

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan

On: Wednesday 2 July 2014

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
 Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
 Gordon Patterson (GP), FCS
 Angus Corby (AC), Transport Scotland
 Ian Fergusson (IF), Forest Enterprise
 Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH
 Donald Fraser (DF), SNH
 Anton Watson (AW), SNH
 Ian Talboys (IT), Aberdeen City Council
 Peter Semple (PS), Inverclyde and Dunbartonshire DMG
 Alex Hogg (AH), SGA
 Kenny Willmitt (KW), BASC Scotland
 John Bruce (JB), BDS
 Andy Mavin (AM) Police Scotland
 James Govan (JG) Stalker, Ayrshire
 Rob Sharp (RSh), stalker
 Iain Anderson (IA dep for DQ), SLDG
 Paul Adkins (PA dep for AT)
 David Bruce (DB), Commercial forestry

Apologies or not present:

Ron Smith (RS), Vice Chairman
 Derek Kneller (DK), NLDMG
 Andrew Treadaway (AT)
 Malcolm Muir ((MM) South Lanarkshire Council, COSLA
 David Quarrell (DQ), SLDG
 David Fyffe (DFy), Scottish Land & Estates
 Daye Tucker (DT) NFUS
 Jane Begg (JBg), West Lothian Council
 George Ritchie (GR), Banff & Buchan DMG
 Alex Stoddart (AS), SACS
 Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA

		Action
1	<p>Welcome The Chairman welcomed both David Bruce representing commercial forestry interests and Paul Adkins deputising for Andrew Treadaway, to their first meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Matters arising <u>2.1 RTA Sub Group</u> JB has discussed with RC and the group's meetings are being conducted by e mail. Ongoing.</p> <p><u>2.2 COSLA</u> DP had exchanged e mails with MM. No events in pipeline at which LDNS might have a presence in immediate future. Ongoing.</p>	<p>JB</p> <p>DP, MM</p>

	<p><u>2.3 PACEC</u> 2.3.1 RC said that the draft questionnaire was almost finalised and that copies would be available on the stand at Scone. It will be circulated asap to committee and the LDNS database. DB said that he would circulate round forestry contacts also.</p> <p>2.3.2 RC said that the questionnaire had been designed by a small committee and that it had been seen and approved by JH for the stakeholders.</p> <p><u>2.4 VAT</u> JH reported that further to previous discussions it would be difficult to change the VAT arrangements particularly since the Memo of Agreement had already been signed. Also difficult with single supplier and no competitive tender for a public sector contract. IF said that FES was also governed by rules on single supplier contracts.</p> <p><u>2.5 Lowland Deer Group Constitution</u> JH said that an upland model was in development and that this could in turn be adapted for low ground groups. Included in the Project Plan to have done by October.</p> <p><u>2.6 Bruntsfield Golf Club – and F & C Register etc</u> 2.6.1 RC said that he had been alerted by a neighbour to the golf club and had provided the names of two deer managers in the area including AP. RC said that LDNS needed to develop a procedure for enquiries such as this and, once decided, this should go on the website. Agreed that reference to SNH F & C Register should be made.</p> <p>2.6.2 JH said that they would usually provide suitable names from the F & C register and any other recommendation could be difficult.</p> <p>2.6.3 RSh said that all the Groups involved with LDNS were very well qualified, with professional, competent people, and covered by insurance and ought to be able to be recommended.</p> <p>2.6.4 DF said he thought either route was acceptable. In giving contacts from the F & C Register SNH does try to match up operators with locality.</p> <p>2.6.5 RSh said individual members on the F & C Register might not ‘tick all the boxes’, and it should not be for SNH to promote or endorse individual practitioners.</p>	<p>DP DB</p> <p>JH</p>
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2.6.6 JB said that BDS was also reluctant to endorse an individual particularly since they could derive huge benefit from that endorsement.

2.6.7 RSh said that the problem needed to be fully assessed first and that 'pulling the trigger' should be the last resort.

2.6.8 RC said that a correct way forward was still required and that the BDS solution made a lot of sense.

2.6.9 AP said he did not see that there was any 'proper route' to solving a deer problem.

2.6.10 PA Said that the solution offered should allow the landowner to choose from a number of options so there was no question of recommendation or endorsement but that the choice was made by the owner of the property, and that proper understanding of the issue would allow for a better response.

2.6.11 RC said that a form of words should be developed that presented the right approach. RC/DP to develop for LDNS website in consultation with SNH.

RC, DP

2.7 SSPCA extended powers

2.7.1 JB said that he had discussed this in general terms with Stuart Eardley, SSPCA, and the application for greater powers essentially would allow SSPCA to collect evidence if first at the scene. JB said that it would not necessarily be detrimental.

2.7.2 AM clarified that S19 Powers (currently a privilege afforded only to Police Officers) would allow the SSPCA to enter land other than dwellings or lockfast premises; search for, search or examine things if they suspect that evidence will be found in or on that thing; and seize evidence. This extends beyond the current powers which under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 allow the SSPCA to enter non-domestic premises to investigate offences in relation to animals controlled by man on a permanent or temporary basis. The new powers would be exercisable where there was reason to suspect that a Part 1 offence (includes those relating to wild birds, other protected animals, poaching, snaring and non-native species) was being committed or that there was evidence of such an offence having been committed. For example, this would allow the SSPCA to enter land where animals were not in distress – i.e. checking for illegal traps where no animal is present.

2.7.3 JB said that currently SSPCA officers could not be

	<p>stopped anyway because of the Access legislation, albeit this was meant to be about taking access and not taking evidence. However, AM said that S19 power was completely different. New powers would mean that SSPCA could go onto land without a warrant which they can currently only do where there is an animal welfare issue. AM said that evidence collected just under a 'general right of access' could be challenged in court.</p> <p>2.7.4 KW said that in his view the Police had no agenda whereas this might not be the case for all. The consultation closes on 1 September.</p> <p>2.7.5 AP said he could not see the point in taking evidence that would be inadmissible in Court.</p> <p>2.7.6 RC suggested that, given the divergence of opinion, Executive Committee members should respond to the consultation as they saw fit.</p>	All
3	<p>Declarations on interest</p> <p>3.1 RC reiterated that this would be a regular agenda item, that there was nothing untoward with having a commercial interest, but for transparency it was good to record in the Minutes anything of relevance.</p> <p>3.2 PA advised that he and AT were undertaking Level 1 assessments representing Barony College.</p> <p>3.3 AP said that in addition to being Chair of WLDMG he also ran his own game management and deer management business.</p>	
4	<p>Chairman's report</p> <p>4.1 RC reported on his activity since the last meeting. He had attended the launch of the IDDMG, which was the first new Group to formally set up since the formation of LDNS, and a pleasing outcome. It had also been useful to meet reps from LLTNP at the launch and who appeared keen to become more involved with LDNS and may be able to help with communicating DIAT to other local authorities.</p> <p>4.2 RC had attended the SLDG Urban Deer Awareness day which had a good line-up of speakers and around 50 attendees total (with a waiting list also). LDNS had contributed to the cost and also a sum had been donated to Epilepsy Scotland.</p> <p>4.3 RC had attended the Woodlands Group chaired by GP to consider how to take forward the FCS NWSS report.</p>	

	<p>4.4 RC advised that the reports of the Land Reform Review Group and the Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee had included a number of recommendations that could impact on deer management.</p>	
5	<p>Financial Report</p> <p>5.1 RC tabled the LDNS audited accounts to 31 March 2014 which will go for formal approval to the AGM in 2015.</p> <p>5.2 RC highlighted that the main sources of income were grants from SNH, FES and TS.</p> <p>5.3 RC said that a breakdown of the 'miscellaneous' item of £1312.80 would be given at the next meeting.</p> <p>5.4 The year-end showed a surplus of £9628.52 although it was forecast that this would all be absorbed into increased expenditure during year 2014/15.</p> <p>5.5 The Committee approved the Accounts. RC said that he would sign them once they had been ratified at the AGM. They do not require to be submitted to HMRC.</p> <p>5.6 On the income and expenditure 'year to date' figures for 2014/15, RC said that the grant payments from the Agencies were yet to come through although the remittance of £10,000 from SNH was in process.</p> <p>5.7 Expenditure to date is self-explanatory as on the financial statement.</p>	RC, DP
6	<p>DMG Constitutions</p> <p>RC referred to the discussion under <i>matters arising</i>, and JH confirmed that a template low ground constitution was in development.</p>	JH
7	<p>LDNS Project Plan</p> <p>AW, JH and DP to arrange a separate meeting to update, progress and circulate prior to next meeting.</p>	DP
8	<p>Native Woodland Survey</p> <p>8.1 GP gave a presentation on the recent Scottish Native Woodlands Survey. The presentation will be circulated and available on the LDNS website.</p> <p>8.2 Next steps would be to tie the findings of the Survey into the Scottish Forestry and Biodiversity Strategies, plus identify other areas such as Planning and the SRDP. A further meeting had been set to do this.</p> <p>8.3 GP said that it was unlikely that good quality farmland would be made available for future planting,</p>	DP

	<p>that native woodland was not a cash crop, and that the survey did not set out to identify objectives for management but simply what was there.</p> <p>8.4 RC said that there were questions yet to be resolved from the survey over differentiating between 'deer damage' and 'wider herbivore impacts'.</p> <p>8.5 GP said that regarding restocking, local provenance or origin (12 species) was preferred in answer to a question from JB.</p>	
9	<p>SNH Update</p> <p>9.1 JH said that SNH continued to map deer impact data breaking Scotland down by local authority area. Wildlife crime data had still to be added to the maps. This was potentially useful work that would highlight where there were deer issues particularly in relation to public safety, DVCs, designated sites etc.</p> <p>9.2 JH said that all data would be in the public domain, and that there were no data protection issues over it.</p> <p>9.3 JH said that a considerable amount of SNH WLO time going forward at present was focused on upland/red deer range DMGs. Embarking on a process with Groups to support deer management planning, but consideration was also being given as to how this thinking would translate to the low ground situation.</p>	
10	<p>Urban Deer Day – 14.06.14</p> <p>10.1 RC reported on the day and its success, good attendance, and good range of informative presentations. It was noted that more structure would have been good for the afternoon programme.</p> <p>10.2 PS said that he had come not knowing really what to expect and while it was billed as 'urban' much of the information had been in relation to low ground deer management in general which was useful.</p> <p>10.3 Generally agreed it had been a very good exercise and DQ was commended particularly for all the work he and SLDG had put into its organising.</p>	
11	<p>Urban deer management assessment and further deer management qualifications discussion</p> <p>11.1 RC said that Urban Deer Management was on the agenda for the Best Practice Steering Group and was being looked at in relation to the need to amend or add to existing guides.</p>	

Essentially relates to the human element and interaction with the public as all other aspects were covered elsewhere in Best Practice.

11.2 The view was that DQ's Urban Deer Guide should sit as a reference work supporting Best Practice as it adds a lot of valuable information based on years of personal experience. On DQ's own suggestion it would benefit from proof reading and checking for accuracy. The DIAT guides would also be re-examined to see if any aspects of them needed to be updated. The DQ Guide would go back to the Best Practice Group at the next meeting.

11.3 JH advised that it would be for the BPG steering group and Competence review group to decide what further qualifications might be required.

11.4 Suggestion that if the guide, or a parallel was to progress, this should possibly be titled 'Managing deer close to people' rather than 'controlling urban deer' which would place it in a broader context.

11.5 PA said that if there was demand to raise standards and fill skills gaps, and there was, then surely it was right to meet that demand with a new qualification, and, whilst many elements were universal and covered elsewhere, FC requirements for example placed an FC lease beyond the reach of most.

11.6 JB said that DSC 1 and 2 were not limited to 'recreational' stalkers but were National Occupational Standards for professional practitioners too; also that 'practical and social skills' needed to be addressed together.

11.7 RC said that a proper relationship needed to be established between Best Practice and formal training such as DSC 1 and 2. Also that Best Practice provided a further level of self-improvement, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), so that skills and personal development did not finish with DSC 2. More CPD events such as those being organised by BDS, BASC, SACS, and by AP, DQ and DK for their deer groups have an important role to play but the case for further formal training and an additional qualification was far from being agreed generally and was opposed by the Government agencies.

11.8 PS said that a *Certificate of Attendance* or similar at these days would be a possible compromise.

	<p>11.9 PA emphasised that he felt there was a market for further qualification that could cover areas not already met by DSC 1 and 2 or Best Practice such as undertaking a risk assessment, health and safety, Ladders Act, and deer management in an urban environment etc. RC suggested that PA should forward a list to the Best Practice Group via Alastair MacGugan at SNH.</p> <p>11.10 AP asked where the list should end – for example other topics could be night shooting, dogs, and vicarious liability.</p>	
12	<p>Events</p> <p>12.1 DP said that LDNS would be at the Scottish Game Fair sharing a stand with ADMG.</p> <p>12.2 The first of what could be a series of ‘walk and talk’ events was planned for Dalkeith Palace Park with Scottish Land & Estates and Buccleuch. This was an event designed to update landowners/farmers on their responsibilities with regard to deer management. Outcomes for this event were to develop a template for similar events to be rolled out in other areas, and also to form, hopefully, a Midlothian/East Lothian Deer Management Forum that would meet on an annual basis to discuss relevant deer matters.</p>	
13	<p>Local and National deer issues</p> <p><u>13.1 Fallow</u> The question of too many fallow deer in Tayside was raised and possible action required.</p> <p><u>13.2 SW Scotland</u> RC said that the process to divide the large SW Scotland group into three had begun, that there was support for this move on the ground and this could result in perhaps three smaller but more workable groups covering the whole area at a more effective scale. RC said that LDNS and SNH were there to help in the process if needed.</p>	
14	<p>Date of next meeting 10.30am, Monday 6 October 2014, Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan.</p>	