

## Danger when deer hit the headlines



**Richard Cooke, Chairman, LDNS**

*Deer managers regularly face the dilemma that, while greater recognition for what we do is important, when the media take an interest in deer issues then inevitably it is the wrong messages that make the headlines.*

We saw this earlier this year, most notably following the University of East Anglia's report published in the Journal of Wildlife Management where numbers of two species (roe and muntjac) across just 234 sq kms of East Anglia were extrapolated out over the whole of the UK and all species. The headline was that an annual cull of 60 per cent of all deer was required nationally to keep numbers and impacts in check. Not all the blame can be laid with the report itself - the media worked this up into a front-page story without thinking to check the facts or the implications of the nonsense that they were fabricating.

Why damaging? Because without straying too far into anyone else's territory we are confident that we have got things largely in check in Scotland.

On the high ground we have structures that are working better probably than ever before, and those headlines in that context were simply irrelevant. On the low ground we possibly sensed that such ill informed and unwelcome propaganda might be forthcoming at some stage, and that is the very reason for LDNS – not just to do the job, but to demonstrate that the job is being done and done well.

This particular story was damaging too for those promoting the case for more venison to be produced in the UK to meet growing market demand. Why do we need more deer when we're over-run by them anyway would not be an unreasonable reaction.

To revert to the dilemma, if we want recognition for what we do, if we want our opinions to be sought and our professionalism to be valued, then we have to put ourselves out there – and that is what LDNS is about.

That's why the competence awareness day run by South Lanarkshire Deer Group is a good model. That's why the formation of the Angus Deer Initiative to reach farmers in that area is a good concept. That's why helping local butchers to understand more about deer and venison and to source their supply locally where appropriate is important.

Having been around for 18 months, LDNS is at the point of reviewing what it is and where it's going, and much of what we do must be about engaging with the public at all levels, so that when the crackpot suggestions about deer hit the news desks we can respond positively and confidently.

*We have a way to go – but we are now well on the way.*

## LDNS representatives report good progress to Minister for Environment at briefing meeting

*Representatives of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland (LDNS) met in April with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, who also has responsibility for deer issues at the Scottish Parliament.*

The meeting was held to discuss the work of LDNS and the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) and progress made since the passing of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, and also the progress of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland (LDNS).

The meeting was attended by Richard Cooke, Chairman of LDNS (and ADMG), and Dick Playfair, LDNS Secretary.

Richard Cooke said: "I think that there is good momentum with regard to the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act. Everybody in the deer management sector has recognised the responsibilities embodied in the Code of Deer Management and are finding it helpful, particularly when drawing up or updating deer management plans.

"The legislation appears to have been taken seriously by those in the sector and, when it is reviewed, I am confident that we can show good progress.

"I think there is still work to do in raising awareness of the Code among those who cull deer on an occasional basis to protect their economic interests such as crops and trees, particularly in relation to competence.

"In an ideal world we would like anyone who takes a rifle to shoot a deer to be doing so under the same standards, but I think the introduction of the General Licence and the emphasis on training to demonstrate competence has been a helpful move in that direction."

"The point of LDNS is to introduce a collaborative culture to the management of lowland deer. It's about bringing a wide range of individuals and organisations that are involved with lowland deer together and adding value.

"The response has been very positive and I am immensely impressed by the commitment and



professionalism of the many vocational deer managers who have become involved with the Network so far.

"In our second year what we are doing, having built the core, is to roll out local initiatives encouraging those on the low ground to recognise deer management as one of their responsibilities, to take advantage of training opportunities, and to work with each other."

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change said:

"The messages we have received back regarding the Act, the Code and deer management generally suggest that good progress is being made particularly in certain areas where previously concerns had been expressed.

"The low ground initiative fills a gap and, for the record, we very much welcome the work that is being done to establish the Lowland Deer Network and the contribution that it is making"

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# LDNS AGM

*The first Annual General meeting of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland took place on Sunday 9 December 2012 at the Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld.*

This was the meeting at which LDNS became formally constituted, with elections and appointments to its Executive Committee (previously a Development Committee), the election of Richard Cooke to LDNS Chairman (proposed by Robert Sharp; seconded by Colin Young), and Ron Smith to LDNS Vice Chairman (proposed by Richard Cooke; seconded by Alex Hogg).

While numbers attending were low, this did enable the formalities of adopting the Constitution and the elections to be covered more quickly than might have been the case to a packed house. A list of members of the LDNS Executive Committee is shown on the back page. Representatives for regions and sectors/expertise were elected; representatives for the public bodies, agencies, local government, and NGOs were appointed.

Richard Cooke delivered his annual report, highlighting activity that had followed on from the proposal to form LDNS in November 2011, and also a financial statement for the Network.

The formal business was followed by presentations on Competence from Colin McClean, on Deer Management from Robert Sharp, and on Low Ground Deer Management Issues from Ian Laing of Police Scotland. Ryan Walrath of the North Lanarkshire Deer Management Group also gave a short presentation on CWD in deer in the USA.

A panel question and answer session followed, with the panel comprising Jamie Hammond, SNH; Ian Fergusson FCS; Ian Laing, Police Scotland; Rob Sharp; and Ryan Walrath with a number of broad ranging questions put to them.

Summing up, Ian Fergusson said that the formation of LDNS had been a huge challenge, that communication was a crucial part of that process and that FCS would continue to support LDNS through 2013/14.

Jamie Hammond said that SNH had to be cautious about how its funds were spent, but LDNS had made significant progress in one year in an area where previously there had been no collaboration or cohesion.

## Deer Management and Scotland's Trunk Road Network



**Angus Corby, Landscape Advisor,  
Transport Scotland**

*By their very nature, roads can create physical barriers within the landscape, fragmenting habitats and severing feeding areas and movement corridors previously used*

*by a variety of species, including deer. Whilst a robust planning system and high level of environmental assessment and design takes this into account for new road schemes – ensuring roads fit into the landscape and are as permeable as possible for relevant species – older roads can create formidable obstacles, representing a hazard for animals which, in turn, can affect the safety of road users, particularly where deer are concerned.*

In 2011 the Scottish Government adopted new legislation which, amongst other things, placed greater focus on wild deer management. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (WANE Act) required Scottish Natural Heritage to develop a Code of Practice for Deer Management (the Code) which now applies to all land owners and managers of land where wild deer are found; including within the trunk road boundary.

The fundamental objective of the Code is to set out recommended action for sustainable deer management and to promote collaboration between neighbouring landowners/managers to ensure that any negative impacts of deer on the public interest are minimised, as far as practicable, whilst deer welfare is safeguarded. In order to reflect these requirements in the management of the trunk road estate, Transport Scotland has included the obligations of the Code within the new contracts for the Operating Companies which manage and maintain the network on its behalf.

Each Operating Company will now be required to prepare an annual Deer Management Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Code.

The Plans will include:

*(i) A strategy* – covering the general approach to managing deer across the Unit. This section will identify the general areas where wild deer may come into conflict with the road network and include good practice proposals for

collaborating in deer management planning with adjacent landowners or other interested parties.

*(ii) Part A* – a record of works undertaken and achievements made during the preceding year in respect of deer management. This may include the installation or maintenance of specific deer mitigation facilities; liaison with adjacent landowners or other interested parties; action to resolve incidents or reports received concerning deer accessing the Unit; and general comment on the effectiveness of current mitigation measures in place across the Unit.

*(iii) Part B* – proposals and actions intended to be implemented during the following year in accordance with the deer management plan strategy. This may include areas and/or routes to be targeted for deer management; details of deer mitigation proposals and the likely actions involved; and proposals for future liaison and collaboration.

The first Deer Management Plans came into force on the North West and South West Units from April this year, with the North East and South East areas following once these contracts are awarded and commence on site (expected April 2014). As this is a new contractual obligation it is anticipated that the Operating Companies will require a little time to get up to speed with the requirements of the Code and to prepare fully integrated Deer Management Plans. However, it is hoped that as the Plans develop they will help deliver more pro-active and effective deer management across the trunk road estate, ultimately benefiting both the welfare of the animals and the safety of road users.



Photo: Fallow deer at the roadside. Jochen Langbein



# Competence Update



Colin McClean

*Most will be aware that the issue of Competence arises from the WANE Act. The Act challenges the deer sector to significantly increase uptake of deer stalking qualifications through our current voluntary system with its aim to ensure that everyone who shoots deer unsupervised in Scotland is competent in terms of deer welfare, firearms safety and food safety. The Scottish Government is intending to review the current arrangements in 2014 and, if uptake of the voluntary system of deer qualifications is viewed as unsatisfactory, then Government is likely to impose a statutory system.*

The Deer Sector Competence Working Group was set up in 2011 consisting of organisations like ADMG, BASC, BDS, SGA and others. In 2012 the Working Group decided that DSC1 or any equivalent qualifications would be a sufficient test of competence. This decision was endorsed by the Minister of the Environment although he was keen that as many people as possible should also go forward to sit DSC2.

Through 2012 one primary task was to communicate the following messages:

- *If you wish to shoot deer unsupervised in Scotland for whatever reason, sport, marauding deer on a croft, forestry lease or whatever, then this affects you.*
- *The sector has until 2014 to increase uptake of stalking qualifications significantly or risk a compulsory test being imposed.*
- *Demonstrating competence is straight-forward so anyone wanting to be assessed as competent should contact one of the training organisations such as BASC, BDS or their local training provider (which could be their local deer management group) and they will be able to take you through the process.*

To communicate this message, over 3000 leaflets were handed out at game fairs and agricultural shows. Articles were published in the Deer Journal, the ADMG newsletter, the LDNS newsletter, and in Land Business, the magazine of Scottish Land and Estates. Media information has also been circulated, and numerous presentations made on competence at meetings.

The view now is that the professional and recreational deer stalking sectors are reasonably well informed and engaged in the process. The farming and crofting sectors however are probably less up to speed, so the Working Group's priorities for 2013 are as follows:

- *To persuade all in the professional or recreational stalking sectors who have yet to sit DSC1 that they should do so.*
- *To target communications and persuasion foremost at the farming and crofting sector.*

Some in LDNS who have already 'bought in' to the whole concept of competence and ongoing improvement may ask why this effort is being made. However, we believe that Government is unlikely to differentiate between different groups of people within the deer-culling sector and that any compulsory system imposed because of insufficient uptake will affect everyone.

We need to be able to demonstrate to Government that most stalkers are well qualified so we also need to collect data, although this will be done principally across upland groups and the red deer range.

Those in LDNS who are delivering competence, and building awareness of it, whether at grass roots level such as the day at East Kilbride, or through specific courses with training and accreditation providers such as Barony College/SRUC should take pride in the example that they are setting in response to the drive to improve standards across the board.



Photo: Greg Login, SLDG



Photo: FCS



Photo: Scottish Natural Heritage

# Lowland Deer Network Scotland Events

## Butchery Demonstrations

Two butchery demonstrations held at Carfraemill, Scottish Borders, and Aberdeen Airport Thistle Hotel in September 2012 to help join up the supply chain between local estates and deer managers and the independent butchery sector. Demonstrations were by Bruce Brymer.

Organised by LDNS and the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association in association with SGA.



## LDNS AGM

At the Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld, December 2012.



## Competence Awareness Day

The Ally McCoist Centre, East Kilbride, 2 March 2013

A full day introduction to those new to deer management in a rural and semi rural environment with a series of talks, demonstrations and skills opportunities on the range.

Organised by South Lanarkshire Deer Group



Photos: Greg Login, SLDG

## Borders Stalking Fair

At the Border Union Showground, Kelso. LDNS was present with a display for two days, 23 and 24 March, with several good contacts made, and discussions regarding the new Inverclyde Deer Management Group.



Photos: Robert Sharp

## DSC Level 1 Day, West Lothian

Two days of theory, practical and then assessment for DSC Level 1 both in a lodge and outside on estate ground in West Lothian/South Lanarkshire, with the tutorials/course work conducted by Paul Adkins and Andrew Treadaway of Barony College SRUC.

Organised by West Lothian Deer Management Group.



Photos: Robert Sharp



# Angus Deer Initiative

## - an update

***In June 2012 the Angus Deer Initiative held its first meeting to try and engage with farmers and landowners with large properties in Angus with lowland deer but probably no management plan in place. Recreational and vocational stalkers and landowners and farmers who already had an interest in deer management were also invited. 35 people were invited by letter and most followed up with a phone call.***

The meeting was chaired by Richard Cooke, LDNS Chairman who gave an overview of the Lowland Deer Network. Jamie Hammond of SNH gave a talk on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act and its impact on landowner responsibility emphasising that under the law everyone who has deer on their ground has a duty to manage them 'sustainably'. Other speakers were Robert Beatty (NFUS), Mark Duncan (Forest Enterprise Scotland), Peter Keyser on his roe stalking business, Christian Nissen of Highland Game on the value of properly handled venison, and Alan Bell (Tayside Police) on road traffic accidents (RTAs) and the link between poaching and other rural crime.

The meeting was well attended but almost all those who came already had an interest in deer management to some degree. In reviewing it, we felt it did not quite hit the mark in terms of those who we had wanted to attract.

This year therefore, as a follow up, and with the help of Harvey Birse, a recreational stalker and well known in the area by people with roe deer interests, we intend to bring stalkers together to discuss the situation in their area regarding local deer populations, and landowner and farming attitudes towards deer management and stalking. From that we will be able to approach some of the landholdings and offer a necessary service to them to help reduce RTAs and to manage their lowland deer.

We plan to meet soon, so all interested should please contact me (details below) for more information.

**Alisdair Colyton**

**Angus Deer Initiative, Lindertis Farms Ltd,  
Lindertis, Kirriemuir, Angus DD8 5NT**

**E: [lindertisfarms@btconnect.com](mailto:lindertisfarms@btconnect.com) | M: 07740 877565**

## The Leading Question

***Q: I've read recently in the media about Scouts being open to prosecution even on campsites on private land for carrying knives, and they have re-written their Code accordingly. What is the situation regarding stalkers and deer managers carrying knives?***

***Colin Shedden, Director, BASC Scotland, writes:***

BASC received assurances from the Scottish Government earlier this year that people with a good reason for carrying a knife, such as deer stalkers, shooters and gamekeepers would not be affected by the last 'zero tolerance' crackdown on knife crime in Scotland.

We understand from the Scottish Government that existing exemptions are still in place for those having 'good reason' for having an otherwise illegal knife; a locking knife or one with a blade over three inches. This would allow a deerstalker or gamekeeper, for instance, to have a knife with him or her while working or going to or returning from a stalking trip. However, routinely carrying a knife in the car is not permitted.

Whilst we support initiatives against knife crime, many people involved in shooting may have possibly felt that they can no longer carry a knife for work, game shooting, pest control or deer stalking. We are able to reassure them that they can continue as before and that if they need a knife with them they can carry one.



*Photo: Neil McIntyre, [www.neilmcintyre.com](http://www.neilmcintyre.com)*

# Earning a buck, or two



**Derek Kneller, Secretary, North Lanarkshire Deer Management Group**

*Hearing the dawn chorus, I realised I had overslept and a text message on my mobile confirmed my companion for the morning was waiting patiently on the drive.*

Apologies given, Ryan and I set off on the M8 heading for Tannochside, near Glasgow. Ryan is a fellow member of North Lanarkshire DMG. He hails from Wisconsin USA where he was involved in deer management, practically, and during the course of further studies.

Since relocating to the north side of Glasgow he decided to become involved in local deer management in Scotland and sourced the nearest DMG. His experience in the USA has been primarily with white tailed deer, but today roe deer management is the nature of his business on Glasgow's urban fringe.

This outing is primarily to reduce deer numbers in an area where there are several key factors to address. Also it will give Ryan the opportunity to gain more practical experience in dealing with our smaller - but every bit as challenging – deer species.

After surveying the area, factors such as deer vehicle collisions (DVCs), deer welfare and crop damage etc had to be addressed, and when dealing with these management issues public safety is always the primary concern. Community woodlands quite often require management plans that are tailored to take into account all these very diverse problems and address them accordingly. DVCs are a regular occurrence locally, and particularly during the spring flush.

Our aim is to remove any young bucks, thereby reducing the number of territorial disputes as these clashes can often result in deer being chased, or chasing each other onto busy roads with inevitable consequences for both deer and drivers and vehicles.

The management area is landlocked by roads, with the M73 to the west, the A8/M8 along the north side, with two minor B roads encasing the ground to the south and east. It is mainly arable/dairy farmed ground, some wooded glens furnish the banks of the River Calder as it threads towards the city of Glasgow. The grant-funded community woodland scheme is located throughout these wooded glens.



We arrived at the ground, despite my long lie, at around 05.30am. We prepared our kit and checked the wind direction. Once a plan was decided, we set off down the west boundary fence and, on reaching the wooded glen we turned east facing a wind still quite chilly despite the spring season. We stalked in this direction for 30 minutes picking our way slowly and quietly along the edge of the woodland, scanning down the wooded banks towards the river's edge.

A little further, the steep bank swept back from the riverside and back towards the arable ground creating a sizeable fertile plain planted up with native broadleaves. Stopping, we sat and scanned the low ground at the riverside, all the way across to where the high bank swept back towards the river's edge and, just as we were preparing to move on, we spotted a young buck coming over the far bank, making his way down through the trees in our direction. Following him we noticed another young buck and before long they both were in the low ground below us.

Ryan nominated which animal he was going to take and when it presented he took the shot which was accurate and clean. The second buck ran out and as he turned he presented safely almost full broadside. I gave Ryan a nod to take him also which he did with the same efficiency as with the first.

Both animals were field dressed, and then transported back to the larder for further preparation and documentation. The next visit back to this property will involve delivering a venison pack to the landowner.

***A satisfactory result all round.***



*Photos: Derek Kneller, NLDMG*



# New Deer Management Group set up to cover Inverclyde and Dunbartonshire



**Steven Duncan,  
Deputy Secretary, I&D DMG**

*Following on from enthusiastic discussions at the Kelso Deer Stalking Fair in March and the original launch of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland, a new Deer Management*

*Group is rapidly taking shape. The initial area covered by the group is to be within the Council districts of Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire and is being actively driven by Committee members: Dr Peter Semple, Chairman of the former West of Scotland Branch of the BDS from 1984-1987 and now Chairman of I&D DMG; Peter Wilkinson, Secretary; Steven Duncan, Deputy Secretary; George Cockburn, Treasurer; and Hugh O'Neil.*

The above Committee members, and other fellow deer managers are all based in Inverclyde and Dunbartonshire. All are members of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland and are DSC1/2 qualified with collectively more than 100 year's deer management experience between them.

The fledgling group had its initial meeting at High Lunderston Bothy, Inverkip on 4 April. Derek Kneller, Secretary of North Lanarkshire DMG was in attendance and has pledged continued support in establishing this latest venture.

It was felt by all those present that their region was not currently represented by the Lowland Deer Network Scotland and that the formation of a deer management group in this area would provide an opportunity to maintain best practice and promote healthy deer management within the local community and additionally to allow Continuous Personnel Development (CPD) for vocational stalkers and other like-minded people involved in deer welfare and management.

Since the initial meeting, additional impetus has been maintained with further interested parties and deer managers coming forward. This was built on at a further meeting on 9 May, again at High Lunderston Bothy, where a Constitution and Committee for the DMG was formally established. Ben Harrower, Wildlife Manager for Scottish Lowlands District with the Forestry Commission has pledged his continued support giving practical advice on current legislation. Further support and guidance has already been pledged by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Lowland Deer Network.

It is planned that a formal launch with all relevant stakeholders will take place in the coming months with the DMG becoming fully operational during Summer 2013. This will also include a fully interactive website for both landowners requiring assistance and prospective new members to get in touch.

Organisations, land owners or like-minded deer managers, or persons who have the welfare and management of their local deer population as a priority and would like further information on the activities of the Inverclyde and Dunbartonshire Deer Management Group are encouraged to contact in the first instance:

**Peter Wilkinson (DMG Secretary)**  
e: [pwilkinson@wilkinsonandco.co.uk](mailto:pwilkinson@wilkinsonandco.co.uk)

or

**Steven Duncan (DMG Deputy Secretary)**  
e: [sjrsdunc@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:sjrsdunc@blueyonder.co.uk)

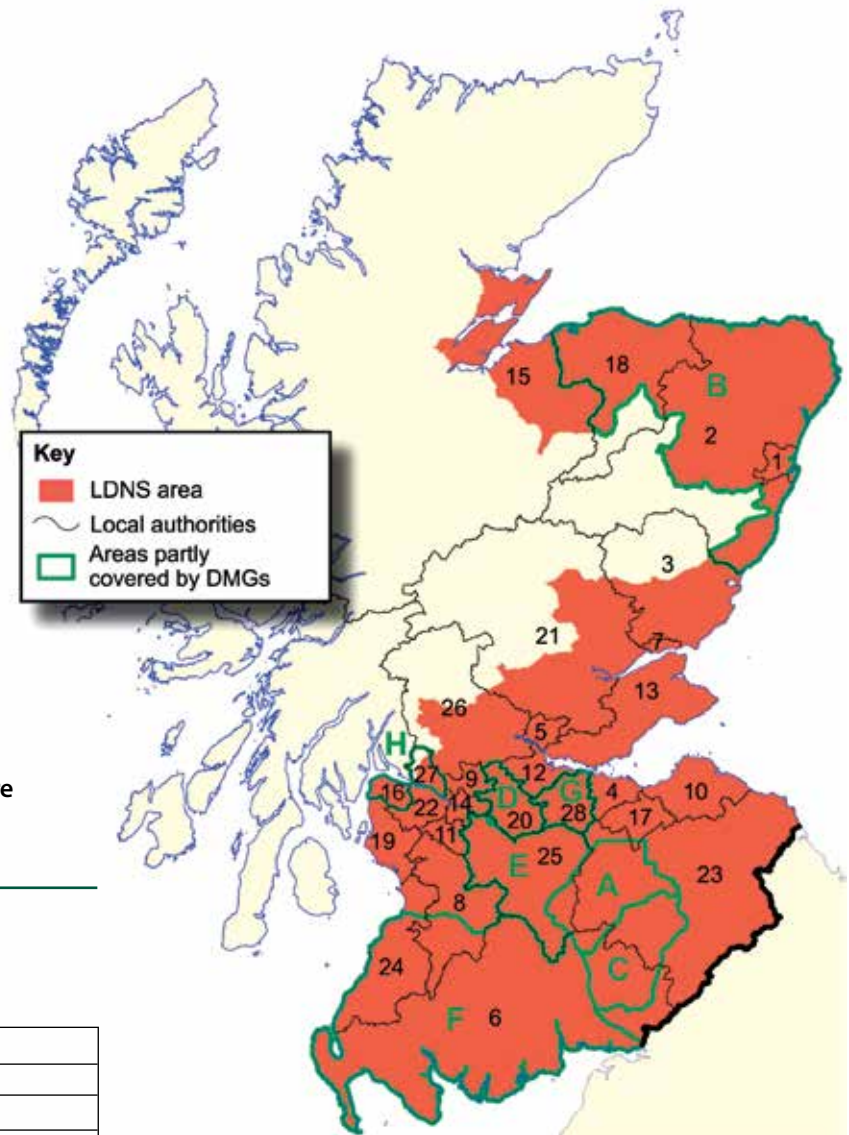
# LDNS Area

## Areas partly covered by DMGs

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>A - Borders</b>               | <b>E - South Lanarkshire</b>                  |
| <b>B - Buchan &amp; District</b> | <b>F - South West Scotland</b>                |
| <b>C - Eskdalemuir</b>           | <b>G - West Lothian</b>                       |
| <b>D - North Lanarkshire</b>     | <b>H - Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire</b> |

## Local Authorities

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 - Aberdeen City       | 15 - Highland            |
| 2 - Aberdeenshire       | 16 - Inverclyde          |
| 3 - Angus               | 17 - Midlothian          |
| 4 - City of Edinburgh   | 18 - Moray               |
| 5 - Clackmannanshire    | 19 - North Ayrshire      |
| 6 - Dumfries & Galloway | 20 - North Lanarkshire   |
| 7 - Dundee City         | 21 - Perth & Kinross     |
| 8 - East Ayrshire       | 22 - Renfrewshire        |
| 9 - East Dunbartonshire | 23 - Scottish Borders    |
| 10 - East Lothian       | 24 - South Ayrshire      |
| 11 - East Renfrewshire  | 25 - South Lanarkshire   |
| 12 - Falkirk            | 26 - Stirling            |
| 13 - Fife               | 27 - West Dunbartonshire |
| 14 - Glasgow City       | 28 - West Lothian        |



## LDNS Executive Committee

Richard Cooke	LDNS Chairman
Ron Smith	LDNS Vice Chairman
Dick Playfair	LDNS Secretary
Jane Begg	West Lothian Council
John Bruce	BDS
Angus Corby	Transport Scotland
Alisdair Colyton	Farmer, Angus Deer Initiative
Ian Fergusson	Forestry Commission Scotland
Mike Flynn	SSPCA
David Fyffe	Scottish Land & Estates
James Govan	Stalker, SW Scotland
James Hammond	SNH
Glen Heggs	Forestry
Alex Hogg	Scottish Gamekeepers Association
Derek Kneller	North Lanarkshire Deer Management Group
Ian Laing	Police Scotland
Malcolm Muir	South Lanarkshire Council
Gordon Patterson	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Alex Paul	West Lothian Deer Management Group
David Quarrell	South Lanarkshire Deer Group
George Ritchie	Banff & Buchan Deer Management Group
Robert Sharp	Stalker and Deer Manager, Renfrewshire
Ian Talboys	Aberdeen Council
Daye Tucker	NFU Scotland
Kenny Willmitt	BASC Scotland

## What does LDNS offer and how to join?

*LDNS adds value by coordinating existing effort and representation and provides the basis for a collaborative approach. It can provide a single, strong voice if further legislation is brought forward, when consultation papers require a response, or the sector is faced with new European regulation.*

LDNS is a source of information internally for members and externally to the wider public who want to see deer but know little about deer management. LDNS has an important role to play in public education and in countering negative comment. Membership also provides representation to bodies including the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group, the Scottish Venison Partnership, and the Scottish Quality Wild Venison assurance scheme.

LDNS provides a forum for increased contact and sharing including events to provide access to Best Practice Advice, other training needs, and experience exchange.

This Newsletter is produced by:

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