

Minutes of the 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland

At: Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld
On: Sunday 26 January 2014

Present: LDNS Executive Committee
Richard Cooke, Chairman
Dick Playfair, Secretary
Ian Fergusson, Forest Enterprise
Donald Fraser, SNH
Jamie Hammond, SNH
Anton Watson, SNH
Ian Talboys, Aberdeen Council
Alex Paul, WLDMG
David Quarrell, SLDG
Peter Semple, Inverclyde DMG
Derek Kneller, NLDMG
Alex Hogg, SGA
Daye Tucker, NFUS
David Fyffe, Scottish Land & Estates
Iain Laing, Police Scotland
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland
Glen Heggs, SW Scotland DMG/UPM
James Govan, Stalker, Ayrshire
Robert Sharp, Stalker, Renfrewshire

Members and others attending (subject to amendment):

Professor James Simpson, Speaker
Ben Harrower, FCS, Speaker
Chris Dalton, South Ayrshire, Speaker
Stuart Wilson, Speaker
Ian Anderson, SLDG
Christopher Badenoch
Andrew Baillie
David Baillie
Alastair Boston, The Deer Initiative
Thomas Brand
David Brooks, NLDMG
William Brooks, NLDMG
Frank Burn
John Campbell-Smith
Ian Clark, SACS
Steven Clark
Jason Davidson, BASC
David Ferguson, NLDMG
Jim Forrest
William Gilchrist, NLDMG
Neil Gordon
Bill Haddow, NLDMG
Robert Halbert, Inverclyde DMG
John Hamilton, NLDMG
Kayleigh Hogg

Dave Hunter
Hugh Hunter, NLDMG
Greg Login, SLDG
Matt Love, NLDMG
Garry MacHenry, Blackface Meat Company
Denis McColgan
Neil McKechnie, NLDMG
Blair McFarlane
Alan S Marshall
Kenneth Morton
Dave Muir, WLDMG
David Muir, WLDMG
Hugh O'Neill, Inverclyde DMG
David Overton
Christian Nissen, Highland Game
Craig Paterson, NLDMG
Ralph Ross
Robert Smith
Chris Staples, Airthrie Estates
Alex Stoddart, SACS
Andrew Taylor, Scottish Government
Mark Telfer
Andrew Treadaway
John Walker
Ian Wright, NLDMG
Dr Alasdair B Young

Apologies:

Ron Smith, Committee, Vice Chairman
John Bruce, Committee
Angus Corby, Committee
Gordon Patterson, Committee
Gordon Ritchie, Committee
Kenny Willmitt, Committee
Edward Baxter
Robert Clerk
Colin Johnson
Peter Keyser
Jim Paxton
Jamie Stewart, SCA

1.

Welcome and Chairman's Report

Richard Cooke, LDNS Chairman, welcomed all to the AGM. He reminded everyone that LDNS had been set up in November 2011 and had held its first AGM in December 2012. Its Constitution had been approved, and he as Chairman and Ron Smith as Vice Chairman had been elected at that time. This was the first full working AGM of LDNS with an Executive Committee rather than a development committee. It was encouraging, he said, to see a full room.

The minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting are available on the website, and were proposed as a true record by Glen Heggs, seconded by Robert Sharp.

Using Powerpoint, Richard Cooke described the make-up and membership of the LDNS Executive Committee.

He advised that the main objectives of LDNS were (1) to provide leadership, (2) to establish communication, (3) to support Best Practice and promote Competence, (4) to improve public understanding, and (5) to represent the interests of low ground deer management to Government.

In reviewing the year, Richard Cooke said that the Executive Committee had met 4 times, and that a newly convened events sub committee had met twice (this comprised Kenny Willmitt, BASC; Ian Fergusson, FES; Jamie Hammond and Anton Watson, SNH; Derek Kneller, NLDMG, Dick Playfair, and himself).

A Joint LDNS/Agency Project Plan had been drawn up – this was a working document and was updated regularly.

There were now 5 established low ground Deer Groups, and the Inverclyde and Dumbarton DMG was to be launched in the summer. There was some realignment of Groups needed, most notably in SW Scotland. As a result possibly 4 new Groups were under consideration. The Angus Deer Initiative had also been set up.

The remit of LDNS was to extend representation and to engage more effectively with farmers, forestry companies, environmental NGOs and the venison trade. LDNS, with the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association, had been involved in three events for butchers in Glasgow, Ayrshire and Perth, with thanks to David Quarrell, Jim Govan and Jamie Hammond for their input for these.

Richard Cooke said that SNH would be reviewing levels of Competence through 2014/15 and suggested that most of those attending the AGM would already have attained a high level of Competence, but that other sectors, such as farming, were lagging behind.

Regarding Best Practice, he reported that 50 + Best Practice Guides were available, and that 10 Best Practice events had been held in the last 3 years. LDNS is now also represented on the Best Practice Steering Group.

A Competence Awareness Day had been run by SLDG and it was planned that this, or similar, was to be repeated in 2014. He gave credit to SLDG for its organisation and said that it set format for other Groups to follow.

A DSC Level 1 Course had been run by WLDG in conjunction with NLDMG, and there had also been 2 wildlife crime events in Fife.

	<p>Richard Cooke made reference to CWD and whilst this disease was not present in the UK or Europe, said that it was spreading through the USA, that all must be encouraged to take reasonable precautions and that, primarily through the efforts of John Bruce and BDS, the Scottish Government had been alerted to the risk.</p> <p>In terms of DMG mentoring, NLDMG had been extremely helpful in working with the new Inverclyde DMG towards its set up.</p> <p>Regarding communication, Richard Cooke said that the LDNS website was up and running and a source of information as it includes Executive Committee meeting minutes and events. LDNS also was on Twitter, two newsletters (printed and online) had been produced during the year, a new information leaflet had been published, and LDNS had attended the Borders Stalking Fair and the Scottish Game Fair.</p> <p>The LDNS Newsletter is also made available to MSPs to help to educate them in deer matters. The evidence sessions of the RACCE Committee into Deer Management and the Environment, although focused primarily on the upland deer range, had been ultimately a useful exercise and Richard Cooke had represented both ADMG and LDNS at those sessions, with written evidence from LDNS submitted. The level of knowledge of MSPs about deer management was generally low, and it was explained to them that it was a complex issue. He said that the RACCE enquiry was a 'major event' for the deer sector but hopefully the voluntary principle was set to continue as a result although there is to be a further Government review in 2016.</p> <p>Richard Cooke and Dick Playfair had met with the new Rural Affairs Minister Paul Wheelhouse MSP and this was reported as a useful and productive session.</p>
2.	<p>Financial Report</p> <p>Richard Cooke explained that the LDNS financial year ran to 31 March. The financial statements to consider were therefore the Audited Accounts to 31 March 2013 and the Year to Date expenditure to January 2014.</p> <p>Accounts to 31 March 2013 saw income of £28,510.77 with grants of £10,000 each from SNH and FCS, and a further £7000 from Transport Scotland, the balance comprising membership fees, bank interest and event registration fees.</p> <p>Expenditure for the year amounted to £22,905.64 giving a year end surplus of £5605.13.</p> <p>Also included in the accounts were the income and outgoings for the 2011 launch event of £6151.86. This event was cost neutral and was covered by contributions from ADMG, SNH and FCS.</p> <p>Mr Cooke said that he made no charge as Chairman but that a fee of £2400 was paid to his office for membership and financial administration duties.</p>

	<p>For the year to 31 March 2014, figures were available to 15 January showing income of £17,380.23, the major element of this being £17,000 grant funding from SNH and Transport Scotland with a £10,000 contribution from FCS to come.</p> <p>Expenditure to date amounted to some £20,391.76. It was expected to end the year with a surplus in the region of £8000 to carry forward to 2014/15.</p> <p>Questions on the finances covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What recurring costs are there for LDNS apart from the website? • How long was public sector support for LDNS anticipated to continue? • Do all members of the Committee give their time for nothing? <p>The 2012/13 Accounts were proposed by Alex Hogg and seconded by Ian Fergusson.</p> <p><u>Subscriptions</u> Subscription levels were discussed. Richard Cooke said that it was not the case that LDNS could be self-sufficient and that it therefore made sense to move subscriptions to a lower level in order to encourage increased membership.</p> <p>A new subscription level was proposed for individuals at £10.00 per annum, and at £25.00 for Deer Groups, Local Authorities and Corporate Members.</p> <p>John Campbell Smith questioned whether it would cost more than £10 to collect and service and individual subscription.</p> <p>The new subscription rates were proposed by John Campbell Smith and seconded by Jim Govan and would be applied from 1 April 2014.</p>
3.	<p>Election of Committee and Office Bearers Richard Cooke explained that the election of Office Bearers and Committee was on a rotational basis, and that this year the Vice Chairman, Ron Smith, was standing down but had been nominated for re-election. This was duly carried, proposed by Richard Cooke, seconded by John Campbell Smith.</p> <p>Six members of the Executive Committee were standing down but standing for re-election, those being: David Quarrell, Alex Paul, Glen Heggs, Alex Hogg, Jim Govan and Robert Sharp. All were duly re-elected, proposed by Andrew Baillie, seconded by John Campbell Smith.</p>
4.	<p>SNH Report Jamie Hammond gave an update from SNH. He said that this would now be the third year that SNH was supporting LDNS and that he was encouraged by numbers attending this second AGM.</p>

	<p>He emphasised the importance of the RACCE Committee sessions and SNH's evidence to the Committee, saying that some MSPs consider that deer management under the voluntary principle is not working, and that 'Scotland plc' expects the public interest in deer management to be better catered for. Delivery of the Code was an important aspect of this as this embodied sustainable deer management.</p> <p>The case had not been helped, he said, by scaremongering over deer numbers in parts of England. There were localised hot spots, damage to natural heritage caused by deer, and numbers of DVCs. Considerable trust was being placed in owners and managers to bring matters under control where there were issues.</p> <p>He was encouraged by the moves to form new Deer Groups – SNH funds were scarce however and this year SNH would not be in a position to become involved in further funding of projects. SNH would however continue to support LDNS.</p> <p>He said that the Competence Review Group would assess both the uptake of Competence and its impact on deer welfare.</p> <p>Also, contrary to rumour, Best Practice had not ended, and SNH would continue to support the Colleges. 25 new guides were planned and there would be some integration of LDNS and SNH work on these.</p> <p>Regarding sites in unfavourable condition, he said that there were 300 lowland features including woodland SSSIs and a priority for these would be improving habitat condition.</p> <p>Richard Cooke said that with regard to DVCs a small group had been set up to address this including the Police and BDS. Some work had already been started by Derek Kneller and NLDMG on a guidance note for motorists and possibly advice for humane dispatch at the roadside.</p>
5.	<p>Plans for 2014/15</p> <p>Dick Playfair outlined the plans for main activities through 2014/15. These would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of the low ground DMG network • Activity to reach Local Authorities. • Heightened representation at NFUS meetings • Video (subject to additional budget from SNH) • 'Deer on Your Doorstep' pilot • Local events • Deerstalking Fair and Scottish Game Fair presence • A template deer management plan • Newsletters x 2 and online e bulletins as appropriate • Regular updating of website; addition of events and more photographs

6.	<p>Guest presentations</p> <p>Guest presentations were given by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ben Harrower, Wildlife Ranger Manager, Forestry Commission Scotland - <i>Urban Deer and the National Forest Estate</i>• Professor James Simpson - <i>Disease in Scottish wild deer and the Scottish deer project</i>• Chris Dalton, South Ayrshire Stalking - <i>The low ground stalking experience</i> <p>Chris Dalton deputised for Sporting Rifle editor Peter Carr at late notice. Peter Carr was unable to attend.</p>
7.	<p>Questions from the floor</p> <p>These covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement of the Scottish Government veterinary diseases unit with the Scottish Deer Project.• How much Forestry Commission budget is spent on education – both schools and the wider public.• The Raasay deer management contract and South Ayrshire Stalking.• Whether there was a requirement to have a deer management plan for forestry blocks of less than 50ha.• Whether deer management plans were taken into consideration for wind farm developments.• Whether a connection existed between spreading of sewage sludge and the incidence of antlered female roe deer. <p>As there were no additional questions the Chairman thanked the speakers and all those who had attended, and duly closed the meeting.</p>