

MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 19 FEBRUARY 2021

Held at West Plaza Hotel, 110 Wakefield Street Wellington

Present: Grant Dodson (Chair), Tim Gale (General Manager), Rachael Dean, Steve McFall, Sharon Salmons, John Cook, Bruce Warburton, Erin Garrick, Don Patterson, Gerald Telford, Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer)

In attendance: Minister Kiritapu Allan (via Zoom), Lou Sanson (Director-General DOC), Huia Forbes (Minister's Office), Jacqui Bassett (DOC), Ben Reddiex (DOC), Sam Green (DOC), Roger Duxfield (ex-Councillor, via Zoom), Hayden Cox (Contractor), Gwyn Thurlow (NZDA)

Apologies: Stephen Hall (Deputy Chair), Ngaire Best (DOC)

- 1. Welcome, Health & Safety, Agenda:** Grant Dodson welcomed Councillors & guests and provided a Health & Safety overview for the premises. The updated Agenda was confirmed. Grant Dodson introduced guests and the new GAC Policy Advisor Gerald Telford.
- 2. Chairman's Update:** Grant Dodson circulated his report outlining priorities and areas of current focus. Congratulations were extended to the Gale family on the recent birth of their baby.

Matters discussed included:

- Establishing a solid and constructive relationship with the Minister.
- Progressing future funding sources to enable GAC to properly fulfil its mandate.
- Appointment of a 2nd FTE position - new Policy Advisor.
- GAC submission re Himalayan Tahr Control Operational Plan July 2021 to June 2022.
- Hunter Education and Hunters for Conservation.
- Progress made by the GAC since appointing General Manager Tim Gale.

- 3. Minutes of previous meeting 24 November 2020** were taken as read with minor alterations.

Motion 32/1: Moved Grant Dodson/Bruce Warburton: that the Minutes of the 24 November 2020 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting.	CARRIED
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- 4. Matters arising Minutes 24 November (not already on agenda) and Action Table update:**

- Action Items table discussed.
- NZPHGA, accreditation of their industry standards.
- The Risk Register was reviewed with no changes recommended.
- The GAC expects to receive the Minister's Letter of Expectation for 2021-22 in the coming weeks.

- 5. Additional Resource:** Grant Dodson introduced Gerald Telford who has been appointed on a temporary contract position with the GAC as Policy Advisor. Council approved recommendations A-F below, as outlined by Tim Gale.

Motion 32/2: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: that recommendations A- F be approved. A) That the Council endorse the establishment of the role of Policy Advisor. B) That the role be offered as a fixed term contract for a period of up to 5 months
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- C) That the remuneration for the role be set at \$75,000 (gross per annum) inclusive of any Kiwi Saver entitlements, plus accrued annual leave at the equivalent rate of 8% (\$6,750 gross per month).
- D) That the Council provide a laptop and phone for the appointee at a cost of up to \$3,500 excluding GST
- E) That approved actual and reasonable costs incurred by the appointee on Council business will be reimbursed including accommodation, meals, and transport costs. For the purpose of the Council's operating budget such expenses are budgeted at \$2,000 per month excluding GST
- F) That the current financial position of the Council can sustain this financial outlay. CARRIED

6. Budget and Remuneration: Grant Dodson and Tim Gale led a discussion regarding an update to the previously approved Budget which reflects the changes to resourcing. A Cash Flow Forecast to 30 June 2021 was reviewed as at 31 December 2020.

Motion 32/3: Moved Rachael Dean/Steve McFall: that Council approves the recommended revised GAC Budget for 2020-21 incorporating additional funding and approves the proposed allocation of additional funding. CARRIED

Motion 32/4: Moved Grant Dodson/John Cook: that Council approves the Cash Flow Forecast (as at 31 December 2020) for the year ending 30 June 2021 as circulated. CARRIED

Motion 32/5: Moved Grant Dodson/Erin Garrick: that Council receives the report on remuneration adjustment and approves the recommendation. CARRIED

It was agreed that GAC remuneration rates be reviewed annually. Chair Grant Dodson recognised the significant and mostly volunteer work of Councillors and contractors since the GAC was established. The marginal increase in remuneration ensures the GAC can retain key personnel and better reflects the fair and true cost of operating the GAC.

7. Funding Strategy: Council received the report on progress regarding the GAC funding strategy. The GAC's focus is to progress the 3-tier funding model with funding secured through Vote Conservation and proposals under development to source funds from a voluntary contribution on firearms and ammunition sales, and an Export Trophy Tag Levy.

A working document will be circulated to Council by the end of March 2021. It was noted that due to Covid the GAC is unlikely to get any significant funding from the Export Trophy Tag Levy for at least 2 years and will continue to need additional Vote Conservation funding until the other funding initiatives come to fruition.

There has been no recent progress with the proposed Export Trophy Tag Levy proposal - details were included in the BIM to Minister Allan. GAC Governance Advisors are hoping to get some resolution on this shortly which should enable regulations to be drafted in advance of international hunter's arrival into NZ. The GAC has previously had good support from the NZPHGA regarding this levy. The time to explore the concept further with the guides is now as they will be too busy to have input to the process once the international borders reopen.

Council noted the GAC funding strategy update report and content.

Motion 32/6: Moved Don Patterson/Rachael Dean: that Council receives the funding strategy update report and content. CARRIED

8. Minister Allan's Address: Minister Kiritapu Allan joined the meeting via Zoom. Grant Dodson facilitated introductions. Minister Allan spoke about the direction she wanted to see the GAC take in helping to manage the conservation estate while also promoting hunting interests and sound management of game animals. The Minister acknowledged the good work done by the GAC over lockdown, particularly with the Venison Mince initiative. The Minister asked what the GAC key priorities are and there was discussion on many topics. High level outcomes the GAC wishes to see achieved and supported by the Minister are:

- GAC want to see more people enjoying hunting as a recreational activity.
- GAC want hunters to be educated and trained in safe and successful practice.
- the utilisation of game-meat resource instead of animals being 'culled to waste'.
- sustainable management of game animals and hunting for the benefit of recreation, commerce, and conservation.

Funding - The GAC seeks the Minister's support for increased interim funding until revenue from the proposed additional funding streams can be realised. This will enable the GAC to maintain delivery of existing functions. It is clear that the GAC will have limited alternative funding streams while the borders remain closed and for some time following the reopening. The Minister agreed that the current funding provided to Council seems very slim. She would like to see a definite funding proposition from the GAC and is very keen to see any further ideas the GAC has around jobs for nature. Grant Dodson noted the funding totalling around \$400k annually will be the minimum required for the GAC to deliver on its SPE.

The GAC undertook to provide further advice to the Minister on funding requirements particularly with regard to any shortfall post 30 June 2021.

In addition, further work will identify what needs to be done to facilitate the progression of the Trophy Export Levy. The Minister undertook to update advice regarding the impact of the free trade agreements on the Trophy Export Levy.

Deer Management - The GAC supports the development of 'Te Ara Ki Mua – The Path Ahead project' and looks forward to further direction from the Minister on this project.

HOSI - The GAC seeks the Minister's support to progress the designation of an appropriate HOSI. HOSI criteria and templates developed by the GAC and DOC during the period 2015 to 2018 can be resurrected if the Minister chooses to endorse the HOSI approach.

The GAC undertook to provide further advice to the Minister about HOSI.

Tahr Management - The GAC continues to be actively engaged in the consultation process working with the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG), DOC, and the hunting sector. The GAC has recommended a review of certain provisions within the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (HTCP) as aspects of the Plan are no longer accurate or fit for purpose.

Jobs for Nature Community Conservation Fund - The GAC has submitted a joint application with the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association as part of the Jobs for Nature Community Conservation Fund. The GAC is seeking support from the Minister to develop, accelerate and implement nationwide hunter education and training. The GAC was given to understand that the proposal to continue the Venison Mince initiative was declined as it didn't strictly meet the criteria for creating enough 'new jobs' within the \$/FTE parameters and FWF deer were subsequently culled to waste. Tim Gale also outlined the Wallaby Control proposal that was declined by MPI.

Hunter Education - The GAC continues to develop our Hunter Education Strategy alongside DOC and other key stakeholders particularly NZDA with a draft framework in place. This education strategy will seek to educate and train hunters to understand the responsibilities and contribution a hunter can make to game animal management and ensuring New Zealand's unique biodiversity thrives.

The Chair invited Gwyn Thurlow, Chief Executive Officer and General Counsel for the NZDA to provide advice to the Minister regarding the NZDA HUNTS training, their extensive use of volunteer instructors across many branches who train on average 200 hunters annually.

Firearms - The GAC continues to work constructively with the Police, Firearms Community Advisory Forum, and the Range Certification Engagement Group to seek solutions to implementation and compliance issues for firearms licence holders, applicants, and those with firearms ranges.

Hunters for Conservation – Grant Dodson briefly outlined the nature of this initiative and how it will benefit nature and conservation, by utilising the large number of hunters to improve conservation outcomes on a voluntary basis.

- 9. Priorities, workplan, projects:** Council only discussion following the Minister's address.
- 10. Communications Report:** Tim Gale and Hayden Cox provided an update covering the significant communications activities since the last Council Meeting.
- 11. Firearms, Ranges and Licencing Update:** Roger Duxfield provided an update on what is happening with firearms licence and renewals processing and his representation on NZ Police forums (the Firearms Community Advisory Forum and the Range Certification Engagement Group) and their ongoing work. The GAC has used its expertise in the use of firearms for hunting to work alongside Police, other agencies and stakeholders, advocating for practical changes to the Arms Legislation Act and raised the awareness and views of the hunting sector to improve hunting opportunities.

A letter regarding the backlog of new firearms licences was sent to the Minister on 28 January 2021 and it was noted this resulted in a positive response from Police.

The GAC supported three applications to join a new statutory body (a Firearms Advisory Group that answers to the Minister of Police). Grant Dodson thanked Roger Duxfield for his work on the various committees and for representing the GAC.

The GAC noted the issue of lapsed firearms licences awaiting renewal and agreed these should be formally extended again to see hunters through the roar period.

12. DOC Governance Update – Jacqui Bassett, Governance and Performance Manager, DOC provided a governance update. A draft Letter of Expectation has been developed and will be forwarded to the GAC shortly. This should enable the GAC to start preparing its Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) for 2021-22 and get it signed off within the recommended timeframe of two months prior to the end of the financial year i.e. April 2021.

It was noted that the GAC's previous SPE has still not been signed off and we are now 8 months in to the 2020-21 period. Jacqui Bassett congratulated the GAC on having provided its half-yearly report already, well within the expected timeframe. Jacqui Bassett has really appreciated working with the GAC and asked that this be recorded in the Minutes.

Self-evaluation process - the previous Minister's Letter of Expectation included a requirement for the GAC to undertake a self-evaluation process or engage an external reviewer. DOC will provide guidance and information on what tools are already available that might be of assistance.

Motion 32/7: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: that Council receives the paper on self-evaluation and notes the content.

CARRIED

13. General Manager's Report: Tim Gale provided an overview of activities and engagements since the last Council Meeting. Council's expertise is increasingly being called upon by DOC and other organisations. Our leadership on tahr and deer has been recognised and our collaborative approach has been appreciated. Some key points noted were:

- GAC's raised profile has put pressure on current resources.
- Deer management is a significant body of work which will require additional resource.
- The GAC continues to support the Hunters for Conservation initiative and their planned projects.

Hunter Education Strategy - Tim Gale provided an updated report. Council received the report and noted the content.

Tahr Management Update - GAC representatives attended the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) meeting on 15 December 2020. Following the meeting, on 31 January 2021, the GAC provided DOC with feedback and advice on the draft Terms of Reference for TPILG, submission on the Tahr Control Operational Plan 2021/22 and contributions toward the Research and Monitoring plan for the 2021/22 TCOP. .

DOC is expecting to finalise and distribute the Terms of Reference by the end of February and issue the agenda for the next Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group Meeting on 1 March for a meeting on 16 March in Christchurch. Comments on the draft Tahr Control Operation Plan close on 30 March and the final plan is expected to be distributed on 10 May 2021.

Council received the content of the Tahr Management Update Report and recommendations. Council noted that the GAC has had input to the TPILG Terms of Reference. Council notes that the GAC has made its submission on the Himalayan Tahr Control Operational Plan July 2020 to June 2022 for 2021/22 and noted the contents of the submission.

Deer Management Update – A report was provided to Council covering Te Ara Ki Mua – The Path Ahead: Deer in Aotearoa, the Raukumara Restoration Project, Sika Research and Adaptive Management Model and the Ruahine Deer Management Plan.

Council has contributed financially towards the Sika Research and Adaptive Management Model. Council notes and endorses the spend on the “straw-man” plan to contribute to the Sika Research and Adaptive Management Programme

Council received the Deer Management update report and noted its content. Council supports further engagement in the design and delivery of the Raukumara Restoration Project where requested. Council supports further engagement in the delivery of the Ruahine Deer Management Plan.

Permit Review – The GAC submitted feedback to DOC on 7 December 2020, seeking to alleviate some of the long-standing issues regarding Hunting Permits.

Council received the update on the Hunting Permit Review and noted the GAC’s liaison with DOC to bring about a better hunting permit process and gather better information about the hunting activities of New Zealanders and overseas visitors to help inform future policy and operational decisions in the future.

Wallaby Control Work - As per our Letter of Expectations 2020/21, the GAC was asked to consider how it might contribute to the wallaby control programme through the project alliance model to support efforts to both create new jobs and enhance biodiversity on public and private land.

The GAC subsequently submitted a proposal to MPI on 8 October 2020 seeking to contribute to the programme by utilising the Commercial Hunting Sector for Wallaby Control Programme. The proposal was declined by MPI. Council received the proposal made to MPI and the subsequent response and noted the content. No further work on Wallaby’s is recommended at this stage.

Motion 32/8: Moved Grant/Steve: that the Council receives the proposal made to MPI and the subsequent response and notes the content. CARRIED

IT Update – once the GAC has established the exact nature of the services it requires; the incumbent plus other suppliers will be asked to quote for the contract.

Other activities - Councillor Erin Garrick will be part of a small advisory group being formed for the NZ Royal Society funded Marsden Research Project. Researchers will be looking at the social dimensions of introduced species such as wild pigs, wilding conifers, tahr and carp. Tim Gale has recently met with OSPRI to discuss the GAC submission to them on 30 September 2020.

The General Manager’s Quarterly Reports were noted and accepted.

Motion 32/9: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: that the General Manager’s Report is approved. CARRIED

- 14. Financial reports:** Tim Gale spoke to the Financial Reports as circulated. The Council Pack contains the GAC Monthly Financial Report to 31 December 2020 and credit card expenditure since the last Council Meeting, as at 5 February 2021.

Motion 32/10: Moved Rachael Dean/Bruce Warburton: that Council approves the Financial Report as at 31 December 2020. CARRIED

Motion 32/11: Moved Rachael Dean/Bruce Warburton: that Council approves the Credit Card Expenditure from 11 November 2020 to 5 February 2021 as circulated. CARRIED

Delegations Policy Review - The Council approved a Delegations Policy in May 2019. Following this year's audit, and the evolving structure of the GAC, the policy needed to be updated. The existing Delegations Policy and Delegations Schedule has been updated. Further redrafting has been ongoing. Council supports the General Manager and Finance Chair finalising the updated policy.

Motion 32/12: Moved Sharon Salmons/Steve McFall: Council received the update on the Delegations Policy and supports the finalisation of the review by the General Manager. CARRIED

15. General Business: the GAC had been asked to make a presentation to the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) in April 2020. Steve McFall and Garry Ottmann attended a meeting with MPI on 16 December 2020 to discuss African Swine Fever and the implications should it make its way into NZ.

Steve McFall will be part of the judging team at the Pureora Forest Park Hunting Competition on 18 April 2021 (competition runs from 12 March to 18 April).

Tim Gale is preparing a GAC Submission on the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area reclassification, submissions close 26 February 2021.

It was noted that there is a bill before the Environment Committee of Parliament regarding Crown Pastoral Land Reform.

Meeting closed at 4.50pm.