

**Minutes of the 4th Annual General Meeting
of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland**

Held at: The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan
On: Wednesday 27 April 2016

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
Ron Smith (RS), Vice Chairman
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH
Colin Edwards (CE), FCS
Angus Corby (AC), Transport Scotland
John Bruce (JB)
Dr Colin Shedden (CS)
Alex Hogg (AH)
Glen Heggs (GH)
Ian Talboys (IT)
David Bruce (DB)
Jim Govan (JG)
David Fyffe (DF)
Rob Sharp (RS)
Ben Clinch, Moray Estates
William Haddow, NLDMG
Robert Smith
Richard Knight, SLDG
Dr R Alasdair B Young
Peter Keyser

Apologies:

Donald Fraser, SNH
Anton Watson, SNH
Ian Fergusson, FES
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland
Daye Tucker, NFUS
Alex Stoddart, SACS
Peter Semple, I&DDMG
David Ferguson, NLDG
Mark Lazzeri, Falkland Estate
Alex Paul, WLDG
Andrew Treadaway, Barony College
George Ritchie, BBDG
Malcolm Muir, S Lanarkshire Council

1.	<p>Previous minutes (AGM 22.02.2015) and any matters arising RC welcomed all to the meeting, the 4th AGM of LDNS, and the Network's 5th year of operation.</p> <p>He remarked that the previous format had been reconsidered on the basis of cost and low attendance and it had been decided to hold a smaller AGM following the regular Executive Committee meeting.</p> <p>He said that the previous minutes had been on the website for some time and did not propose going through them. The previous minutes were proposed as an accurate record by JB and seconded by DF.</p>
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<p>2.</p>	<p>Chairman's report The Chairman's report for the year is at Appendix 1.</p> <p>There was general discussion covering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer management planning for lowland groups, the SNH assessment process, and report to Ministers • The threat of CWD, and the monitoring and reporting available through BDS • The need for greater engagement with local land managers • The challenge to get more low ground venison to market. • SNH Chairman's letter to all Scottish local authorities • The Land Reform Bill – will receive Royal Assent within the next month.
<p>3.</p>	<p>Financial Update The Chairman spoke to the financial report in the form of an income and expenditure account for the year to 31 March 2016, and balance sheet as at 31 March 2016.</p> <p>The financial report showed total income of £27,339 against expenditure for the year of £29,009 giving a net deficit of £1670. Taking into account prepayments and funds carried forward from the previous year the report showed a net surplus of £6867.</p> <p>The Secretary spoke to the projected budget for 2016/17 forecasting total income (including funds brought forward, and an additional £5,000 from FCS) of £32,350 with projected expenditure of £33,480 giving a projected shortfall of some £1,130.</p> <p>It was agreed that costs could be reduced by only producing one printed newsletter and greater use of e mail updates.</p> <p>The contribution to PACEC was not recurring.</p> <p>Training and other events would be split in future financial reports.</p> <p>RC said that the Network was not a money making organisation and whilst it would be preferred to carry a small surplus, funds were very tight.</p> <p>The Financial Report was approved subject to the explanation that the difference between AGM expenses under years 2015 and 2016 were that the bulk of the cost for the 2014/15 AGM at Westerwood had been billed in the preceding financial year, and that the figure of £386.42 denoted only a number of costs carried forward into the following year under review.</p> <p>Approval of the financial report was proposed by JB and seconded by RS.</p>

4.	<p>Elections and appointments to Committee</p> <p>The Chairman explained the make-up of the Committee and that a number of its members were eligible for re-election.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex Paul, Alex Hogg, Jim Govan and Rob Sharp were re-elected, proposed by RC, seconded by RS. • Glen Heggs, representing SW Scotland, was proposed by RC, seconded by JG. • Mark Lazzeri*, formerly of North Harris Trust and at this time estate Manager at Falkland Estate, was proposed as Vice Chairman by RC, seconded by JG. <p>RC explained that Andrew Treadaway represented 'Education' on the Committee.</p> <p>* Mark Lazzeri has subsequently resigned from the Committee following his appointment to a post with Islay Estates.</p>
5.	<p>SNH Paper – priorities, roles and actions</p> <p>JH delivered a forward-looking paper <i>Assessing the delivery of public interests in lowland Scotland – pilot project</i>. This is available on the LDNS website at [link]</p>
6.	<p>LDNS events programme</p> <p>DP gave an update on future LDNS planned events, available on the LDNS website [link]</p>
7.	<p>General discussion</p> <p>Questions were asked as to how compliance by local authorities could be improved, and whether they also could be subject to a fine. JH said that they would be subject initially to a Code Compliance letter. SNH would identify the major players, where there was land with deer on it and no management in place.</p> <p>The assessment/review process was again discussed. JH said that SNH had undertaken 'evidence gathering'.</p> <p>DF said that following the flood events earlier in the year it was evident that there was definite need for management at a local level to be simplified and prioritized rather than a more general approach adopted.</p> <p>The proposed SNH pilot project was discussed and its likely location as the central belt/corridor bounded by Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling, and Hamilton.</p> <p>It was noted that the work undertaken by stalkers in reducing deer numbers and their physical presence on the ground was an active deterrent to wildlife crime. DF said that wildlife crime hand-outs would be available at the Aberdeenshire events at which LDNS would have a display presence.</p> <p>With no further discussion the meeting was concluded.</p>

LDNS AGM – 27 April 2016

Chairman's Report

This is our fourth AGM following the formation meeting in November 2011. Different format a largely administrative weekday AGM rather than an event with guest presentations.

What has been achieved over the first five years of LDNS? In my view quite a lot has happened. Some progress has been measurable; some less so.

Firstly the intangibles

- Building a culture of collaboration – very broad Committee representation, increasing numbers of LDGs, more openness. A genuine 'Network' that supports LDGs, individuals and organising in delivering effective collaborative deer management.
- Engagement – support of relevant Agencies; awareness-raising with internal and external public audiences through our publications, website and events.
- Demonstrating public benefit. It's early days but active in supporting deer welfare/training; road safety; venison; standards; local opportunities and training
- Distinctive system for the lowlands in all its forms and we are working to persuade Government of that.

Secondly more measurable achievements

- Now 10 DMGs, which is not to say there is no deer management in other areas.
- Local activities and events programme – 2016 programme is the busiest and widest geographical spread yet, Aberdeenshire to Galashiels, Fife to Stranraer and particularly in the Central Belt.
- Products – workshops and training; taster events; contribution to Police wildlife events;
 - Deer on your Doorstep
 - A Meeting of Minds
 - Dogs for deer
 - Local awareness raising
 - Website, publications, e-news, posters.Dick will detail the events programme later in the meeting.
- New local area initiatives
- Contributing to SRUC research review for SNH and to the Authorisations review.
- Representation at Parliamentary level. Getting our point across. Direct contact with MSPs and Ministers.

Areas for future development

- Deer management plans for LDGs? Requires further thought.
- Disease and health issues cannot be overlooked.
- Authorisations Review – Comments submitted.
- Local managers.
- Venison for local consumption (food miles).
- Larders for DMGs.
- Getting local authorities involved

Political context

- Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 – more SNH powers of intervention, advance cull setting, requirement for a DMP, £40k fine, three yearly review of the Deer Code. Sporting rates reintroduced.
- Upland DMG Deer Management Plans and SNH Assessment.
- Scottish Government Review Autumn 2016 – “objective and evidence based”. SNH report will be critical to the outcome.
- Lowlands not immune. No DMPs yet; LDGs different from DMGs; but quote from member of the RACCE Committee “...the situation in the Lowlands may be even worse than in the Highlands.” Such perceptions, justified or not, represent a risk to how we do our job at sectoral and individual level.
- Sustained criticism from some environmental NGOs – “too many deer”, “voluntary approach not fit for purpose” and that is the message that is getting across at Holyrood.
- So great political pressure for yet more intervention including universal cull setting by SNH or a Regulator.
- Deer politics are inextricably bound up in the land reform agenda, at least so far as the Highlands are concerned.
- Case being made by LDGs for more access to Scottish Government culling contracts – less cost and supports local skills and local economy, plus venison for local people and local causes. This should be an open door but requires Government support and investment, eg community larders. Those points were well made at the ‘Meeting of Minds’ lunch.

Summary and thanks

- On the one hand excellent progress in both DMGs generally and across the lowlands; LDNS is also gathering momentum.
- Yet ironically the deer sector has never been more criticised, more under scrutiny.
- All deer management organisations are doing their best to counter misinformation but a danger that many minds at Holyrood are already made up. Need to continue major effort to set the record straight, correct misinformation.
- And the work of LDNS continues with many here doing their bit. My thanks to all the LDGs and individual Committee members, and those outside, for their support.
- The focus of the Committee’s work is now moving to local delivery of events and awareness raising and we have set up an events sub-committee to expand and drive this but the main Executive Committee will continue to meet regularly.
- My particular thanks also to Playfair Walker, Dick, for keeping the administration and communication wheels turning at all times and for responding promptly to a very fast changing situation.
- My thanks also to our public sector partners – SNH, FCS and Transport Scotland who together provide almost all our funding.
- We have a fight on our hands and much to prove to others even though we know how much the deer sector has moved and will continue to move forward.