

Minutes of the Islay Local Goose Management Group Meeting

Held on 27 March 2018 in the SNH Office, Bowmore

| Present | Organisation | Initials |
|------------|---|------------|
| [REDACTED] | SGRPID SNH SNFU RSPB SNFU SNFU SNFU SLE SNH | [REDACTED] |

1. Welcome and Apologies

[REDACTED] welcomed everyone to the meeting. Particular welcome to [REDACTED] who has agreed to join the Group as the new representative for [REDACTED]

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (25/10/17)

AP – [REDACTED] to write to NGMRG to request payment is split 85/15 – [REDACTED] had made the request but it was not agreed and a 50/50 payment split was issued for 2017/18. This request will be reiterated as it is important to business cash flow and enables preparation for the winter ahead.

AP – [REDACTED] to collate Group feedback to ISGMS review and submit to [REDACTED] feedback drafted, to be confirmed and submitted, action carried forward for [REDACTED]

AP – [REDACTED] to circulate WWT white-front report once published – not yet available

AP – Group to discuss whether the costings used in the calculation should be updated at the mid-point of the scheme – this was discussed and it was agreed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would look to update the calculation over the summer. [REDACTED] to inform [REDACTED] colleagues that the Group intend to do this.

AP – [REDACTED] to investigate the ideas proposed by the Group for improving the options available to the marksmen – further discussion under point 5.

AP – [REDACTED] to look at options for increasing marksmen capacity – The money remaining from the compatibility checks was primarily used on the marksmen contracts. 3 marksmen have been working full time on the contract and there has been additional spend on ammunition.

AP – [REDACTED] to input suggestions for the development of a goose shooting protocol – [REDACTED] submitted points to consider for [REDACTED] for [REDACTED]. A protocol has been developed and was circulated at the meeting. It can be amended regularly and [REDACTED] agreed to update points relating to RAMSAR sites and Canada geese.

AP – [REDACTED] to ensure marksmen are aware of the different types of Canada geese present on the Island – This discussion has taken place.

3. Scheme Update for 2017/18

[REDACTED] updated the Group on count figures for 2017/18. The International counts have been completed and a season average of 40,989 barnacles and 4932 white-fronts has been adopted. [REDACTED] circulated an updated graph showing the goose numbers from 2000-2017.

91 Scheme Agreements were signed and Management Agreement spend totalled £877,259. Payments will be processed by the end of March as scheduled.

██████████ – the Group discussed an email received from ██████████ outlining the issues of Estate shooting activities being carried out during International counts. The Group agreed this was a significant issue for some farmers. Counts also need to be co-ordinated to avoid full moon periods.

AP – ██████████ to try to secure dates as far in advance as possible for circulation to those carrying out sporting shooting. ██████████ agreed to discuss this issue with estates.

AP – ██████████ to draft response to ██████████

██████████ has reported issues with goose counts failing to pick up representative figures for his farm. In 2016/17 ██████████ carried out some additional monitoring which identified large flocks of geese using the farm in the early mornings and evidence of roosting. These counts have been incorporated into the average. It was agreed going forward that we would keep an eye on counts at ██████████ and discuss further action should repeated zero counts be recorded.

AP – ██████████ to draft response to ██████████

There was further discussion on the changes in goose movements in general and the effectiveness of the current count system going forward. Group agreed to start looking at possible changes to payment structure and monitoring options in advance of next scheme.

AP – ██████████ to consider possible scheme design changes during the update of costings

4. Verification contract

██████████ updated the Group on the verification contract that ██████████ have set up to verify the assumptions used to calculate goose scheme payments. ██████████ had involvement in the tender and interview aspects of the contract. The work will be carried out by ██████████. It was agreed to invite ██████████ to the next meeting. Group agreed the importance of ensuring additional inputs to pasture are also considered.

AP – ██████████ to contact ██████████ to invite ██████████ to the next meeting and explain the extra patching up works that aren't recorded effectively through the goose scheme data.

5. Lethal scaring

██████████ updated the Group on the shooting carried out to date. The bag limit is 3600 geese of which the marksmen are allocated 3095. As of 26 March 2018 there had been 2763 shot. 3 marksmen are working full time with occasional support from another subcontractor. Contracts have been extended for 2018/19.

██████████ – The Group discussed an email from ██████████ relating to the mandatory shooting activity within the scheme. The Group strongly support the need for all holdings to be treated equally. The impacts on tourism were recognised however and the Group has agreed that, where an appropriate justification is provided, a land manager can choose to nominate a buffer field instead of having shooting on a first or second year reseed. These will be considered on a case by case basis.

AP – [REDACTED] to draft response to [REDACTED]

Email from [REDACTED] – The Group discussed an email from [REDACTED] raising concerns about the activities of the marksmen. [REDACTED] had provided an interim response and the Group agreed that the marksmen were appropriately trained and it was important that wounded geese were reported and despatched promptly. Recent tourism figures for the island show encouraging increases (25% increase when compared to same quarter last year).

AP – [REDACTED] to respond to [REDACTED]

The Group had a wider discussion on the following points:

- Marksmen contracts being extended into April
- Change to licensing arrangements has led to shooting events being more visible and multiple shots attract more attention
- The potential for an increased number of wounded birds
- Tourism and bird watching interests.
- Restrictions in Oct/ Nov in Gruinart SPA catchment
- The continued impact to farming businesses as a result of goose pressure
- The possibility of implementing compulsory buffer areas
- Communications, including possible merit of holding a public meeting
- Invite to Bird Nerds Group
- Current pressure on and scrutiny of marksmen contractors
- Ideas for changes in 2018/19

AP – [REDACTED] to discuss possible Group representation with [REDACTED]

AP – [REDACTED] to review the Gruinart restrictions to see if the catchment can be reduced

AP – [REDACTED] to see if licenses can be issued more promptly during scheme launch

AP – [REDACTED] to review potential for compulsory buffer

AP – [REDACTED] to ask ILGMG to consider whether we should hold a public meeting – carried forward to next meeting

AP – [REDACTED] to circulate dates for Birds Nerds and respond to [REDACTED] plus [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] will attend accompanied by [REDACTED] plus [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

AP – [REDACTED] to write to marksmen to thank them for their hard work and reiterate the Group support of their activities

AP – Marksmen to be invited to contribute ideas about the design of the shooting effort in 2018/19

[REDACTED] updated the Group on the recent WWT barnacle census and current work at a range/ flyway plan level.

6. AOB

[REDACTED] updated the Group on the Goose Policy Review. This document will shortly be submitted to SG. Comments regarding constraints to funding have been included in a covering letter.

The grass monitoring cages have not been put out this year while the results to date are reviewed and a plan is developed for future monitoring requirements.

7. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed

