

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth
On: Wednesday 4 July 2018

Present: Richard Cooke, Chairman (RC)
Colin Shedden, Vice Chairman, BASC (CS)
Dick Playfair, Secretary (DP)
Jamie Hammond, SNH (JH)
Kevin McCulloch, SNH (KM)
Colin Edwards, FCS (CE)
Ian Fergusson, FES (IF)
Charlie Everitt, Police Scotland (CEv)
Jamie Farquhar, Confor (JF)
John Bruce, BDS (JB)
Alex Stoddart, SACS (AS)
Lisa Roberts, NFUS (LR)
Jamie Stewart, SCA (JSt)
James Simpson (JS)
Jim Govan (JG)
John Campbell-Smith (JCS)
Ron Smith (RS)

Apologies or not present:

Donald Fraser, SNH
Angus Corby, Transport Scotland
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland
Alex Hogg, SGA
Iain Robertson, MOD
Mike Flynn, SSPCA
David Fyffe, SL&E
David Bruce, UPM Tilhill
Ian Talboys, City of Aberdeen
Maitland Rankin, GDDG
David Ferguson, NLDG
Rob Sharp
Hugh O'Neill
George Ritchie, BBDG
Glen Heggs, SWSDG
Mark Telfer, EELD
David Quarrell, SLDG
Andrew Treadaway, Barony College

1.	Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising
	<u>1.1 LDNS sub-groups</u> DP said he had difficulty making more time available for more sub-groups over and above that currently allocated. The proposal now was for four sub-groups (events, communications, training, and food safety). RC acknowledged that there would be additional time and cost in servicing sub-groups and that further thought is required as to how to do this.

	<p><u>1.2 DMQ holders map</u> CS said that some progress had been made on this with DMQ although, to have any real purpose, further detail was required, possibly attributing numbers of DMQ holders to post codes.</p> <p><u>1.3 Humane animal dispatch</u> JB said that it was too soon for development and that he would advise when this might be taken forward in Scotland.</p>
2.	<p>Financial report</p> <p>2.1 RC advised that there was no financial support for LDNS this year from FCS. Funds were still to come from SNH and Transport Scotland for year to 31 March 2019.</p> <p>2.2 The accounts show income year to date (as at 30.06.18) of £285.27, expenditure of £5,836, and an account balance £14,678.00 cr.</p> <p>2.3 RC asked DP for a quarterly timesheet breaking down his time by activity.</p> <p>2.4 CE said that although the decision had been made not to support LDNS this year, separate funding might be available on a project basis.</p> <p>2.5 IF said that FES continued to support the upland DMG network through an agreed annual contribution, an annual grant to the Scottish Venison Partnership. and was engaged directly with the Galloway & Dumfries-shire, Eskdale and Borders deer groups.</p> <p>2.6 DP said he had reviewed the annual budget, and with no additional allocation for project management time this now showed a very small surplus at year end.</p>
3.	<p>Deer Working Group</p> <p>3.1 RC gave an update. He is an external advisor to the Group which has now begun to review the system of deer management in Scotland and from which it will be making recommendations. He hoped that the Group would be looking for an evolutionary approach rather than wholesale change. What was possible in terms of change would also be governed by the life of the Parliament and the legislative programme. He thought it unlikely that there could realistically be a new Deer Bill in the short term.</p> <p>Lowland Deer Panel</p> <p>3.2.1 Peter Watson, Chair of the Lowland Deer Panel, had attended the most recent Deer Management Round Table and made a presentation. In RC's view the Panel has an impossible remit within a short timeframe being due to report back to Government in October, moved back from September. There had been a number of interview and panel sessions and a questionnaire circulated. The Panel's task is to look at the lowland system within the current framework. One of the biggest issues is the lack</p>

	<p>of information across lowland territory, so any recommendations will be difficult without knowing the scale of the deer population or the available resource to manage it.</p> <p>3.2.2 CS said that the WANE Act has the power to bring forward a register of those people able to shoot deer and for them to have to provide a cull return. However, it was suspected that many would be unregistered, both with regard to culling deer and selling venison into the food chain.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Sporting rates</p> <p>4.1 RC reported that the second tranche of assessments had been issued, and there would be at least one more round. Many who had received notices would have appealed.</p> <p>4.2 JF raised points over the timing of appeals and also the possibility of 'empty property relief' where shootings were not let. It was noted that FES has appealed 545 assessments and that the definition of deer forest being a sporting resource was questioned where forestry was the primary land use.</p> <p>4.3 Valuation notices were also coming in for deer larders which may or may not be rateable depending on the circumstances. This aspect remains unclear.</p> <p>4.4 The meeting was reminded that it is the respective Local Authority and not the Assessor that determines what is rateable and/or exempt under the Small Business Bonus Scheme.</p> <p>4.5 CS asked whether there was a definition of 'empty property' and whether this covered areas of deer management only ie not commercially let.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Venison and food standards</p> <p>5.1 There was a brief resumé of the FSS meeting with the sector at Battleby on 25 June. The suspected <i>E Coli O157</i> incident of 2015 had attracted the attention of FSS to the game sector, and FSS was now taking a close interest across all aspects of venison and feathered game production. Mainly red deer venison producers have taken a number of steps to improve standards, having set up the Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP) and the quality assurance scheme, Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV). SVP was also undertaking much work in relation to the promotion of its food safety films, seminars at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair and other initiatives to come. FSS was being helpful whilst not hiding its powers and authority. Of particular concern is that some sub-standard carcasses are thought to be finding their way into the food chain.</p> <p>5.2 The second Battleby meeting was far broader than the first. The conclusions and action points of that meeting are not yet available from FSS; however, the sector should take the initiative and continue to</p>

promote high standards. FSS may now recognise, following the second meeting, that the deer sector, processors and Local Authorities know what they have to do to minimise risk.

5.3 A number of people had responded to FSS individually or on behalf of their organisations following earlier publication of the FSS action plan. SVP had undertaken a consultation with its members in order to respond to the relevant points (8 – 23) and this had been submitted to FSS ahead of the meeting.

5.4 JB Said that he had held a private session with FSS and hopefully covered some gaps in knowledge, not least training. He said that all were now better informed not to send high risk carcasses to AGHEs and that trained hunter references were given on all tags for traceability.

5.5 JB reminded all that Scotland was an *E Coli O157* hot spot, with 25 per cent of cattle herds infected, and that the risk would be higher where deer were co-grazing with cattle.

5.6 RC said that high-risk potentially contaminated carcasses should not be submitted but was reassured that most in the sector would have understood that message. There were however many producing venison who operated outside the mainstream who might not fully understand their responsibilities as food producers or have taken appropriate training. One of the FSS frustrations appeared to be the number of different organisations with membership (and responsibility) within the sector.

5.7 FSS was also liaising with the local authorities to appraise them of their responsibilities.

5.8 JB pointed out that the Poaching Priority Group had undertaken a survey of the location of registered venison dealer license holders, and it was evident that there were gaps in some areas where no returns had been made.

5.9 The point was made again for the need for small, local chills/larders.

5.10 JCS said that it was important to work to improve shooting standards and continue to impress that anything 'gut shot' should not be presented.

5.11 JB said that everything had been tightened at AGHEs: two had closed; three full-time vets/inspectors were in place; and the previous voluntary inspection regime had been withdrawn.

5.12 RC said that the deer industry had to make the venison food chain secure and to use all available channels to promote Best Practice messages. He said that there was a planned meat hygiene refresher pilot being organised by David Quarrell in East Kilbride in October which would be supported by LDNS. LDNS should see how this could be rolled out to other groups and locations, perhaps under the Best Practice banner.

	<p>5.13 It was decided to set up an LDNS Venison Group, its membership drawn from those at the meeting to comprise JSt (Chair), JCS, IF, AS, JB (or representative), CE, SNH (AMacG or PM) and DP.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Events and activity review</p> <p>6.1 DP gave a round-up of activity over the period which was also reported in the LDNS newsletter. The main activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIA day at Flanders Moss (with BDS and SNH), 2 May. • DVC day at Raehills (with Transport Scotland, SL&E and Galloway & Dumfries-shire Deer Group), 12 June • Shared stand at GWCT Scottish Game Fair, 29 June – 1 July <p>6.2 LDNS had supported a DMQ 1 course run by Alex Paul. DP cited this both as an excellent funding application and also a comprehensive report delivered afterwards with photos.</p> <p>6.3 Events to come include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer dogs day, Angus (date to be confirmed) • Meat hygiene refresher pilot, East Kilbride, 8 October <p>6.4 DP also reported that the latest LDNS Newsletter/Annual Review was available.</p> <p>6.5 RC reminded the meeting that <i>Deer on your Doorstep</i> material was available. KM suggested that he would circulate local authority contacts to see if he could generate some interest in venues for posters to be displayed.</p> <p>6.6 JB advised that BDS had held its annual two-day seminar in Edinburgh which had been well attended. All the presentations from the conference are available on the BDS website.</p> <p>6.7 It was also advised that BDS ranges might be available for practice or events once certain access issues are sorted. JCS said that there had been an upswing of people joining the Lothian & Borders Rifle Club and that he would put the clubs where he had contacts in touch with LDNS to assess whether there was benefit in formalising links.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Pilot scheme</p> <p>7.1 JH reported that the Pilot was at write-up stage. It was largely map based and explored how deer management meets the public interest in the Pilot area, what data was available and its usefulness, who was managing deer, deer numbers etc. The results will be published online and then followed up with stage 2 which will be put out to tender in due course and will explore other related issues such as training, venison, larder facilities etc.</p>

	<p>7.2 The study will link into the 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and explore deer management modelling and delivery. JH said that it was not intended to revolutionise or change anything at this stage.</p> <p>7.3 JB suggested that a flow chart would be helpful to show how the Pilot moves forward.</p>
8.	<p>Event for local authorities</p> <p>8.1 JH said that SNH was deciding how to pitch this event and who it should be aimed at – rangers, officers, elected representatives? It was intended to include the Cabinet Secretary and MSPs.</p> <p>8.2 RC said that he hoped it might be staged this year. Also, there was now the whole venison/meat hygiene situation to consider which is also very much a matter for local authorities.</p>
9.	<p>Deer health survey</p> <p>DP reported that the project steering group was meeting on 11.07.18 and a further update could be given after that date.</p>
10.	<p>Reports from attending Deer Groups, organisations and areas</p> <p><u>10.1 Inverclyde and Dumbartonshire DG</u> It was reported that this Group had now disbanded.</p> <p><u>10.2 Borders (JCS)</u> Group ticking over. AGM will be held on 14 August with Ian McWatt of FSS invited to attend and speak.</p> <p><u>10.3 N Ayrshire area (JG)</u> JG said there was potential to pull something together for N Ayrshire given forestry development in the Largs area, public misunderstanding of deer management, and the need to engage with local politicians.</p> <p><u>10.4 Forestry Commission (CE)</u> CE reported that an HIA day had been held at the 7 Lochs project. Evident that in this area also there was public misunderstanding about the requirement for deer management.</p> <p><u>10.5 BDS (JB)</u> JB said that the hard, late winter had resulted in a lot of orphaning and high kid mortality. The hard winter would also impact on the quality of carcasses.</p> <p><u>10.6 BASC Scotland (CS)</u> CS said that Nicolle Hamilton from BASC would be addressing a meeting of EHOs in 2019.</p>
11.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>11.1 RC said that he felt that there was a risk of LDNS ‘running out of steam’ despite all that is going on in the deer world. He said he had</p>

	<p>decided not to stand again for the office of Chairman at the AGM in 2019. While it was for Members at the AGM to elect his successor, he had ascertained that the Vice Chair, Colin Shedden, would be willing to stand. RC said he had been in the chair since 2011 when LDNS was established and, seven years on, a new Chair might find it helpful and timely to have to hand a review as to what LDNS was for and what it had achieved, its challenges, and its resources.</p> <p>11.2 RC therefore asked CS to start this review process with a preliminary internal survey, to enable the role of LDNS to be re-evaluated as to how it relates to practitioners, and the degree to which it has brought all the diverse organisations, agencies and individuals together to promote a collaborative approach to deer management in lowland and near-urban situations.</p> <p>11.3 The review should also look at how LDNS communicates with its constituency, whether it should become more regionalised, its programme of events, administration and cost, and whether it was representative of the lowland deer management community.</p> <p>11.4 CS said that he welcomed the concept of a review, to take stock and reflect on challenges ahead. It should be a quick and internal review for its own purposes.</p> <p>11.5 JH said that a review would be helpful, that it should be objective and establish what LDNS could be doing better. Whilst the output should be internal it should also aid SNH, FCS and TS in their decisions regarding support of LDNS going forward,</p> <p>11.6 RS asked whether there was any way of assessing how successful LDNS was in terms of reaching practitioners because, no matter how events were organised, nothing ever suited everyone. A map that showed where the firearms licence holders were across low ground areas might show where best, regionally, LDNS should direct its efforts.</p>
12.	<p>Date of next meeting Thursday 23 August 2018 at the Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth. Agenda to follow.</p>