individual properties were not achieved this was communicated during the season and neighbouring estates collectively continued to cull and ensure overall targets were achieved.

As per discussions during 2023 over 60% of the hind cull was achieved prior to Christmas. NatureScot thanked members in delivering last seasons cull including those who had delivered this on the ground.

Concerns were raised with regards to temporary movements of large numbers of deer out with the Section 7 area (i.e. to the SE of the SGDMG area) and how this impacts upon the cull that can be taken as there is a risk that deer are not targeted as hard in the area out with the Section 7. Whilst the winter weather was not too hard, there was a few days when larger groups of deer moved into the non S7 area of SGDMG. Further discussion covered on this below.

In the wider area of the SGDMG. a further 360 red deer were culled, although some properties culled no hinds.

JI provided on a regular basis, (predominantly weekly) reports on culls achieved in season 23/24. This was only possible due to the ongoing assistance from stalkers who provided regular updates.

ACTION: JI to continue to request and provide cull updates throughout the 24/25 season. This will include wider SGDMG properties.

1. **Population Management**

As per population modelling run by NatureScot a minimal cull of 1544 red deer is needed to continue to deliver the Section 7 population density target.

C Maclean provided information on the CNPA hind venison scheme. This is a new scheme which encourages culling of hinds (& calves) above the property 3 year average. Once the property reaches110% of the 3 year average then they can be paid from the 85% hind (and subsequent calf) through to the 110% hind, up to a total 150% all at a rate of £70 per head. This scheme is open to all signatories of the Caenlochan Section 7 scheme, whether in or out of the park, and also the wider SGDMG members. Any property interested in the scheme to make contact with CMaclean @ the CNPA.

Prior to the meeting estates had provided the following as provisional cull targets for the 2024/25 period which provide a total of 1810 red deer for the Caenlochan Section 7 area.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Stags | Hinds | Calves |
| 1 | Alrick | 35 | 0 | 0 |
| Auchavan\*\* | 40 | 60 | 24 |
| Glen Cally\*\* | 40 | 60 | 24 |
| Glen Isla House | 30 | 30 | 10 |
| Invercauld Glenshee | 50 | 80 | 32 |
| Tulchan\*\* | 80 | 150 | 60 |
| **Total** | **275** | **380** | **150** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | Balmoral Bachnagairn | 30 | 45 | 18 |
| Clova (South) | 25 | 40 | 16 |
| Coire Fee | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Glen Head & Glen Damh | 30 | 80 | 16 |
| FLS / Glen Prosen\* | 208 | 108 | 104 |
| FLS Glen Doll\* | 60 | 50 | 25 |
|  | **Total** | **356** | **328** | **181** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Invercauld Glencallater | 60 | 60 | 20 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Total** | **691** | **768** | **351** |

\*FLS stated an overall cull target of 400 and 135 red deer at FLS Prosen & FLS Glendoll respectively, which has been split down. Please note that cull reporting for FLS Prosen is both the open hill property and fenced older forestry block.

\*\* Auchavan, Glencally & Tulchan confirmed after the meeting.

NG stated that assistance from NatureScot during the hind cull may be needed for 24/25. NG & JI to liaise as season progresses.

GT stated that if the above overall cull target is delivered then based on the population model the S7 area would be close to delivery the density target. NatureScot’s advice would be that the estates should increase hind culls slightly in order to meet this target. Members felt culls as provided were more inline with their expectations under the agreement. Due to the likely proximity to the density target for the Section 7 area it was suggested that the deer count should be carried out in Spring 2025 to update the population information. Whilst there was some discussion around whether a summer count should be conducted, all present were in agreement for a count in 2025 and the preference would be for this to be done in spring – i.e. late March/ April. This count will aim to cover the same extent as in 2022 and may extend to south of Mount Blair.

Cull targets for the current non S7 area of SGDMG should be set. SGDMG & NatureScot to liaise.

ACTION: NatureScot to liaise with Glenisla House over hind cull support

ACTION: Estates interested in the CNPA hind venison scheme to contact Colin Maclean/ Mike Cottam at the CNPA.

ACTION: JI to confirm provisional targets with Auchavan/ Glencally & Tulchan and FLS to provide a breakdown into stags, hinds calves.

ACTION: NS to plan to count in 2025 and consider extent of the count area to include Brewlands/ Bellaty and south of Blacklunans road.

1. **AOB**

Throughout the meeting there was confusion and queries regarding the Caenlochan S7 and SGDMG, with several attendees raising concerns about the extent of the S7 area. For further information a list of current signatories is provided below.

In summary the Caenlochan S7 covers a smaller area of SGDMG, including some properties that are not SGDMG members, with the primary aim to deliver a red deer population reduction to improve the condition of the open range designated sites (Caenlochan SAC/ SSSI & Garbh Corie SSSI).

There is cross over between SGDMG & Caenlochan S7 in terms of the management of deer at the landscape scale to deliver objectives. Properties pay a membership for the SGDMG, with no annual membership for the Caenlochan S7, although there is a cost in delivery of the Section 7 in terms of time & also the cull of deer informs the SGDMG membership rates.

Extending the area of the Section 7 was raised and discussed. It is for the signatories to recommend to NatureScot that the control area be expanded if deemed necessary to deliver the objectives of the Section 7. There was concern from some that excluding the properties to the east of Prosen & Glenhead could result in difficulties for delivery of local culls and therefore density targets not being achieved, as deer occupy the non Section 7 area more frequently.

Whilst a risk to overall deer culling level is a concern NatureScot state that wider SGDMG cull setting and liaison should ensure that this risk is managed. Balnaboth are the only property that was previously in the older Section 7 that are now no longer. Expanding the area to include remaining SGDMG properties would require an assessment of what impact deer on these properties will have on the designated sites, which due to the distance from the sites, becomes less obvious.

Cull requests will continue to be delivered across the SGDMG area and wider properties by Naturescot, via JI.

NG queried what happens once the S7 density target is achieved? GT & CM responded that current focus is on delivery of the culls to ensure density targets are achieved, then maintained with a follow up HIA to inform condition of designated features. At that point further discussion on HIA results can be discussed within the context of wider herbivore management.

Mountain Hares – the browsing impact of mountain hares to the designated features was raised. Previous HIA reports had raised and summarised impacts from mountain hares and since the removal of the open season no mountain hares are culled across the Caenlochan S7 area unless within some selected forestry schemes. JI stated that a licence to cull mountain hares for the prevention of damage to nature conservation interests can be applied for. JI to follow up and report back to members on this approach.

ACTION: Sesction 7 signatories to confirm the recommendation to NatureScotto expand the Section 7 area.

ACTION: JI to provide information on mountain hare licensing.

1. **Date of next meeting**

Week beginning 21st October 2024 – date to be confirmed.

List of current signatories to the Caenlochan Section 7

The Agreement is between-

NatureScot

And,

Alrick Estate

Balmoral Bachnagairn Estate

Glenhead/Damph Estate (Scottish Water)

Clova Estate

Invercauld Glencallater & Glenshee Estates

Tulchan of Glenisla

Forest & Land Scotland Glendoll and Glenprosen

NatureScot Corrie Fee

Glenisla House Estate

Glencally and Auchavan Estates