

MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 29 JULY 2020

HIGH PEAK ESTATE – 546 HIGH PEAK ROAD, WINDWHISTLE

Present: Don Hammond (Chair), Tim Gale (General Manager), Carol Watson, Richard Burdon, Roger Duxfield, Rachael Dean, Steve McFall, Sharon Salmons, Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer)

In attendance: Minister Eugenie Sage (Zoom), Lou Sanson (Zoom), Rod Treder (DOC), Ngaire Best (DOC), Garry Ottmann, Geoff Kerr (ex-Councillor), Simon Guild (NZAGE), James Guild (High Peak), James Cagney (NZPHGA), Grant Dodson (member of the public)

Apologies: Stephen Hall (Deputy Chair), Edward Ellison (NZCA)

- 1. Welcome, Health & Safety, Agenda:** Don Hammond welcomed Councillors & guests and thanked our host for the venue and their hospitality. Don Hammond facilitated introductions around the table and particularly recognised the contribution of Rod Treder and the role he has played over the past couple years. Simon Guild introduced the facility, Health & Safety overview and housekeeping. The Agenda was approved.
- 2. Chairman's introduction:** Don Hammond reflected on the messaging coming out the GAC during lockdown, the volume of work Tim Gale and others had, and lessons that can be learned from the experience.
- 3. Minutes of previous meeting 27 May 2020 (Zoom)** were taken as read with minor alterations.

Motion 29/1: Moved Steve McFall /Rachael Dean: that the Minutes of the 27 May 2020 Zoom Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting. CARRIED
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- 4. Matters arising Minutes 27 May 2020 and Action Table update:**
 - DOC was again asked to follow up and provide an update to the GAC re progress of the AATH Code of Practice (delivered to the Minister in December 2014 by the GAC). Previous advice has been that it will be incorporated into the conditions of new concessions.
 - All action items relating to Deer Management were completed and the GAC has made it clear to DOC that it wants to be an active partner in the planning & design phase of deer management, delivery, engagement, identification of sites and helping with the development of assessment criteria.
 - The final draft of the Hunter Education Strategy was completed in June 2020, to be delivered to the Minister.
 - Councillors were reminded of the need to review and declare any conflicts of interest.
- 5. Minister's Address to Council (via Zoom):** Minister Eugenie Sage acknowledged retiring Chairman Don Hammond and Councillors Roger Duxfield, Carol Watson and Richard Burdon. The new Chair is Grant Dodson and four more new Councillors to be announced shortly. Discussion was had regarding the Forest & Bird vs the MOC court case and the GAC's obligations as a statutory body responsible for providing advice to the Minister and the Department.

The GAC's position is that the 1993 Himalayan Tahr Plan is out of date and parameters should be reviewed. This is even more significant given the increase in public conservation land due to Tenure Review. There was discussion supporting Tahr hunter numbers have increased, and hunting in general seems to have increased in popularity.

The GAC acknowledged the good work that had been done so far on the Deer Plan. The GAC would like to contribute more but lacks the resources. The Minister confirmed funding allocation.

The Minister expressed her appreciation for the work done by the GAC team during COVID-19 Lockdown and the clear communications issued in consultation with other hunting organisations, around activities that were allowable under each lockdown level.

The GAC strongly urged the Department to continue progressing the GAC Levy Proposal even while the NZ borders are closed to ensure the regulations are in place when the borders reopen, and international hunters are allowed in again.

Roger Duxfield raised access easements directly with the Minister. Some hunters have been issued with trespass notices while transporting unloaded unassembled firearms through recognised easements/paper roads when accessing DOC managed public land hunting areas. The consequence of this is that under the new firearm Act this could be a reason for Police to revoke their firearms licence. The Minister advised that the Walking Access Commission has recently been given \$57ml to, amongst other things, sort this out and we should approach the Commission about this. She also mentioned with Tenure Review coming to an end and the new Crown Pastoral Land coming in, that Minister Damian O'Connor will have an increased budget for wild animal control and there will be an advocacy for land holders to increase hunting easements. The Minister asked that if the GAC had any special requests in this regard, please send to Minister O'Connor cc to her.

- 6. Lou Sanson:** Lou Sanson thanked Don Hammond for his leadership of the GAC over the past 6 years which has seen the GAC go from strength to strength as a valuable government agency.

Lou Sanson spoke about the recent stimulus package to protect the Conservation Estate and the opportunity for the GAC to further pursue its budget proposals for shovel ready conservation projects, Jobs for Nature and the potential for GAC to be involved in projects such as Wallaby Control. There could also be a role to play in managing recreational land users maintaining tracks and DOC huts.

The recent collaboration with the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation providing mince to foodbanks was an excellent initiative and a win-win for everyone.

Further points of discussion regarding the tahr management consultation process and the Operational Control Plan. The threats made against the Minister were discussed. There has also been an arrest made for the release of Sika Deer in Taranaki and the offender may end up with a prison term. The GAC was very clear in not condoning the threats against DOC, the Minister or the helicopter operators.

Ruahine Deer Meetings and the cessation of that work was discussed, and continuation of this project would be beneficial as a model for further work.

Discussion regarding the what can be done to build some certainty in the WARO industry, stabilise their businesses and ensure certainty with venison sales.

The GAC is keen to work with DOC on issues relevant to businesses in the post COVID-19 economic environment and gave examples of hunting estates and guiding operators who have lost almost 100% of their businesses due to the borders being closed. And this was the genesis of the wallaby control idea, utilising the skills and experience of hunters and expert shooters and give them an income in the absence of international visitors.

- 7. Briefing for incoming Minister** – discussion about what Councillors would like to see in the Briefing from the GAC to the incoming Minister.
- 8. Grant Dodson** – was introduced as the new Council Chair and gave an overview of his background. He is looking forward to working with Councillors and DOC.
- 9. Risk Register:** the draft Risk Register was discussed, noting that this is a requirement for Statutory Bodies - it needs to be reviewed regularly.
- 10. General Manager's Report:** Tim Gale read his General Manager's report covering highlights such as the Fiordland Wapiti Area Mince Project (product delivery, media coverage & public response), an increase in Tahr App returns and development of the draft GAC Hunter Education Strategy.

<p>Motion 29/2: Moved Roger Duxfield/Sharon Salmons: That the Council accepts the General Manager's Report.</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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- 11. Acquiring Additional Resource:** The GAC's raised profile has put pressure on current resources, as the team becomes more involved in projects. Since the appointment of the GM, there has been an increased understanding of the value of the GAC to government, particularly as a conduit for effective communications with the hunting sector and this was particularly apparent during the COVID-19 lockdown. It is recommended that Council endorsed the General Manager to seek ways to support the creation of an additional role of Policy Advisor. Council supports the additional resource and will also start to build a case for an increase in base line funding. Tim Gale will put a list of policy projects together.

<p>Motion 29/3: Moved Roger Duxfield/Richard Burdon that Council endorses the recommendation from the General Manager for an additional resource.</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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Tahr Plan Update: Geoff Kerr provided an update on the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG).

The GAC and other hunting sector organisations, have been invited to make a submission to the Department by 5 August 2020. Stakeholders can also attend a meeting in Christchurch on 2 and 3 August to make verbal or written submissions but must pre book a time with DOC. This consultation will inform DOC's decision about whether to make changes to the Operational Plan. DOC will then make their decision on 17 August and communicate this to stakeholders as soon as practicable.

The GAC will continue to push for information, a review of the HTCP parameters, an improvement in relations with DOC, making informed decisions, agreeing principles to work to, improved communications/consultation, a possible review of the permitted density limits within managed areas, the assumptions that underpin the plan. Throughout this process the GAC has attempted to maintain our position as being able to broker an acceptable solution for both sides as has been successfully done in the past.

- 12. Firearms Update:** In June 2020, the Arms Act was significantly amended. Some of the changes will come into effect immediately, others in December 2020 and June 2021 and June 2022 with the final provisions – the registry – coming into force in three years. The details are on the GAC and NZ Police website <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/firearms-and-safety/new-firearms-laws-and-what-they-mean>. The GAC was left off the invitation list (for the second time) to attend a Firearms Community Advisory Forum (FCAF) on 2 July 2020. Roger Duxfield/GAC has been invited to these meetings for the past two years. Roger Duxfield attended the meeting as a GAC representative and subsequently pointed out to Police that the GAC in it's Act has a responsibility for both firearms safety and education, also in our letter of expectations from our Minister has highlighted firearms

education and safety as a priority. There were a lot of apologies from senior Police staff and has been minuted in the latest FCAF minutes. The NZ Police have since sent details of a proposed Firearms Ranges Working Group that will provide advice to Police on the development of draft best practice standards and guidelines for the operation of civilian shooting ranges as required for the implementation of Part 6 (Shooting clubs and shooting ranges) of the Arms Legislation Act. Roger Duxfield has been appointed to this Working Group.

Don Hammond thanked Roger Duxfield for his contributions over the past 6 years working with the NZ Police and other agencies trying to ensure changes to firearms legislation do not have unintended consequences for the hunting sector and trying to make sure overseas hunters are given the correct advice about bringing their own firearms into NZ – an area that has seen many visitors hugely inconvenienced.

13.FWF Venison Project Update: Tim Gale gave an overview of this project and Garry Ottmann provided up-to-date report on costs, number of animals, tonnage of meat, distribution etc. The GAC has had good feedback from agencies that received the meat and meat processing jobs were retained because of the project.

14.Communications Report & update: GAC activities through and since lockdown, updates from the GAC that supported the government's efforts to get alert level rules out to hunters, engagement with stakeholders in the hunting and outdoors sector regarding allowed activities and alignment of messaging, promotion of the Tahr App in social media and hunting magazines, worked with ZIP to release the findings of the tahr trial in the Perth Valley, and issued two further editions of The Stalk newsletter to subscribers, the GAC website and Facebook.

15.Governance and Relationship Matters: Ngaire Best gave an overview of the Minister's role, statutory legislation, Board appointment process, the role of the Ministers of Finance and State Services, the role of the Department and its senior leadership team, crown entity funding and governance, monitoring functions and expectations and accountability to Parliament and the House of Representatives..

16.NZPHGA James Cagney: James Cagney addressed Council, setting out the effect of COVID-19 on the guided hunting sector which occurred right at the start of the 2020 hunting season and has had a huge impact on small and large businesses with lost revenue due to the closed borders. The NZPHGA has been working with the Tourism Industry Association on protocols. Some members are keen to be involved in Jobs for Nature such as wallaby culling.

The NZPHGA has sought feedback from their members through a survey, and the data gathered shows the value of the industry is higher than originally thought. Clients who would have come to NZ to hunt tahr have rescheduled meaning they are expecting big numbers when the borders re open. The new Firearms legislation has also created a lot of work for them and they are still working their way through the implications for their sector. The NZPHGA are keen to see the funding for the GAC in the form of the export levy, signed off by the Minister. The NZPHGA has appreciated the support of the GAC through the COVID Lockdown and the partnership between the two organisations is highly valued.

17.NZAGE Simon Guild – Simon Guild has appreciated working with the GAC over the past six years and Game Estates have seen the benefits in terms of sharing information about game animals and firearms and ensuring the hunting sector is portrayed as a unified sector, in agreement on important issues. He said it is good to know there is a body representing them and to see what has been achieved. He expects they will be inundated once the NZ borders reopen so they are using this time to diversify and adjust so that High Peak is prepared. The survey that James Cagney referred to was

timely as it helped quantify the value of the guiding industry to NZ tourism, its high net value and the risks for the NZ economy if the borders remain closed for a couple of years.

Don Hammond thanked James Cagney and Simon Guild for their comments and support. Don Hammond and Tim Gale thanked Simon Guild and his team for hosting us at High Peak. Don Hammond presented James Guild with a photo from his time on the Game Animal Council Establishment Committee. James acknowledged the achievements of Don Hammond and the GAC team, in an underfunded and under resourced Council.

18.Sika Show Planning: Don Hammond talked about planning for Sika Show and the opportunity this represents to engage with all the industries that support hunting.

19.Administrative Matters – Tim Gale asked for feedback on the various components of the proposed new induction package and proposed a review of the Delegations Policy.

20.GAC Finances: Tim Gale spoke to the financial report as circulated. The Board Pack contains the GAC Monthly Financial Report for May and June 2020 and credit card expenditure since the last Board Meeting.

<p>Motion 29/4: Moved Roger Duxfield/Steve McFall: that the Council accepts the financial reports and that expenditure to-date be approved.</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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<p>Motion 29/5: Moved Roger Duxfield/Steve McFall: that the Council approves the expenditure on the credit card.</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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21.Progress of Annual Report and Audit: The Annual Report and Audit is nearly complete.

22.General Business: Tim Gale and new Chair Grant Dodson will meet with the NZCA on 20 August. Carol Watson has had an email from the Bowhunters Association objecting to new landing fees.

Action: Tim Gale and Carol Watson to raise the issue of the new landing fees with DOC.

Action: Steve McFall wants to be put in touch with the DOC officer in charge of Kauri Dieback.

Rod Treder said it has been a pleasure dealing with the GAC over the past couple years and with Chairman Don Hammond in particular. Ngaire Best also thanked Don Hammond for his time as Chair of the GAC and other retiring Councillors who will also get a letter from Minister.

Richard Burdon thanked everyone for their camaraderie and support and Don Hammond for the excellent job he has done, pulling everyone together.

Don Hammond recognised everyone who has contributed since the start of Council and before that, the Establishment Committee, and the very high level of volunteer hours. Hunters like to enjoy nature and NZ's indigenous species while they are in the hills. Hunters need to be recognised for their contribution to conservation and their care of the environment, hunters are constantly out in the hills and undertake many important jobs trapping predators, removing wilding pines, culling wild animal numbers. Don Hammond recognised Roger Duxfield and Garry Ottmann for the huge number of hours they have put in as volunteers providing advice to the hunting sector, attending meetings, preparing submissions and representing hunting bodies. Hunting to survive, hunting to eat has always been part of the NZ culture and should continue to be although an increasing urban population may think differently. The GAC's challenge is to achieve the sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, commerce and conservation.

Meeting closed 3.55pm.