

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan
On: Tuesday 12 November 2013

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
Ron Smith (RS) Vice Chairman
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
John Bruce (JB) BDS
Kenny Willmitt (KW), BASC Scotland
Ian Talboys (IT), Aberdeen Council
Peter Semple (PS), Inverclyde DMG
Derek Kneller (DK) NLDMG
Ian Fergusson (IF), Forest Enterprise
Angus Corby (ACor), Transport Scotland
John Bruce (JB), BDS
Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH
Donald Fraser (DF) SNH
Daye Tucker (DT), NFUS
David Quarrell (DQ) SLDG
David Fyffe (DFy), Scottish Land & Estates
Robert Sharp (RSh), Stalker, Renfrewshire

Apologies or not present:

Anton Watson (AW), SNH
Glenn Heggs (GH), SW Scotland DMG/UPM
James Govan (JG) Stalker, Ayrshire
Iain Laing (IL) Police Scotland
Alex Paul (AP), WLDMG
Jane Begg (JBg), West Lothian Council
Gordon Patterson (GP), Forest Enterprise
Malcolm Muir (MM), South Lanarkshire Council, COSLA
Alex Hogg (AH), SGA
George Ritchie (GR), Banff & Buchan DMG
Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA

1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>1.1 RC welcomed Peter Semple of Inverclyde DMG and Donald Fraser of SNH to the meeting.</p> <p>1.2 RC advised that Alisdair Colyton has stepped down from the Committee, although he is hopeful that Alisdair will be replaced by another representative from the Angus Deer Initiative for future meetings.</p>
2	<p>Minutes</p> <p>The draft minutes of the meeting on 15 August 2013 were agreed as a fair record.</p>
3	<p>Matters arising</p> <p><u>3.1 Proforma for dealing with deer in the event of an RTA</u> DK making progress and carried forward to next meeting. Also, BDS working with Wildlife Crime Officers re humane dispatch</p>

	<p><u>3.2 Deer Line</u> JH advised that there was no change to Deer Line, and that all deer data is stored for 9 years.</p> <p><u>3.3 Lowland Cull Data</u> 3.3.1 RC has written to the Minister regarding cull data and having this put back on agricultural statutory return forms. Only 5000 of 25,000 agricultural holdings registered with SGRPID in Scotland contribute cull data. It had been on the IACS June return form as a voluntary requirement under EU legislation in 2012 but has now been removed. An acknowledgment has been received from the Minister's office. RC to follow up.</p> <p>3.3.2 JB said it was difficult for Government to justify including this if no statutory Act requires it. An alternative for deer managers/stalker would be to advise SNH where deer had been killed, and then SNH could send out a return form.</p> <p>3.3.3 DT said that, as the Minister had responsibility for deer under the WANE Act, surely some sort of reporting system was necessary.</p> <p>3.3.4 DF said it would be best to link with the agricultural returns, and that information could be requested either under the Deer Act or Agricultural Holdings Act, but that legislation prevents this information being shared. RSh questioned how many farmers would actually be bothered to submit a return.</p> <p><u>3.4 New SW Scotland Group</u> RC said that he had been in touch with Andrew Treadaway and that his plan for a new Group was progressing.</p> <p><u>3.5 Subscriptions</u> To be agreed for 2014 at the AGM in January</p> <p><u>3.6 Annual accounts</u> Will be posted on the website following approval at the AGM. There was still a question over whether pre-formation costs should be included, but felt it would be good to show investment by both public and private sector.</p> <p><u>3.7 Best Practice</u> It was suggested that an update should be included in the next Newsletter. RC advised that he sits on the Best Practice Steering Group representing LDNS.</p>
4	<p>Financial Report RC reported that the finances were relatively healthy with figures for the financial year to 30 October 2013 showing income of £17,302 against expenditure of £13,857 with £8210 from the previous year carried forward. Currently there was a balance of income over expenditure of £11,654.56.</p>

5	<p>Political update</p> <p><u>Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee Enquiry</u></p> <p>5.1 RC gave an update to the meeting on the RACCE Committee enquiry into deer management and the environment that had been prompted by an issue in NW Sutherland where a Section 7 Agreement was being negotiated by SNH after a stalemate within the DMG. It was hoped that this would result in a successful conclusion.</p> <p>5.2 This had been drawn to the attention of Rob Gibson, Highland MSP, (who also chairs the RACCE Committee) who had brought a review of deer and the natural heritage to the Committee Agenda. He had also been making his personal view known through the media. Some of the Environmental NGOs were proposing a statutory deer management system as they had also done prior to the passing of the WANE Bill.</p> <p>5.3 RC said that it was important that the enquiry into regulating deer management should also take into account the complex situation in low ground areas that are very different from the situation in the open hill red deer range. LDNS had submitted a response as written evidence to the Committee. RC apologised that due to expedience this had not been circulated to the Committee in advance. All present assented that they were happy that this action had been taken. SNH would be submitting its own evidence independently.</p> <p>5.4 JB agreed that it was 'prudent' to draw attention to the breadth of deer management across Scotland, and that the situation that had sparked the Enquiry was atypical.</p> <p>5.5 RC said that he had had preliminary meetings with Rob Gibson MSP and Graham Dey MSP, the RACCE Committee Vice Convener.</p> <p>5.6 JB said that he hoped that the Committee would see sense, but that there could be no control over what they might ask or routes of questioning that they might pursue.</p> <p>5.7 It is not known what is likely to happen next, although it is thought highly unlikely that the Scottish Government will want to revisit the Act and Code just 2 years after WANE and, in any event, ahead of a review by SNH.</p> <p>5.8 RS suggested that now it was on the agenda it was likely to stay there until a conclusion was reached.</p> <p>5.9 JB questioned how much this exercise is costing the public purse.</p>
6.	<p>LDNS Project Plan</p> <p>6.1 RC had met with Robbie Kernahan, SNH, to discuss the future of LDNS and its relationship with SNH. A further meeting had taken place with JH and DF of SNH immediately before the meeting with a number of actions agreed. It had been decided that the current LDNS Project Plan and Communications Plan should be merged with the SNH priorities and Job List. For the next meeting a spreadsheet showing list of tasks and delivery organisations to be tabled by SNH to plot activity going forward.</p>

6.2 RSh said that it was vital to build relationships with the forestry companies (Scottish Woodlands, UPM Tilhill etc) in addition to Local Authorities (LAs) and the farming community. RSh said that trees were being planted right through the LDNS area and that “effective, energetic representation” with forestry companies was required.

6.3 RC said that the LAs are increasingly becoming engaged but that most are still unaware of their responsibilities under the Code. The RACCE Committee enquiry should help to raise awareness.

6.4 IT said that from his experience there was still a significant degree of ignorance following the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association meeting at Battleby, attended by around 30. Some were involved in deer management but others had not even considered it yet despite issues such as DVCs, damage to new tree planting etc.

6.5 Suggested that possibly LA internal newsletters could be used to reach staff; also whether a display stand could be taken at the COSLA conference.

6.6 RS said that farmers had a duty to protect against damage to planting done under the WGS. On the same principle could there not be a case for LAs having to repay public money where they allowed significant deer damage to occur?

6.7 RC said that LDNS needed to press forward, not only with farmers and LAs but also to secure effective representation with forestry companies and environmental NGOs.

6.8 DF (SNH) said that two actions were in hand: (1) a meeting with the FC Conservancy office that manages grant funding for new planting, and (2) an event in Spring 2014 to focus on low ground woodland and deer issues.

6.9 DT asked what contact had been made with Stirling Council and that, as far as she was aware, they were at the early stages of developing a Council Deer Management Plan or Protocol. DT asked also what progress there had been regarding a Stirling DMG. JH said that this was not a DMG as such but a group of individuals with a common interest in managing deer. DT asked what would prevent Ian Semple’s group becoming an official Group, and whether a conversation with Forth Environment Link would also be beneficial?

6.10 PS (Inverclyde) said that it had been helpful to draw on the experience of others, and that their DMG launch was scheduled for February. The input from DK and JH had been extremely valuable.

6.11 DFy said that he suspected that a ‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top-down’ approach might be required. In Aberdeen the Scottish Government is paying for a two year future land use strategy pilot encompassing forestry, agriculture and rural business – and it should also include deer management. DFy said he would raise with regard to the Aberdeen plan.

	<p>6.12 JB said that in a similar exercise in the Borders deer had not been mentioned once.</p> <p>6.13 DT said that it would be helpful if some Pillar 2 funding to be channeled to rural development could be used for deer management, and that a letter should go to MEPs expressing concern that £2million of convergence payment was not coming to Scotland.</p> <p>6.15 RS said that the Police wildlife crime meeting in Fife the previous week had been a good focus for all rural issues, with 100 + attending. He had spoken on Competence and the Code, and JB had talked about CWD,</p> <p>6.16 DT asked whether the Startree Project might be helpful. There had been a meeting at Falkland Palace. Startree is a project showing how multi-purpose trees and non-wood products can be used to strengthen and diversify economic activity in rural areas http://star-tree.eu/project</p> <p>6.17 One area for continuing development was for locally shot venison to be supplied to local butchers shops.</p>
7	<p>Events</p> <p>DP reported on the first LDNS Events Sub Group meeting on 24 October at which the following areas for 2014 has been discussed:</p> <p><u>7.1 Local Authorities (LAs)</u> 2 x DIAT events (different levels) Poster Model deer management policy for LAs.</p> <p><u>7.2 Engaging with the Wider Public</u> Range of posters Local 'Deer On Your Doorstep' awareness event to be trialed in EH10.</p> <p><u>7.3 DVCs</u></p> <p><u>7.4 Schools</u> Deer spotting App Tie into 'Deer in Scotland Education Zone'</p> <p><u>7.5 Course for humane dispatch of deer</u></p> <p>Minutes of this meeting appended.</p>
8	<p>AGM</p> <p>8.1 A date had been agreed for Sunday 26 January 2014 at the Westerwood Hotel Cumbernauld. Format as before with an Executive Committee meeting, lunch and AGM in the early afternoon followed by a short programme of guest presentations.</p> <p>8.2 One key issue for ratification at the AGM would be a decision on subscriptions, and the proposal was that the individual subscription should be dropped to £10.00 and that for Groups, organisations etc to £25.00. These would be ratified at the AGM.</p> <p>8.3 JB pointed out that it would cost more than £10 per year to 'manage' a subscription. RC said that there was no expectation that subscriptions would finance LDNS but £10 would simply cover the cost.</p>

	<p>8.4 A rough format for the day as follows: 11.00am Executive Committee meeting 12.00 Soup and sandwich lunch (or working lunch) 13.00 Coffee 13.30 AGM – formal business 14.00 Guest presentations 3 x 20 minutes 15.00 Panel Q and A 15.30 Close</p> <p>8.5 RC to check whether the Chairman needs to be re-elected, in which case someone else will have to chair the meeting at that point (Noted that RS, Vice Chairman, will not be able to attend).</p> <p>8.6 RC to check whether Accounts should be circulated in advance.</p> <p>8.7 A number of speakers suggested: Ben Weatherall, Peter Carr, Byron Pace, Selena Barr, Jimmy Simpson, Ken Urquhart, Andy Richardson, Leif Brag.</p> <p>8.8 RC/DP to agree final programme and invite speakers.</p>
9	<p>Print and promotional material</p> <p><u>9.1 Leaflet</u></p> <p>9.1.1 There were a few additional changes to the new leaflet regarding the DSC1 wording, and the inclusion of a DVC picture rather than the Jochen Langbein shot. DK to forward pic to DP.</p> <p>9.1.2 Once these changes done then leaflet to go to print as soon as possible. 100 copies to be ordered for each Committee member, plus 500 as stock (3000 total).</p> <p><u>9.2 Winter Newsletter</u></p> <p>DP said that the next Newsletter, to be produced for the AGM, would cover the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political report and the RACCE Committee enquiry • Wildlife crime, DNA use for crime solving and list of new Wildlife Crime Officers and contact numbers • Muntjac • Case study – possibly Banff and Buchan DMG • Venison • Protocol for dealing with deer in RTAs • CWD • ‘Deer On Your Doorstep’ • The Leading Question
10	<p>Website and twitter</p> <p>DP advised that both the Website www.ldns.org.uk and the twitter account @LDNScotland were online and for all interested to engage with.</p>

11 **Local and National deer issues and reports from Exec Committee members**

11.1 Fife (RS)

RS said that the intended meeting to discuss a NE Fife Group had been rolled into the Police Wildlife Crime seminar. It was now intended to hold a meeting early in the New Year.

11.2 John Bruce

JB said that CWD was at the top of his agenda. A leaflet had been produced, and the circulation of information was not about scaremongering but raising awareness of genuine concerns. He said it was shocking how little was known about the disease in the USA, and the UK and Europe must try and do everything to prevent its arrival. There had been a successful meeting with the Minister and it had been agreed that the transportation of the organism is a crime.

11.3 Ian Talboys

Copy of the report of Battleby Rangers Meeting to follow.

11.4 Peter Semple

Inverclyde DMG launch planned for February.

11.5 Derek Kneller

Involved in development of DVC protocol. He confirmed that he was also available to give advice to candidate DMGs.

11.6 Ian Fergusson

The SW Scotland DMG meeting had been poorly attended, and all agreed it should be reconstituted as smaller, more localized units. It was agreed however that it would be better not to fold the existing Group meanwhile but to operate in a reduced capacity with Maitland Rankin remaining in the Chair and as point of contact for continuity.

11.7 Angus Corby

Transport Scotland has been working with SNH collecting data on RTAs on trunk roads. The new maintenance contracts coming through would require Deer Management Plans.

11.8 Jamie Hammond

11.8.1 The proposed South South Lanarkshire Group was currently canvassing support, and would be known either as Upper Clyde DMG or Biggar DMG.

11.8.2 The Local Authority event in September at Dundee had been cancelled due to poor uptake – from 100 named personal contacts invited there had only been 10 positive responses. There were plans to organise a 1 or 2 day event with South Lanarkshire Council in March 2014 covering a range of topics.

11.9 Donald Fraser

DF said it that there were designated sites within the LDNS area and these should feature on the future agenda for LDNS. A list of designated sites is on the SNH website for those wishing to see where they are.

11.10 Daye Tucker

DT reckons there was confusion on the Agricultural Return regarding deer information and that some may have assumed this was in relation to deer farming. Ian Semple (already mentioned in the context of deer management in the Stirling area) manages wild deer on her farm, and to her knowledge does not put in a return.

11.11 Rob Sharp

RSh said that not enough emphasis could be placed on getting forestry companies to engage. Plus representatives from NGOs, other land management bodies, and rural consultants.

11.12 David Quarrell

DQ reported that he and SLDG were working up their assessment for managing urban deer. He has been in discussion with Peter Anderson (at Northern College), Andrew Treadaway and Paul Adkins and hopes the assessment will be ready for Spring 2014 with the intention to run it as a pilot under the LDNS banner. DQ said that a separate meeting with BASC, BDS, FCS, SNH and LDNS would be helpful.

11.13 David Fyffe

DFy said that a good case study or future article could be on the Banff and Buchan DMG deer dogs.

11.14 Other points

11.14.1 RC reported that the contact with Mark Oddy at Buccleuch Estates would be followed up.

11.14.2 DP said that Alex Paul had advised that contact had been made with Chris Staples and that active deer management was now underway on both Hopetoun and Dundas Castle Estates and that these could possibly also be linked in to the WLDMG area.

11.14.3 RC said that he was currently considering commissioning PACEC to produce a new report on the economic impact of deer management across all Scotland as this would produce some valuable headline figures. This followed the previous PACEC supplement of 2006 that had looked only at upland DMGs. RC proposed that LDNS should meet 1/3 of the estimated cost of £12 - £14k with the balance covered by ADMG. The sponsor bodies would be asked to agree that this was a justified expense

11.14.4 DFy said it was important that this took into account full time and part time jobs, and alternative employment. JH said that he would coordinate a response from the sponsors.

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Date of next meeting

Sunday 26 January 2014, 11.30am, at the Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld prior to the AGM.