

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: Stirling University Innovation Park
On: Thursday 15 August 2013

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
Ian Fergusson (IF), Forest Enterprise
John Bruce (JB), BDS
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
James Govan (JG) Stalker, Ayrshire
Derek Kneller (DK) NLDMG
Iain Laing (IL) Police Scotland
Alisdair Colyton (AC), Farmer, Angus
Alex Paul (AP), WLDMG
Ron Smith (RS) Vice Chairman, Fife
Jane Begg (JBg), West Lothian Council

Apologies: Angus Corby (ACor), Transport Scotland
Gordon Patterson (GP), Forest Enterprise
Daye Tucker (DT), NFUS
David Quarrell (DQ) SLDG
Robert Sharp (RS), Stalker, Renfrewshire
Malcolm Muir (MM), South Lanarkshire Council, COSLA
Alex Hogg (AH), SGA
George Ritchie (GR), Banff & Buchan DMG
David Fyffe (DF), Scottish Land & Estates
Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA (No response – check e mail)

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| 1. | Minutes 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5 June 2013 were approved subject to the following changes: 1.2 Item 2.5.3 There is near certainty that Scottish Woodlands does require cull returns to be submitted. 1.3 Approval of minutes proposed by JG and seconded by IF. |
| 2. | Attendance 2.1 RC noted a disappointing turnout, and hoped for a fuller turnout next time. |
| 3. | Matters arising 3.1 <u>Meetings with NFUS regional managers, reps etc</u> Carried forward. 3.2 <u>Information leaflet on low ground deer management opportunities</u> Proposed to have an all-encompassing leaflet for handing out at auction marts, events etc on lowland deer on two pages. |

AW has done draft (circulated). Comments to be fed back to AW. Then RC, DP, JH and AW to agree copy and DP to commission design (A5 or B5) and print for distribution at next meeting. RC said funding for this would be from LDNS budget.

3.3 Low ground DMG cull return

3.3.1 DK gave an update on the system NLDMG had developed and was using involving identification and registration of private properties with DMG as controller, and an individual from within the Group nominated as a contact for SNH.

3.3.2 JBg said it was the owner's legal responsibility to submit the return and what is required is a clause on the form allowing the information to be shared by SNH with the Group. She said it was difficult in low ground areas to get owners to engage. There may be an opportunity for this to be included under cross compliance/good practice as part of new SRDP?

3.3.3 RC said that ADMG had had input to the consultation on SRDP. It has disappointing that the voluntary tick-box on the biannual agricultural return had been removed but understandable as uptake had been poor. .

3.3.4 JH said that he had discussed with colleagues and that there were problems in that the system was agriculture driven. It was not a European requirement to report either whether an owner has deer on their ground or whether they are being managed.

3.3.5 JB said that there was an opportunity for DMGs to advise owners as part of their management engagement that they would be reporting cull numbers to SNH.

3.3.6 DK to send his proforma to DP for circulation with minutes.

3.3.7 Discussion followed about Deer Line (the old DCS database system) that had been used for HFTSH and whether this was going to change. JH to clarify whether this would be incorporated into the new SNH website.

3.3.8 JB said there could be issues as data collection is undertaken by a third party contractor, and also the questions were very upland orientated.

3.3.10 RC suggested that possibly SGRPID could be charged with issuing a cull return form to every landholding in Scotland. RC to write to the Minister highlighting this anomaly and asking if something could be done about it. JH also to relay this back to SNH.

3.4 Competence leaflets

New yellow leaflets in circulation. Old style green ones can be binned.

3.5 Article on poaching for next newsletter

On schedule for newsletter. IL said that poaching remained a big problem in Fife, and arrests had been made. There was also progress on work involving the recovery of deer DNA from clothing and vehicles. One case currently with Procurator Fiscal, but after that there would be the opportunity for a story for general media and how DNA testing is becoming increasingly important in the campaign against poaching.

3.6 Banner advertising on NFUS website

DP reported that only advertising on NFUS website was for NFU Mutual, but no other opportunities.

3.7 NFUS Contacts

Good progress made by DT and others, but still a lot to do. Ongoing, and pressure to be kept on at head office level also.

3.8 SW Scotland

RC has been in touch with Andrew Treadaway, but requires following up. View that SW Scotland needs to split into smaller sub-groups in order to be more effective.

3.9 Holyrood Event

SGA is the prime mover, but LDNS has indicated we would like to be involved. Ongoing.

3.10 DVD Project

Ongoing.

4. Financial Report

4.1 Income and expenditure from November 2011 to end March 2013 circulated – this is longer than 12 months but takes into account the whole start up period to March 2013.

4.2 Subject to agreement, the Accounts will be tabled and signed off at the AGM at year-end.

4.3 All figures have been seen at previous meetings. RC reminded the meeting that at the AGM it was likely that the individual subscription would be dropped to £10 and also subscription payments for Groups and organisations (including Local Authorities) would be held at £25.

4.4 Discussion on subscriptions to be on agenda for next meeting.

4.5 Those who paid up-front for the SLDG competence day were able to reclaim their deposits if they wished, but they have received a Best Practice Guide for their outlay.

4.6 RC to revisit figures re contributions from Agencies and ADMG for the Peebles launch event.

4.7 RC to check whether there has been any reimbursement of the LDNS share of stand costs for 2012 Scottish Game Fair.

4.8 DP to check whether 'Meeting Room expenses' also covers the 2012 AGM

4.9 'Miscellaneous' and 'sundries' to be clarified.

4.10 Net assets at the end of the period reported were £5605 carried forward.

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| | <p>4.11 RC said that the LDNS accounts should be put on the website once finalized at the AGM so as to comply with FOI.</p> <p>4.12 JB asked whether there were any part-year accruals included in the accounts. Also that the final line on page 1 should be <i>Net Surplus/(Deficit) for period</i> (and not <u>year</u>), and clarification was required on who the Accountant was reporting to.</p> <p>4.13 On the income and expenditure report, RC to clarify figure of £50 income from Border Stalking Fair.</p> |
| 5. | <p>LDNS Project Plan</p> <p>5.1 Two main reasons for the discussion: (1) to redefine purpose of LDNS, and, (2) provide justification to funding agencies as good value for public investment.</p> <p>5.2 The draft paper requires feedback from JH and AC who have not yet had much time to digest it. Feedback received from GP who is happy to endorse it, subject to discussion with others. RC asked for any further comments.</p> <p>5.3 JH said that RS had relayed a number of comments to him.</p> <p>5.4 DP said that the Action Plan should also take into account what LDNS was intending to do, what it would cost and a 'tick-box' element to show what had been achieved.</p> <p>5.5 JH, putting the paper in context, said that after the previous meeting, he had met with GP, IF, AC, AW, and MM to produce a project plan template to capture key messages. The action plan/comms element had needed further work. The success criteria element had been touched on, but these needed now to drill down to specifics.</p> <p>5.6 RC said that achievement of collaborative mechanisms on a local basis such as new deer management groups should also be included in judging success.</p> <p>5.7 JH reported that GP was broadly happy, but still wanted some strategic thinking about where this project would be 2, 3 and 5 years down the line and how it will fit with Agency project work.</p> <p>5.8 JH outlined three key areas of work being led by the Agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNH public safety work • SNH local authority work • FCS woodland expansion and deer impacts <p>5.9 JH said that this project work needed to develop to a point where LDNS could become involved and use the collated data more effectively. This needs to be captured in the document.</p> |

5.10 In line with FCS woodland expansion work, all Local Authorities should be producing Green Network Strategies, with SNH providing public safety and RTA input.

5.11 RC said effective communications were needed so that LDNS is aware of the work that the Agencies are doing.

5.12 JH said that he would pull together a brief outline of these projects and timescale so that possibly a paragraph on each could be included on the LDNS website.

5.13 JBg said that often Planning Officers were doing strategic work on Green Network projects in their Local Authority with no consideration or mention being given to deer. RC said it was important that local politicians and officials should be aware, and where possible SNH should engage with them.

5.14 JB said that there had been no mention of deer in the whole of the Central Scotland Green Network material. Roe deer would become a major issue as and when the fencing became porous resulting in a profusion of roe deer across central Scotland.

5.15 JBg said that opportunities should be created to talk about these issues with local politicians, Chief Executives of Local Authorities and others including planners, rangers etc.

5.16 RC said that the view was that there were quite a lot of 'bubbles' within Local Authorities. It was good to see JBg, IT and MM at meetings, but thinking needed on how to make more people pay attention and how the significance of the risk, highlighted by JB above, can be more effectively communicated.

5.17 GH said the Forestry Commission is a common denominator for almost all new plantings. SNH may not always be consulted, and there is no requirement for them to be if the planting is under 50Ha. JH said that it was important that in terms of tree planting, deer management planning was considered too wherever appropriate.

5.18 JH said he thought DP's paper was 'about there'.

5.19 JH said in his view there should be emphasis on Competence and Best Practice, LDNS running its own major event (possibly contracting to Mike Cottam).

5.20 RC said he saw communication as being an absolute priority, particularly in the light of comments by JBg and JB, reaching people who aren't even thinking about deer. Events are a part of that.

5.21 DP said that he had received feedback from both the Borders and Falkirk where better engagement with the Local Authorities was seen as a must, starting with awareness-raising.

5.22 RC said that the Code would be (and had been) extremely valuable in this regard and taking forward this work with Local Authorities in particular should be a shared responsibility between SNH and LDNS, with possibly a Best Practice type event targeted at Local Authority officials.

5.23 AW has been working on SNH's Deer in and Around Towns (DIAT) project and how best to engage with Local Authorities but also with woodland and wildlife trusts, and anyone in a lowland context with an interest in deer, linking into public safety work.

5.24 SNH has a draft project plan for DIAT. There are plans to hold 2 events this year, one end September hosted by Dundee City Council at Camperdown Country Park. Robbie Kernahan was writing to all Chief Executives of Local Authorities about the Deer Code and with an agenda for the day. RC said it might be helpful to refer to the letter that all CEOs had received prior to the launch conference at Peebles. Invitations will also go to every Local Authority contact on the SNH database. The programme will include Peter Green, a presentation on the Code, Police Scotland, and an afternoon session led by Local Authorities themselves.

5.24 JBg said that travel would be an issue particularly for Local Authority attendance.

5.25 JH said it would be good for LDNS to be represented at these events. RC asked whether LDNS could have a presentation at each event either on good practice, or on the Angus Deer Initiative (in Dundee) for example.

5.26 IT is to talk about the issues that Aberdeen had experienced and how they have managed them.

5.27 JBg said she thought it would be helpful to have some illustration and information about monitoring, decision-making and deer management planning.

5.28 A second event is scheduled to take place at Chatellherault Country Park, Lanarkshire in April 2014 looking at public safety related issues, deer impact on woodland and designated sites, new plantings and deer fencing etc.

5.29 RC said that LDNS would like to play a part in these sessions.

5.30 JH asked all to read the DIAT project plan and come back to AW in the first instance with comments.

5.31 RC said there was a need to avoid duplication of effort.

5.32 Any further comments on the LDNS project plan should be fed back to DP. JH to come back to RC and DP with regard to any further fine-tuning required.

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| 6. | <p>Meeting with Chief Executive of Forest Enterprise RC and DP had attended a meeting with Simon Hodge hearing about the impact of certain tree diseases across Scotland and implications from this in relation to deer – prescriptions for those planting trees are narrowing and more ‘deer-vulnerable’ species will be used in the future; there will be less tolerance of deer, and fencing will have a perimeter role rather than isolating separate restock sites.</p> |
| 7. | <p>Events and initiatives</p> <p><u>7.1 Scottish Game Fair</u> 7.1.1 LDNS had bigger share of the stand with Sporting Rifle not attending and feedback was that it had been a busier and better event than previously and some good conversations were had.</p> <p>7.1.2. There had been useful conversations, for example with Buccleuch Estates, where further follow-up is now needed in terms of reinforcing LDNS messages. RC said presence at Scone should be taken as read as the shop window in Scotland for deer management.</p> <p><u>7.2 Butchers’ Events</u> DP said that there were two events for butchers in conjunction with SFMTA in September that would be LDNS branded - at Stepps on 2 September with DQ, and at Kilmarnock on 3 September with JG. JH would be attending both these events for SNH.</p> <p><u>7.3 Best Practice</u> 7.3.1 JH explained that Mike Cottam’s contract had now concluded, although he was still available for project work. The Best Practice Group had not met for some time. JB said that the group was in a state of limbo, resources were uncertain and the request list of future topics for Guides was unknown. Also the cost for event days was not worked up and not in anyone’s budget at present.</p> <p>7.3.2 RC asked if JH could secure a ‘position statement’ on the future of Best Practice from Alastair MacGugan so that all would know what was planned.</p> <p>7.3.3 JB said that a Best Practice Newsletter was imminent that would update everyone about changes to Guides, plus planned new ones.</p> <p>7.3.4 JH said that there was to be a new DIAT BP Guide. Parts 1 and 2 were already published and would be promoted at the Local Authority days.</p> <p>7.3.5 RC asked whether these Guides could go on the LDNS website either as PDFs, or a link to them.</p> <p><u>7.4 NFUS Branch meetings and contacts</u> Covered under action points. GH said that he had met with the NFUS representative for Dumfries & Galloway.</p> |

7.5 New DMGs and DMG development

7.5.1 South South Lanarkshire

There was concern over the name of a new group centered on Biggar consisting mainly of owner-occupier farmers. No conflict with SLDG apart from name. Request that they could be called Biggar DMG.

7.5.2 Borders DMG

DP had been in touch with Borders DMG over a June event as part of Borders Diversity Week. This didn't happen although there was still a strong will to do something particularly for Scottish Borders Council. They had asked if there was some support from LDNS. Dougie McKenna had come to the Cardrona launch but had not been in contact since. JH said he was meeting them shortly, would see what was happening and how LDNS could be involved.

7.5.3 East Lothian

JH and IF have met with Mark Telfer and others, and formation of an East Lothian Group was being considered. RC said that the 'mentoring approach' adopted for Inverclyde had clearly been very useful.

7.5.4 Inverclyde DMG

DK asked in principle if it would be OK for representatives of NLDMG and Inverclyde to come to alternate Committee meetings. RC said he thought this would be acceptable if the representative of Inverclyde DMG who might be attending was fully briefed and acting as Deputy (as with ADMG), or alternatively they could sit in as observers. There was a danger the Committee could become too large if all Groups were involved and become bogged down in local issues. RC said that anyone could be invited as an observer, and should also be encouraged to attend the AGM. JH endorsed this.

7.5.5 Fife DMG

DP reported that he had had a conversation with Guy Wedderburn who manages a number of estates in Fife who felt that establishing a Fife DMG would be helpful. RS reported that he had spoken with Robert Balfour and a date had been fixed for early November for an initial meeting with farmers in the area to be targeted. RC volunteered LDNS help with communications etc.

7.5.6 Angus Deer Initiative

Little progress had been made since the last meeting. AC now has an assistant to help with running the project. AC said that getting 'buy-in' from local farmers was the major issue.

7.5.7 Stonehaven

RC reported that Richard Holman-Baird of Rickarton Estate was considering the formation of a DMG to cover old Kincardineshire, where there were big areas of forestry and issues with red and roe. It was agreed that some contact from SNH might help to move this on.

7.5.8 Jim Govan's Ayrshire Syndicate

As this is closed to new entrants it is probably not possible to change its status from syndicate to that of a Group.

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| | <p><u>7.5.9 South West Scotland</u> Too big to exist as one Group, and could be usefully subdivided into smaller areas. There is a SW Scotland meeting in October where the future of the Group will become more apparent. JH thought that the big Group might cease to function but a number of smaller Groups might evolve. RC asked whether it might be possible to organise an event for forestry companies in the area. JH said he thought the Group should be allowed to run its course. IF said that discussion of the tree disease threat and replanting might provide a good backdrop for discussion. RC asked if there was enough interest to stage a regional seminar on topical forestry issues, of which deer could form a small part.</p> <p><u>7.6 CWD Update</u> JB gave an update on the situation with CWD and what was being done to prevent its introduction into the UK. He said that there was a major worry with N American hunters coming to the UK. A small sub-committee had been set up and material outlining the threats was available both in leaflet form and on a number of websites to be distributed as widely as possible with biosecurity awareness to be encouraged.</p> <p><u>7.7 ICF Meetings</u> JBg flagged up two imminent ICF meetings in the Trossachs and at Glentress where deer were likely to form part of the discussions.</p> |
| 8. | <p>Conference</p> <p>8.1 DP said that the AGM and conference was likely to take place early in 2014 (January/February). Cumbernauld considered a good location but it was felt that it would be useful to bolt on a 'visit' element to the day and ideas were needed as to what this could be.</p> <p>8.2 A suggestion had been made to stage the event at Callendar House, Falkirk with a visit to Callendar Wood, managed by FCS. Could be developed – DP and IF to discuss. However Callendar House capacity limited to 70, and probably not possible over a weekend.</p> <p>8.3 RC said the feeling was that we would have better attendance combining a morning AGM with an afternoon field visit, but this could create problems in relation to Sundays.</p> <p>8.4 IF said that the International Roe Deer Conference had visited Callendar Wood with about 60 delegates.</p> <p>8.5 Another thought was to do the visit in the morning and the AGM after lunch.</p> <p>8.6 Other ideas included Chatelherault, Harburn Estate or Oatridge College, and involving the Central Scotland Green Network (which would include Callendar Wood).</p> <p>8.7 DP to investigate and report at next meeting.</p> |
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| 9. | <p>Newsletters</p> <p>9.1 DP said that the Summer Newsletter was published and also online. Any feedback helpful. Next issue will be timed for AGM, for publication winter 2013.</p> <p>9.2 RC suggested including a case study and starting to feature different DMGs, possibly Banff & Buchan.</p> <p>9.3 JH suggested including article on muntjac. AW to follow up/draft.</p> <p>9.4 DP to produce a plan and progress.</p> |
| 10. | <p>Website</p> <p>10.1 Now up and running. Has an active links page, but there will be others that should be added, particularly those for DMGs.</p> <p>10.2 Twitter also happening, and those who want to raise issues can do so on it.</p> |
| 11. | <p>Advertising</p> <p>11.1 Advertisements have been placed in both Agritiser and Agrimart as an alternative to going into Scottish Farmer.</p> <p>11.2 DP said that where there were local stories then he could 'package' these for local press. Forfar Despatch Farming Supplement to be approached with Angus Deer Initiative story.</p> |
| 12. | <p>Other local and national issues</p> <p>Liver fluke. JB advised no publicity from LDNS,</p> |
| 13. | <p>Other business</p> <p>DVD concept to be progressed for next time.</p> |
| 14. | <p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Tuesday 12 November from 10.30am – 1.00pm at <u>The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan.</u></p> |