



Woodland Habitat Impact Assessment Awareness Day at Flanders Moss

Chairman's Annual Report 2017-2018



Richard Cooke, Chairman, LDNS

Looking back at what I said at the AGM last year there was a lot in the melting pot and that remains the case. There has been progress, but also new things coming onto the Agenda all the time.

LDNS continues to go forward and gain more recognition from Government and support from deer managers and landholders. We had two full Committee meetings during the year and two new style evening events covering LDNS and deer sector business coupled with presentations on a particular specialist topic of interest, non-lead ammunition, and night vision equipment respectively. We have also participated in a growing events programme and supported a number of events at local level.

I wish however, to make particular reference to the event at the Scottish Parliament held on 29 November last. This was 'sponsored' by Linda Fabiani MSP and attended and addressed by Cabinet Secretary,

Roseanna Cunningham, with a number of other MSPs present, including Graeme Dey, the Convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee. This was a really valuable opportunity to showcase LDNS to a parliamentary audience and, in particular, to make the following points. Lowland deer management is not the same as the DMG model in the highlands, that lowland deer groups vary considerably, reflecting the different circumstances in which they operate and their different memberships, and that there are lots of different but effective approaches to the collaborative management of deer across all land uses in the lowlands.

I would like to express my particular gratitude to Linda Fabiani for taking a close interest in lowland deer matters. This emanated originally from direct contact within her own constituency with the South Lanarkshire Deer Group, but has extended well beyond that. In addition to sponsoring this event she was also helpful in canvassing a consensus for a representative deer manager candidate to join the Lowland Deer Panel.

Continues on page 8 >>

In this issue:

- Page 2 & 3: Annual Accounts
- Page 4 & 5: Review of activity and events
- Page 6: Non-lead ammunition update

- Page 7: Venison update
- Page 8: Chairman's Report – continued

Includes Annual Report and Accounts 2017/18

Lowland Deer Network Scotland:

Income & Expenditure account for the year to 31 March 2018

Income	2018 (£)	2017 (£)
Membership	£426.24	£515.20
SNH Grant Funding	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Transport Scotland Grant	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Forestry Commission Scotland Funding	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Bank Interest	£5.36	£5.28
Urban Deer Awareness Event	-	£10.00
Deer Dog Day receipts	£465.00	-
	£35,896.60	£35,530.48

Expenditure	2018 (£)	2017 (£)
<i>Administration:</i>		
Chairman's Expenses	£963.18	£554.74
Secretarial and Administration Expenses	£2,400.00	£2,400.00
	£3,363.18	£2,954.74
PR Consultant's Fees and Expenses	£16,560.00	£14,400.00
Consultant's outlays	£1,849.20	£1,306.80
Game Fairs	£699.46	£912.00
Newsletter Costs	£1,418.20	£1,359.60
Meeting Room and AGM expenses	£892.00	£938.15
Website Costs	£986.40	£190.80
Travel Expenses	£286.52	£374.48
Accounts	£300.00	£300.00
Training Costs	-	£710.00
PACEC Report 1/3 Share	-	£1,200.00
Events	£4,335.42	£2,224.20
	£31,029.58	£26,870.77
Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year	£4,402.02	£8,659.71

Lowland Deer Network Scotland:

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2018

Current Assets	2018 (£)	2017 (£)
Cash at Bank	£20,229.04	£15,827.02
	£20,229.04	£15,827.02

Current Liabilities	2018 (£)	2017 (£)
Accruals	£300.00	£300.00
	£300.00	£300.00
Net Assets	£19,929.04	£15,527.02
Net Surplus (Deficit) b/fwd	£15,527.02	£6,867.31
Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year	£4,402.02	£8,659.71
	£19,929.04	£15,527.02

Accountant's Report to the Lowland Deer Network Scotland

We have prepared, without carrying out an audit, the approved balance sheet and income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 March 2017 from the books and information supplied.

Johnston Carmichael LLP
Chartered Accountants
15 Academy Street
Forfar
DD8 2HA

17 April 2018

We approve the financial statements for the year ended to 31 March 2018 and confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Richard Cooke
Chairman, Lowland Deer Network Scotland

17 April 2018

LDNS Review of Activity and Events



Dick Playfair

LDNS has organised a wide range of events at various locations across Scotland, or supported local LDG training events through funding.

Date	Event	Area
22.04.17	An introduction to peri-urban deer management	East Kilbride
19.05.17	Deer management, traffic and DVCs (with Scottish Land & Estates)	Gullane, East Lothian
15.06.17	Central Scotland Green Network Forum	Edinburgh
15.06.17	Ballistics and non-lead ammunition meeting	Airth, Falkirk
30.06 – 02.07.17	GWCT Scottish Game Fair	Scone Palace, Perthshire
02.09.17	WLDG First Aid Course	West Lothian
16.09.17	NLDG DSC1 (two days)	N Lanarkshire
21.11.17	Evening meeting – Night vision – with Scott Country International	East Kilbride
29.11.17	LDNS/SNH Scottish Parliament event	Edinburgh
03.12.17	Deer Dog Day	S Ayrshire
13.03.18	Presentation to BDS NE England branch	Ponteland, Newcastle

Date	Planned Activity	Area
02.05.18	Woodland Habitat Impact Assessment Awareness Day	Flanders Moss
12.06.18	DVCs and Deer Management (with Scottish Land & Estates)	Raehills, Dumfriesshire
29.06 – 01.07.18	GWCT Scottish Game Fair	Scone Palace, Perthshire



Night vision evening meeting with Scott Country International

A packed house attended the evening meeting on 21 November 2017 organised at the Auldhouse Inn, East Kilbride. This took the form of an evening LDNS and deer management business meeting followed by a presentation by Scott Country International and the opportunity for them to show their latest night vision and TI equipment to an audience of enthusiastic stalkers and deer managers.

LDNS at the Scottish Parliament

Sponsored by Linda Fabiani MSP, this evening meeting run in collaboration with SNH for around 50 Lowland Deer Group members and guests, allowed the lowland deer management message to percolate a little further down the corridors of Holyrood. The meeting was organised to allow lowland deer managers, both public and private sector, to explain a little more about what they do, how and why. Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment also spoke at the event, as did LDNS Chair Richard Cooke, Nick Morrell from the Edinburgh and East Lothian Deer Group, and Eileen Stuart, Head of Policy and Advice, SNH. The session was ably hosted and chaired by Linda Fabiani MSP, and the Forest Enterprise film on managing deer close to towns was also shown. A number of MSPs took the opportunity to come and find out more, including Graeme Dey, Chair of the Scottish Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee, where he accepted an offer to go on a thermal imaging survey with the Edinburgh and East Lothian Deer Group members.

Deer Dog Day

This event, organised by Glen Heggs and the SW Scotland Deer Group held at Stonehouse, Lanarkshire on 3 December 2017 was described as "excellent" by LDNS Committee member Jim Govan in his report. The day catered for both the novice and experienced stalker in interpreting the shot site and use of a dog for recovery.

The UK Scent Hound Association (UKSHA) delivered a seminar on dogs for deer, including a morning indoor session on shot site examination which included: the practical examination of the shot site; how to determine what to do after the shot and what not to do; finding the shot site using different methods; how to correctly proceed to maximise recovery; the differences that bullet choice makes with shot site presentation; and carcase damage. The after-lunch session covered use of a scent hound, shot site examination, and dispatch of a wounded deer.

Woodland Habitat Impact Assessment Awareness Day

This event took place in early May indoors at the excellent facilities at West Moss Farm, Thornhill, and then after lunch outside on Flanders Moss where there is a significant population of red deer. The indoor session took the 20 attendees through the textbook side of assessing damage by deer, and other herbivores. It focused on which plant species deer prefer to browse and which they do not, types and level of damage, and reaching conclusions about the grazing pressure in a particular area from assessment of what can be seen on the ground. Helen Armstrong of Broomhills Ecology led the event which was organised in conjunction with BDS and SNH.



Deer Dog Day, Lanarkshire



Scottish Parliament, November 2017

Sector-led action plan is next step for move to non-lead says Lead Ammunition Group Chairman

The lead /non-lead ammunition debate continues with the publication of an Update Report from the Lead Ammunition Group. This contains new evidence about the risks to wildlife, the environment and human health from lead ammunition, and follows submission of the Group's 400+ page report in 2015 to former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the Rt. Hon Elizabeth Truss to which she responded that "the risks did not merit a change in current policy."

Whilst Defra took the view on the 2015 report that FSA advice was sufficient and that impacts were not significant enough for change, John Swift, Chair of the Lead Ammunition Group, speaking at the Deer Management Round Table (DMRT) in April following publication of the Update Report was bullish that change was necessary and it was for the industry to take the lead.

In his presentation to DMRT he said that there was acknowledgement that lead was poisonous and that sub-lethal effects were now being reported at lower levels than pre-2015. According to the gun trade some 6000 tonnes of lead were fired annually in the UK, and this was getting into wildlife through ingestion by birds, in scavenged dead animals, and in the prey of some raptors, with a major problem in wildfowl.

He said that current restrictions on the use of lead over wetlands did not go far enough, and that lead was finding its way into the human food chain through other pathways including wild venison and wild venison products.

"There is no level below which lead does not cause harm," said Mr Swift. "Lead in game meat is at levels harmful to adults, children, and pregnant women and there is new evidence from recent studies linking blood lead with game consumption."



Roebuck. Photo: Laurie Campbell



Section of lead and copper bullet. Photo: Jim Govan

The alternative, non-lead ammunition, was effective, safer for the environment and human health, he said, although some non-lead alternatives still needed closer study with regard to fumes and toxicity in water.

Reducing the risk from lead by careful butchery had been assessed, and there was no doubt that such risks in lead-shot game could be mitigated this way, but could not be removed entirely, and that there were impracticalities for both some large and small game.

"The next step," says John Swift, "is the production of an action plan which should be industry-led, or failing that, is led by Defra backed by the FSA. Failing that, LAG will call for statutory, regulatory measures for the restriction of lead ammunition."

The conclusions remain the same as outlined in 2015 – the problems are most likely larger than extensive research has indicated, but there is now a much better understanding of the risks. Also, the sector should be more confident that there are benefits to be delivered by replacing lead with alternatives, and that this change should not threaten the game shooting and deer stalking sectors to any significant degree.

The LAG update also flagged up that dogs in particular could be at risk from being fed trimmings of lead-shot game by hunters, and that trials by Forest Enterprise requiring use of non-lead ammunition for culling deer and wild boar were based on clear evidence that lead ammunition could contaminate carcasses. This could undermine FE's position in putting lead-shot game into the food chain when there were proven alternatives available. Similar extensive trials have been undertaken by FE in Scotland.

With the majority of deer shot entering the food chain, and a large volume of gralloch being left on the hill being scavenged and consumed by birds and other wildlife, then the risk to human health, the environment, and other animals is readily understood. Use of non-lead bullets could remove that risk completely and, as the price differential between lead and non-lead reduces, then that becomes an even harder proposition for the sector to ignore.

www.leadammunitiongroup.org.uk

By Dick Playfair

Scottish venison update



Dick Playfair

There is a lot to report about the Scottish venison sector right now, much of it positive.

Foremost, the Scottish Government has reinforced its interest in venison and its potential evidenced by Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing calling and hosting a venison 'summit' in Perthshire in March attended by some 25 key players, representing wild and farmed venison, public and private sector, and right across the spectrum from stalkers/producers to venison cooks and major customers and suppliers. Those attending heard about opportunities within the UK market, how supply is falling short of demand, and a reduction in imported venison from New Zealand. Mr Ewing led discussion about how this shortfall can be met, by continued expansion of the farmed deer sector and assessing and delivering better routes to market for, for example, roe venison where the raw resource is increasing but the infrastructure to capitalise on it has yet to develop - a discussion that has been going on within LDNS for some time.

An important outcome of the Summit will be the production of a strategic plan for the Scottish venison sector to fit with Scotland Food and Drink's national food strategy *Ambition 2030*. That plan is currently in development with the aim to have it ready for launch, probably in draft form, on Scottish Venison Day, Tuesday 4 September 2018.

In addition, the application for PGI status for Scottish Wild Venison is well underway. The first round of consultation for the UK closed on 25 May. The purpose of the application is to achieve Protected Geographical Indicator status for Scottish Wild Venison. Whilst a European award, it remains relevant after Brexit, recognising the special qualities of the product both in terms of its production and its provenance, from a completely wild and natural resource. The UK consultation may result in the application requiring more work before it goes to Europe as the next stage of the process, but if all goes to plan then PGI could be granted before end 2019. The application has been more than five years in drafting and it is hoped that this work will eventually see a successful outcome.

The consultation for PGI was launched on the same day as the Scottish Venison Summit.

Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV), the voluntary assurance scheme, is in good health, with producer and processor members increasing. It is currently exploring how it can extend its producer scheme, or introduce a new category, whereby small producers and individual vocational/recreational deer managers including low ground stalkers can also join; and for their process to benefit from the additional confidence and safeguards that SQWV scheme membership delivers.



Photo: Laurie Campbell

On the food safety front, venison is also going through a process of evolution on a number of levels. On the one hand a major study is in progress to better understand the prevalence of *E Coli O157* in deer and also the risks for contamination in the early stages of the food chain from hill and gralloch through to the processor. This study is being undertaken by the Moredun Research Institute in conjunction with Edinburgh University and an interim report is expected later in the summer with its findings based on c. 1200 samples from all species all across Scotland (a far higher sample bank than used for previous similar studies for cattle or sheep).

E Coli O157 whether in deer or in the process is an issue in which Food Standards Scotland is taking a strong interest, and the sector is being tested to demonstrate that it can show 'due diligence' and minimise risk across the board. To this end the Scottish Venison Partnership has produced with SQWV and SNH three short films under the Best Practice Guidance banner as a reminder of the risks of contamination, how they can be reduced, and that everyone who pulls the trigger and intends any carcase to go for human consumption is effectively in the food business. Currently a lot of thought is also being given to how the EU small quantities/trained hunter derogation can be made to work better in conjunction with the venison dealer licensing system to provide a short, traceable supply chain and allow for locally shot venison to be sourced and sold, whether through butchers, restaurants, or 'at the farm gate' safely and legally. This requires more work by Local Authority EHOs to inspect premises and issue licences, but the system is in place already to do this. Although in some cases, the resource at local government level may be in short supply.

Likewise, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has stepped up its activity in relation to inspections of Approved Game Handling Establishments (AGHEs) across Scotland, with its inspectors being on site to reject carcasses that have been uplifted from producer larders but which are deemed to be unfit to go into the food chain.

All this activity will result in improving the quality of our Scottish wild venison. Already outstanding, it should come through this examination as better and safer - and a product in which everyone who is involved from woodland or hill, through processing and onward to the consumer, can justifiably take pride.

Chairman's Report - continued

The Panel was set up by SNH on the instruction of the Cabinet Secretary. Its remit is "to examine the complex issues related to lowland deer management, and to contribute to the Scottish Government's ongoing review of deer management across Scotland." In addition, "the Panel's aim is to maximise the benefits of deer for people and ensure that their numbers do not have an impact on conservation, agriculture or road safety. They will consider the nature of deer impacts, the best way to manage deer, including how to work collaboratively, and the information needed to support deer management."

Surprisingly, the Panel has been asked to report back to Government by September of this year, which seems a very short period to come to a view about the lowland deer sector about which much less is known than the highland deer sector - just 6 months. I cannot help thinking that its work will just be an introduction to what may become an ongoing role.

The Panel circulated a questionnaire to all interested parties to try and gain information on how lowland deer management is carried out and is seeking comments, opinions and views about where improvements can be made. LDNS is not a representative body and has not therefore made a submission, but I have responded individually as has the Secretary.

In my own submission I have highlighted the need for information:

- > **We know little about overall populations.**
- > **Annual cull returns to SNH fall far short of reaching all deer managers across the lowlands.**
- > **We do not have a clear picture of what deer management is taking place, where and by who.**
- > **And we do not know how much venison is being produced or how it enters the market.**

We have some information on all of these points, but not enough to have a clear picture for Government to consider what could be done to help it become more comprehensive and efficient. It should be possible to close many of the gaps as various Government agencies have databases covering most, if not all, who can provide that information – SGRPID, SNH, FCS, Police Scotland, Regional Assessors, DMQ etc.

I have also said that, while lowland deer groups are valuable and, by bringing deer managers together, add real value, there is a lot of deer management across the lowlands, carried out by individuals without much or any formal collaboration and that is a perfectly valid approach in many circumstances.

I have also suggested that another collaborative mechanism would be to set up 'larder groups'. These would comprise individual deer managers forming a co-operative which could hopefully access Government funds to acquire land and build and operate larder and chill facilities in locations that would provide a more comprehensive infrastructure for deer management. It would also contribute to food safety, a matter of rising concern, with much new attention being paid to the venison sector by Food Standards Scotland.

These are personal comments based on my own contacts and experience within the sector and are not representative of an LDNS position. It does not have a position and leaves it to its members to make their own representations.

The Deer Working Group (DWG) has also been set up by the Scottish Government. It focusses on the deer sector throughout Scotland, rather than focussing just on lowland deer matters as the Lowland Deer Panel is required to do. The role of the DWG is to make recommendations to Government by spring 2019 on improvements to the present system of deer management, having considered the statutory framework and past performance with comparisons to other approaches in other countries. The DWG is chaired by Simon Pepper and includes Dr Andrew Barbour and Dr Jayne Glass with Robin Callander as 'special adviser'. I have been asked to act as 'external adviser' in a personal, non-representative capacity and have so far attended one meeting as well as responding to questions and points when asked to do so.

It is no coincidence that the DWG will report to Government at the same time as SNH submits its next report on the performance of the whole deer sector prior to the 2019 parliamentary deer review, which presumably will include another close examination by the ECCLR Committee.

In summary, we are under close scrutiny at every level but it is good that the Scottish Government has clearly registered the importance of the lowland deer sector and wishes to gain a better understanding of how it operates in delivering the 'public interest' – which incorporates food safety, road safety, deer welfare, and sustainable environmental, economic and social impacts. The ECCLR Committee is paying close attention and may wish to make its mark by promoting change where it is necessary. If we want that change to be genuinely helpful, rather than perhaps ill-judged intervention on the basis of insufficient knowledge, we really need to get involved and have input.

I feel we have continued to make progress evidenced by a number of new individual memberships and the formation of a couple of new lowland groups with one or two more in the wings. I am aware that we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of people involved in deer management, but the word continues to spread and I believe that the credibility of LDNS as a neutral gathering point for all sorts of deer interests continues to rise.

I would still like to see more engagement from the local authorities and hope that SNH will follow up on their excellent event held last spring. The Cabinet Secretary has been invited to attend that, subject to dates, and that would give it increasing impetus and encourage local authority Chief Executives to pay attention to their statutory legal responsibilities and to realise that there is a ready solution - many trained deer managers keen for access to more land and able to give a good service.

There is also more to do in terms of engaging with farming, crofting and forestry interests, and in respect of the latter, I have had preliminary discussions with Confor about either a joint event or contributing to an event of theirs to raise the profile of deer management with the forestry companies in particular.

I would like to thank our funders, our members, all the Committee and those in the lowland deer groups who have continued to support LDNS and to press forward in their own localities in terms of training, new membership and organising events. Thank you all for your continuing support for LDNS.

Richard Cooke

Chair, Lowland Deer Network Scotland

This Newsletter is produced by:

Lowland Deer Network Scotland, Estate Office, Dalhousie Estates, Brechin, Angus DD9 6SG
Tel: 01356 624 566 | E: dalhousieestates@btinternet.com | www.ldns.org.uk