Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan, By Stirling
On: Wednesday 5 June 2013

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
Ian Fergusson (IF), Forest Enterprise
John Bruce (JB), BDS
Colin Shedden (CS), BASC
Angus Corby (ACor), Transport Scotland
Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH
Anton Watson (AW), SNH
Ian Talboys (IT), Aberdeen Council
Glenn Heggs (GH), SW Scotland DMG/UPM
Kenny Willmitt (KW), BASC Scotland
Gordon Patterson (GP), Forest Enterprise
David Quarrell (DQ) SLDG
Malcolm Muir (MM), South Lanarkshire Council, COSLA
James Govan (JG) Stalker, Ayrshire
Daye Tucker (DT), NFUS
Derek Kneller (DK) NLDMG
Robert Sharp (RS), Stalker, Renfrewshire

Apologies: Alisdair Colyton (AC), Farmer, Angus
Iain Laing (IL) Police Scotland
David Fyffe (DF), Scottish Land & Estates
Alex Paul (AP), WLDMG
Alex Hogg (AH), SGA
Ron Smith (RS) Vice Chairman, Fife
Jane Begg (JBg), West Lothian Council
George Ritchie (GR), Banff & Buchan DMG
Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA (No response – check e mail)

1.	**Minutes – meeting of 10.04.13** The minutes of the meeting held on 10.04.13 were approved.	Action
2.	**Matters arising** 2.1 NFUS meetings DT reported that she had attended NFUS meetings and deer management was on agenda, although there remained a major lack of knowledge about responsibilities under the WANE Act. RC asked if DT would put on paper her ideas for a strategy for LDNS to tackle NFUS meetings and other opportunities. DT had reassured farmers that they should not be concerned about the expanding network of lowland DMGs and that the more of these there were then the less work they would have to do themselves. 2.2 Information in concise format RC asked whether JH and AW had made progress on	DT

	production of a information card on low ground deer responsibilities discussed previously. Carried forward.	JH, AW
	2.3 Meeting with the Minister DP reported that the meeting with the Minister and officials had taken place. The Minister had been briefed about LDNS, welcomed the work being done and said that everyone involved should be congratulated. Brief report of meeting is in LDNS Newsletter.	
	2.4 Thoughts on LDNS future – response to JH Options paper RC said that he had received responses from RS, JG and DP and would be discussed later on agenda.	
	2.5 Cull reporting system DK said he looked into this and been in touch with Graeme Taylor at SNH. There is a system being set up with NLDMG, and others could adopt similar process, but DK was not sure how keen others would be to submit data. What is required is a main point of contact for every piece of ground over which the DMG operates. JH, although not involved in discussions to this point, confirmed that returns would need to be property-linked, although a deer group cull return could still be generated and submitted. DK said he felt that DMGs should encourage their members to collect and submit cull data, and hopefully members will comply. JH warned of potential for duplication. RS said there was certainly likelihood of this although some forestry companies (eg Scottish Woodlands in his experience) did not submit returns. JG however has been asked by the same firm to make returns. RS said his view was that there should be a legal requirement for anyone shooting deer to put in a return. JB said that the onus to submit a return rests with the occupier; who must obtain a cull return from those doing the work. RC agreed that the system was imperfect but whatever can be used should be, including game dealers' records. LDNS can help in encouraging the submission of information. RC asked if more effort should be made with forestry companies to produce more data. JH said that this was planned. RC said that LDNS was prepared to help with this, and possibly that a DMG-type return could be considered. JH to follow up with Graeme Taylor.	JH
	2.6 2013 Competence information JB said new leaflets had been produced. The new legal and technical paper is 'yellow' with an important correction in the	

	opening sentence to say that the Competence review will take place after April 2014. JB has succeeded in getting NFUS to engage. The colour leaflet sets out main points of what the WANE Act means to land owners with deer on their ground. Any old green competence leaflets should now be dumped. JB to forward pdf to be posted on website(s). RS questioned the omission of Barony College. JB concurred that this may be an error and said that any comment should be forwarded to Tim Baynes who had put the information together. 2.7 Poaching article for Newsletter DP said that because of space constraints this would be covered in next issue plus a full list of Police Scotland contacts for wildlife crime officers. JH has list and can supply.	ALL JB,DP JH
3.	**Financial Report** LDNS figures now with accountant to produce full financial report for first full operating year. LDNS had finished year with a modest surplus that was being carried forward. Also year to date (current year) figures were circulated.	
4.	**Discussion paper – future of LDNS** 4.1 JH Options Paper RC circulated his response to the JH Options paper, and asked JH to talk through background to it. JH said he had initially prepared his paper at the end of 2012 for reporting internally – what's happening with LDNS, where it's going, options re funding etc? The paper then went to RC, DP and to funding partners for further thoughts. The paper outlined three main options, now narrowed down to just option 3 – SNH will continue with funding short-term. SNH needs to show value for money as well as benefit on the ground. JH admitted he is at times critical of LDNS, but conscious that good work going on, a lot of it behind the scenes work that cannot be qualified financially, and most were involved voluntarily because of interest. RC said in his view what had been achieved above all was to get committed people to the table giving their own time to do something that needs doing, and a value can't be put on that. However LDNS was emerging from 'honeymoon period', with lots of enthusiasm that is excellent, but it now needs a more structured approach for the future.	

Following Option 3 means accountability to funding bodies.

A draft action plan had also been produced by DP.

Two levels of subscription (individuals at £25.00 and Groups at £100) were both currently under review, and to be decided at next AGM.

It had been suggested that LDNS membership could include a subscription to Best Practice, or be a free add-on with membership to other organisations (like SL&E). This needs to be revisited– DT confirmed that SL&E had agreed to do this.

DP said that there was a danger that a new membership organisation relying on member income would spend most of its time trying to recruit members rather than getting on with the job. Also that the voluntary time should be costed, and that it would not be an underestimate for more than £20K of time to have been put in by the committee in the previous year. JH said that this exercise would be helpful, and would help to demonstrate the effort that is being made.

RC said that this should be done, and that an assessment of hours would be given at year-end.

DP also thought that individual membership is important so members feel they are part of something but that £25 is too high and £10 might be a more realistic level. RC said we needed to look at the opportunity to add further benefit to a higher subscription.

GH suggested possibly £10 for simple membership, and £25 to include Best Practice for those who were not already subscribers to it.

RC said the subscription question would be revisited for the AGM in 6 months.

GP said a strategic approach was required to map out where LDNS would be in 3 years. There should be some reference to helping local authorities and agencies identify where the hot spots and risk areas would arise, and where 'capacity building' would be required in the future.

RC said that this might entail a map showing the hot spots, DVC data, deer population information and other impacts. The design of this might need to be with SNH, but LDNS could assist with collection of data.

JH said that this was already in hand with SNH. SNH is spending £10K per annum on data collection work. SNH

	expects a report next month identifying main risk areas, hot spots and will then assess what action is required to address these. Danger that a lot of money might be spent producing the same information twice. SNH will draw out the risk from DVCs and also other deer welfare data not linked to accidents (1000 deer incidents per annum reported through SSPCA not linked to DVCs). The role of LDNS may be to work with Local Authorities or Community Councils to tackle these areas? RC said that LDNS could also offer a mentoring-type service, make links and introductions and build capacity on the ground. JB said other member organisations also had networks that could and should be involved. GP asked to be given more details of the SNH project. JH said it was not yet officially circulated, but imminent. RC said also there was an opportunity to illustrate the preventative approach, giving Angus initiative as an example. RS suggested there should be link to LDNS from the SNH website, so feedback could come back to LDNS. RC said that SNH should be the first point of contact for problems arising. JG gave example of his being contacted by local NFUS branch in Ayrshire that had concerns about red deer eating crops and JG had checked criteria for controlling these deer with SNH. JG asked whether it would be helpful if LDNS had a register of qualified individuals and DMGs that could be called on. JB said this might raise issues; there was already a 'fit and competent' register, and any enquiries should be referred to SNH in first instance. RC said it was important not to duplicate effort, but LDNS could help to make the links. In conclusion it was decided to adopt JH's paper and subsequent comments as a working document. It should be for the to propose now how they want it to be taken forward. AC said there was probably more of a barrier within Transport Scotland because there was not such a good understanding of deer issues – LDNS wasn't so much about expenditure, but why and how it will help, outcomes, and whether it can add to TS's effective management of its estate. RC asked JH whether there were any parts his paper (Option 3) he might wish to update, given comments and discussion.	

	JH said that LDNS can help promote ongoing SNH work, such as the new 'app' developed by Jochen Langbein. MM said that Local Authorities must become more significant players in deer management as more deer move into peri-urban areas with resulting issues, and that important areas for LAs to address were data gathering and monitoring. Deer fall into the remit of a number of different Local Authority departments such as roads, environmental protection, and cleansing, but these could be un-coordinated and not report effectively. RC said that what a better data collection system by Local Authorities coordinating across all relevant departments would be helpful. JH said that SNH had recognized that there was a gap, but it wasn't just LAs– there were many others with land with lots of deer on it. Over the next 2 – 3 years SNH would be identifying gaps and what needs to be done. Currently it has 3 pilot study areas covering local authorities and NGOs – West (Glasgow, Lanarkshire), Middle (Dundee, Aberdeen, Fife) and Lothians. LAs are engaged at different levels. SNH is starting to look at delivering training, assessing habitat impacts, road safety etc. MM said the single biggest area is roads and that is where the majority of data should be coming from. JH said that there needed to be more input into pilot studies than just from SNH alone, so also involving LAs themselves, Police, community groups etc regardless of whether it was a public safety or deer welfare issue. JH said that there was a possible need for Best Practice guide on road safety to assist. RC asked whether a paper should be pulled together identifying all communication gaps, and what needs to be done to address these with tasks allocated between agencies, LAs, LDNS, and individual organisations within network. JH said that SNH had a draft project plan for *Deer in and around Towns* (DIAT) and from this should pin down where LDNS input can best be applied. This to be a paper for the next meeting. 4.2 <u>Action plan</u> DP has produced a first draft Action Plan covering actions and communications following the request from SNH at	JH

	previous meeting. This doesn't address all audiences, and is communications-weighted because that is much of the nature of the task. RC said that the first thing to impress is the many different things happening or planned, and numbers of people involved. However it will not address all requirements that public agencies are looking for. Also that it was probably best for the agencies to come back to LDNS with how they would like the information assembled for their own purposes. JH asked if everyone else was happy with what was proposed. RC said that there was more going on than on the paper - basic education and messages about the WANE Act for example. JB asked what more could be done than was not already happening; for example BDS, NFUS and others have been pushing this information for two years but DT said there was still a real lack of knowledge in NFUS about WANE and deer because they were focused primarily on commodities and CAP. RC said that it was those who were not 'networking' with other organisations that had probably not yet got the message. GP suggested that a *communications plan* was needed that outlined key messages and delivery mechanisms, also possibly covering two or three years, so allowing to build towards certain events, like a Local Authority education day for example. GP suggested that the media departments in the Agencies and LAs should be asked to assess the draft plan and how it could best be taken forward. RC said that it was important to identify target audiences and important messages, and most of that already exists (in JH's paper and elsewhere). JH said that the funders should have a fresh look and outline how they would like to see it presented. RC asked the Agencies to come back on this. JH said that involving the SNH communications team would not be relevant (if it's about deer they would refer back to him anyway). DP said he thought this process had already been undertaken. 12 – 18 months background has been taken into account already, and Alastair MacGugan had specifically	JH, AC, GP, IF

	requested an equivalent to the WDNA tick-box format outlining what was planned for the next 12 months. This is what had been produced RC said this should be taken forward by JH and the Agencies rather than by DP. Possibly a smaller meeting prior to the next committee meeting would be helpful. Agencies to develop response. DT asked whether there was involvement with RHET on education days and was assured that this was already happening.	JH, AC, GP, IF
5.	**Events and initiatives** 5.1 Royal Highland Show KW said that the BASC stand could carry LDNS leaflets but had no space for a banner. 5.2 Scottish Game Fair RC said this was a leafleting and networking opportunity. LDNS is sharing the ADMG stand with SCSTG. Help sought for the stand – Jim Govan and Daye Tucker said they might be available. Glen Heggs possibly could attend on Sunday. DP asked whether LDNS might have a presence on the Joint Agencies stand; however there was a lot of material relating to YONS so space might be difficult. DP to discuss with James McDougall and Alastair MacGugan. 5.3 Butchers Days These are planned for 2 and 3 September as opportunities to talk to more butchers in lowland areas (Stepps and Kilmarnock venues). Plan to have LDNS representative to talk about deer management. RC said that he would be available for one. DP to liaise with JH re butchers and SNH input. 5.4 Best Practice RC asked whether there were any Best Practice training days planned for low ground areas. JH said that there was a day for Colleges at Creag Meggaidh at end October but no others planned, although opportunities could be identified to develop this area with LDNS. 5.5 Future training/competence awareness days RC asked who on the committee knew of or was planning other events. GH said there was a BDS day in Galloway on 3 November that could be expanded to have an LDNS element. JB mentioned the potential 'minefield' to be overcome regarding who could fire on a BDS range. Some BDS events were easier to 'piggyback' than others. RC said that a presentation	DP DP, JH

	opportunity or even a presence at them would be helpful. JB said that he understood that the LDNS role was to direct people to BDS and other organisations when they had events happening that might be of relevance. JB said people on the ground were certainly hearing about LDNS, but the organisation was undoubtedly still finding its focus. RC said that LDNS was not trying to replicate anything that was already being done but to add value, with its main target not BDS members but those who are not engaged with anyone ergo LDNS should not be seen as a threat. JB said there would be no issue over promoting BDS events through LDNS channels. DP said that the new Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire group would probably welcome some help with a launch event. 5.6 <u>Auction Marts</u> Previous minutes assigned various committee members to speak to auction mart contacts. DP had studied the main mart websites but none of them carry any advertising at all, and doubted this would present an opportunity. It would possibly be best to ask NFUS if they would take a banner ad on their website. DP to take progress. DT also will persist with contacts with NFUS, plus those assigned to make contact with NFUS regional managers on previous minutes should do so. 5.7 <u>New DMGs – opportunities and progress</u> RC said it was gratifying that new DMGs were coming together. • Inverclyde and Dunbartonshire have formed a group with DK mentoring; • Forth Valley – conversation between DT and Ian Semple. May move forward; • Buchan and District DMG has now formally joined LDNS; • SLDMG has formally joined LDNS; • South South Lanarkshire DMG (Tom Frame) JH in contact; • Kilpatrick Hills possibly - DT following up; • SW Scotland DMG (Andrew Treadaway). RC said that SW Scotland's current area was too big to be effective and some type of fragmentation was essential. RC would contact Andrew Treadaway to encourage progress. JH said that Maitland Rankin had done a huge amount of work but that a SW group of the current size was not practical. JH said that what was needed now were like-minded individuals managing	RC, DP DP DT, Others, RC

	deer to a high standard setting up groups through common interest, and that there was evidence of this happening. He said that the Borders group was still working because there were enough interested people to keep it going but the issue in SW was that generally the forestry companies were no longer engaged. IF said that it had been difficult for the last 10 years and that no one was turning up at meetings except the committee. However, there is a common interest, which is managing deer for forestry purposes. JH said there was an active BDS branch in SW Scotland and this was maybe doing the job. JB said that there had to be a 'need' for a group to exist, and if that need was lacking then the exercise became pointless. RC agreed, but said that this tended towards a reactive approach to a problem. However for now a watching brief should be kept on SW Scotland. • Possibility of Fife DMG – Robert Balfour had tried, but that was an owner-based model. Possible update from RS/Steve Wade at next meeting. • Angus Deer Initiative could become the basis of a Deer Group. Further meeting coming up shortly. • Clydesdale Group, based around JG's syndicate as a nucleus. However, JG said that it's not open to more members and doesn't hold regular meetings. JG said that it works as it is, and there is no real reason to change; expansion would be a problem. 5.8 Other GH said that there would be a BDS stand at Galloway Game Fair, Drumlanrig (17 and 18 August) with the possibility for an LDNS banner and information. KW said that there were a number of wildlife crime events due to take place, with deer matters on the agenda. JB said that all PAWS committees were reforming following Police restructuring to a single constabulary. LDNS could help to promote these events. KW said that BASC also did a lot for schools with RHET. Regarding a possible Holyrood event with SGA, this needs further discussion. Thought that SNH might also support this, but currently it is SGA's idea to take forward. RC said that he had been approached by SGA in his ADMG capacity, but felt a Holyrood event would be well suited to raise profile of LDNS in political circles too.	RS, SW GH, DP RC, AH, DP
6.	**AGM and Conference** This is still some time away, but we need to start thinking about it. DP said he thought there was the potential to do	

	more than just the AGM but involve some type of outdoor element as well, or even hold the AGM in conjunction with Scottish Stalking Fair in Kelso. Both RS and JH advised against this. DP said his inclination however was to stick with central belt location. DT suggested that Falkirk might be a good location, and that it might be helpful to speak to Guy Wedderburn at Callendar Estate re holding the event at Callendar House and a visit to the estate. DP to bring a framework for the AGM and event to next meeting.	 DP
7.	**Newsletter, website and PR** 7.1 Newsletter About to go to print. Final pdf to be circulated. 7.2 Website Ready to go up. Three domain names registered – www.ldnscotland.org.uk, www.ldns.org.uk and www.lowlanddeernetwork.org.uk All will point to the LDNS site. 7.3 PR/publicity An article has already been confirmed with the Courier/P&J for their farming supplements. As an alternative to Scottish Farmer, space is to be bought in both Agrimart and Agritiser in coming issues from July onwards. Half page on Agritiser is £148.00, and half page on Agrimart is £174.00. JH said this should flag up farmer responsibilities under WANE, the new website etc. DT asked whether a link to the LDNS website and newsletter could be posted onto the NFUS (and SL&E and others) Facebook and Twitter pages. DP said that there will also be an LDNS Twitter feed set up, accessible through the website. JB said that we should have a Links page on the website to supporting organisations. All committee members would be listed on the website with links to their organisations also. DP to action. Funders logos (SNH, FCS, TS) should be included at front end of website. 7.4 DVD JH said that a DVD would be a valuable awareness-raising tool. IF reported that the Forestry Commission is already producing a short DVD on how they manage deer in	 DP DP DP DP DP DP

	woodlands in and around towns. This covers reasons, public safety, method, risk assessment, competence etc all in single, short production. The DVD would be available to members of the public, local authorities, game fairs, and for internal educational use. A consistent message and more comprehensive in response to an enquiry than just a letter. JH said that there may be an opportunity to have an LDNS DVD to cover all options. RS said we could always just post a film on YouTube. However, RC said he thought it would also be useful to have copies to hand out. JH said it would be good for RHET venison events, meetings with local authority rangers etc and that there was a danger on YouTube that it could be cross-referenced with other deer films with different or conflicting messages. RC said it was a good idea meeting a lot of LDNS objectives. DP said there was also a need for general footage of deer on low ground and on the hill for ADMG. DP said that Greg Login (SLDG) might be a useful contact for footage, or for taking the project forward. RC said that the SCSTG film was extremely useful. LDNS should now consider a DVD, scope out, devise key messages and budget. DP, JH and IF to take forward.	JH, IF, DP
8.	**Date of next meeting** Thursday 15 August at 10.30am, Scion House, Stirling University Innovation Park.	