

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan
 On: Thursday 24 April 2014

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
 Ron Smith (RS), Vice Chairman
 Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
 Kenny Willmitt (KW), BASC Scotland
 Angus Corby (AC), Transport Scotland
 Ian Fergusson (IF), Forest Enterprise
 Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH
 Donald Fraser (DF), SNH
 Anton Watson (AW), SNH
 Ian Talboys (IT), Aberdeen City Council
 Derek Kneller (DK) NLDMG
 Peter Semple (PS), Inverclyde and Dunbartonshire DMG
 Alex Hogg (AH), SGA
 John Bruce (JB), BDS
 Andy Mavin (AM) Police Scotland
 Glenn Heggs (GH), SW Scotland DMG
 James Govan (JG) Stalker, Ayrshire
 Iain Anderson (IA dep for DQ), SLDG
 Andrew Treadaway (AT)
 Alex Stoddart (AS), SACS

Apologies or not present:

Gordon Patterson (GP), FCS
 Alex Paul (AP), WLDMG
 David Quarrell (DQ), SLDG
 David Fyffe (DFy), Scottish Land & Estates
 Iain Laing (IL) Police Scotland
 Daye Tucker (DT) NFUS
 Jane Begg (JBg), West Lothian Council
 Malcolm Muir (MM), South Lanarkshire Council, COSLA
 Rob Sharp (RSh)
 George Ritchie (GR), Banff & Buchan DMG
 Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA

1.	<p>1.1 Welcome: RC welcomed AS and AT to the committee. 1.2 Minutes of previous meeting (25.02.13) 1.2.1 Typos to be amended in minutes at 4.17. 1.2.2 Should be SNH budget cuts (not LDNS) at 5.2. 1.2.3 Under 6 DK had asked for this to be amended to be a NLDMG DSC 1 day, jointly with WLDMG using the facilities at Harburn.</p>	<p>DP DP DP</p>
2.	<p>Matters Arising 2.1 <u>RTA sub group (previous minute 1.2)</u> JB said that the sub-group to discuss protocols for dealing with deer at an RTA still to meet, although there had been some discussion with Police Scotland.</p>	<p>JB</p>

	<p>Still some guidance required on who would lead for Police Scotland as this is not a wildlife crime issue.</p> <p><u>2.2 COSLA (1.4)</u> DP to speak to MM regarding LDNS presence at COSLA conference.</p> <p><u>2.3 Fife DMG (1.5)</u> RS said that this was in progress, and had been discussed with a number of farmers as well as SAC Elmwood. The local Police events had gone well. Not certain that a fully-fledged DMG in Fife would result.</p> <p><u>2.4 PACEC (1.7)</u> RC said that the questionnaire was at the final stages of drafting and would be circulated online within next few weeks. Cost was being met 2/3 by ADMG and 1/3 by LDNS, and was a standalone survey from the separate BASC survey on all fieldsports. It would determine the economic contribution in Scotland of the deer sector as a whole, not just stalking.</p> <p><u>2.5 VAT (3.3)</u> JH said that this had been discussed within SNH, and would not be straightforward for SNH to administer. RC asked if FCS could examine also. JB advised that a significant element of VAT could be recovered if, for example, fees charged by Playfair Walker for secretarial and project work were billed direct to SNH instead of LDNS, and in lieu of SNH giving its grant direct to LDNS.</p> <p><u>2.6 Deer Group Constitutions (4.5)</u> DK had forwarded the NLDMG constitution to RC. This was the model used by IDDMG. JH said that SNH could possibly draw up a template that could work for new Groups.</p> <p><u>2.7 SRDP Review (4.11)</u> 2.7.1 DP said that the 5ha limit proposal above which a Deer Management Plan would be required for new woodland planting had been submitted to the SRDP consultation. DF said that not all applications come to SNH. JH said that plantings over 50ha currently are seen by SNH, and have agreement with FC Lowland Conservancy for an informal dialogue on these, but if it isn't a designated site then doesn't automatically come to SNH.</p> <p>2.7.2 JB said that Central Scotland Green Network was committing both to trees and open amenity areas, and creating habitat for more deer.</p> <p>2.7.3 RC said it would be helpful for SNH to receive assurances from those involved in CSGN that they were also thinking about deer in their planning.</p>	<p>MM</p> <p>JH</p>
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	<p><u>2.8 LDNS Project Plan (5)</u> This was an ongoing working document and some numbers in the latest draft would need to be updated. It was agreed that the Project Plan should be an item for each meeting.</p> <p><u>2.9 Woodland Response Task Group (5.9)</u> 2.9.1 RC said that he had joined this short-term group to discuss what measures should be taken forward from the Native Woodlands Survey. Deer had been cast as the problem in the report although only 1/3 of the identified area of native woodland is affected by herbivore impacts and other herbivores – sheep, goats, rabbits and hares – were also present in many cases. The default assumption that deer were the problem when other herbivores were not thought to be present was also questionable.</p> <p>2.9.2 JB said that an FOI request had been made regarding the study.</p> <p>2.9.3 DF said that there was an opportunity for deer managers to use the information.</p> <p><u>2.10 DVCs (5.12)</u> 2.10.1 AM said that this was dealt with by operational Police side, and not wildlife crime unit. AC said it was not just road safety but also a welfare issue, and that appropriate references were now being written into trunk road operator contracts.</p> <p>2.10.2 RC said that LDNS should probably have basic information on its website advising members of the public what to do if they hit a deer – at the moment they can only be referred to SNH; if there is a public safety issue then the Police are involved, but if there isn't then they are not.</p> <p>2.10.3 JB said that the protocols needed to be better understood and promoted, particularly where a deer was to be dispatched in a public place.</p> <p>2.10.4 Agreed that a message should go on the website advising public to call the Police.</p> <p>2.10.5 AT said that there were other related issues such as traffic slowing to see the accident, also uplifting of the carcass. AC said that if it was a trunk road the carcass would be uplifted or put on the verge.</p> <p>2.10.6 RC said that there were issues regarding both non-reporting and double counting of incidents.</p>	<p>DP, AW</p>

3.	<p>Declaration of interests (DOI)</p> <p>3.1 RC said in order for the operations of LDNS to be totally transparent, and with regard to proper practice and good governance, all members of the Committee would be asked to declare any financial interest to be gained from LDNS.</p> <p>3.2 There were no declarations made at the meeting. RC asked that any future declarations should be made to either the Chairman or Secretary and that the item would be on subsequent agendas.</p> <p>3.3 RC said that a clause on this would be drafted for the LDNS constitution for ratification at the next AGM.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>RC</p>
4.	<p>Financial Report</p> <p>4.1 RC circulated a financial statement for the full financial year, 12 months to 31 March 2014 showing income of £27,580 against expenditure of £25,860, and that the carry forward from 2012/13 had been slightly larger than budgeted.</p> <p>4.2 RC said that new subscriptions would now take effect, but that in view of the reduction in subscription rates proposed in 2013 and agreed at the recent AGM, to be fair, those joining in 2011 and 2012 had effectively had two years membership for the price of one, not having been charged in 2013.</p> <p>4.3 In terms of funding going forward, RC said that assurance had been received from SNH for funding for a further 3 years and that a Memorandum of Agreement had been drawn up and signed with SNH.</p> <p>4.4 A letter/invoice should go to Transport Scotland for year 2014/15.</p>	
5.	<p>LDNS Project Plan</p> <p>AW and DP to discuss and amend as appropriate.</p>	<p>AW, DP</p>
6.	<p>Lowland Deer Impact Data</p> <p>6.1 AW gave a presentation on SNH data relating to deer impacts in the lowlands.</p> <p>6.2 DF said that SNH was able to share information with DMGs although a little work was still required to do this. Also that the data could be highly effective at a local level in terms of finding solutions. There were no barriers to the information/maps/data held by SNH covering counts, DVCs, wildlife crime etc being made available to deer managers.</p> <p>6.3 JB cautioned against putting all information into the public domain so that it was easily accessible. AT supported this saying that it could in the wrong hands provide a guide to where to go coursing or poaching.</p>	

	<p>6.4 RC said however that the deer sector suffered from a culture of secrecy and the availability of more information should be welcomed. AM said that poachers in the main tended to already have a significant amount of local knowledge.</p> <p>6.5 There was discussion also about how more information could be fed into the database as well as access to it.</p>	
7.	<p>SNH work supporting DMGs</p> <p>7.1 DF said that SNH had restructured its team in order to provide more support to DMGs. There would be more strategic resource focused towards the uplands in particular with regard to DMGs delivering the 'public interest'.</p> <p>7.2 RC said that the low ground was less 'under the political microscope' and may not have the same 2016 deadline that DMGs were working towards in the uplands to get up to speed. However the practical case for extending DMG or equivalent coverage to as much of lowland Scotland remains pressing.</p>	
8.	<p>PACEC Study</p> <p>8.1 RC reiterated that this was not just a job to determine the contribution of stalking but that of the whole deer management sector. The questionnaire had not yet been widely circulated, but a few members of the Committee would be asked to complete it in advance to be sure that it was credible and deliverable.</p> <p>8.2 RC said it was important to try and get as good a picture from the LDNS area as possible from this study, and once in circulation it should be distributed by all organisations and DMGs as widely as possible.</p> <p>8.3 It would be circulated separately from the main PACEC field sports survey although there was some crossover.</p>	
9.	<p>Urban Deer Day – 14 June 2014</p> <p>This is fully subscribed. There should be some adjustment to the final programme, liaison with the speakers re exact topics and circulation of this with timings.</p>	DQ, DP
10.	<p>Urban deer management assessment</p> <p>10.1 RC said that he had attended a useful meeting in East Kilbride, and recognized that this exercise would provide an additional level of deer management awareness for those wanting to specialise in deer management in an urban environment. In addition to standard shooting safety and fieldcraft skills it includes elements of etiquette when in contact with the public or operating within areas where there was likelihood of increased public contact, or overseen by residential development.</p>	

	<p>10.2 There was consideration about how this new ‘guidance’ would fit with existing training including that delivered by BASC, BDS, the rural colleges and others as well as fitting with Best Practice. RC said that any measure that brought a new aspect to professionalism was to be welcomed but that further consideration as to where this “fits” would be necessary.</p> <p>10.3 AT said that the programme was designed to look at more sensitive areas where there was more likely to be public interaction. It should not be seen as standalone, nor as a step up, and should provide Local Authorities in particular with more confidence. MM for example sees this as fitting well with the cautious approach of Councils and may help to get them involved.</p> <p>10.4 JB said it was important that, if this went ahead, it did not imply that those that had already taken established national training were in any way inferior or less qualified, and to all intents it was the same operator, the same rifle and the same deer, with the same rules.</p> <p>IF made the point that the standard of safety must be the same in any deer culling situation regardless of geography although working close to high numbers of people does require additional awareness and sometimes a different approach and that there is a case for events and guidance for those involved.</p> <p>10.5 AS suggested that this guidance could be included in Best Practice as the current BP Guide does fall short in this area.</p> <p>10.6 JH said it should not be an additional qualification. However AT said that tagging it onto Best Practice would not be enough, and discussions were planned with DMQ about how it could be progressed. There remained some concern that it should not be seen that a further <u>qualification</u> is required for those managing urban deer.</p> <p>10.7 RC said there was still some way to go to establish how it was going to fit and that it would be referred to the Best Practice Steering Group for consideration.</p>	
11.	<p>Other Activity</p> <p>11.1 <u>IDDMG launch</u> PS flagged up the launch of the IDDMG on Friday 13 June. He said that it would not be a large event. Invitations had gone out, and LDNS had agreed to support the launch with funding.</p>	

	<p>11.2 Deer on Your Doorstep DP reported that he had attended the meeting that SNH had organised with Bruntsfield Golf Club in West Edinburgh and that this would not provide an opportunity for this project to be trialled. The alternative may be to revert to EH10 or Aberdeen. Ken Urquhart also has good detail of deer numbers and movements on the Midlothian side of the Edinburgh City Bypass between Lothianburn and Straiton junctions.</p> <p>11.3 LDNS greater representation in South East Scotland 11.3.1 DP had given a talk to the BDS SE Scotland group. Clearly there appears to be a will to set up a more coordinated approach to low ground deer management across East Lothian and Midlothian. However, this would need the support of the major landholdings to have any impact.</p> <p>11.3.2 DP has made contact with Scottish Land & Estates (Teresa Dougall, SE Scotland regional manager) suggesting a number of options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put deer on the agenda of SE Regional Committee. • Identify a number of the major landholdings who could be involved and approach these. • Introduce as item to Midlothian Estates Regional Hub. • Organise a farm/estate walk and talk visit (half day) jointly with SL&E. <p>11.3.3 DP to organize further meeting with Teresa Dougall of Scottish Land & Estates.</p> <p>11.4 GWCT Scottish Game Fair DP advised that this was taking place at Scone from 4 – 6 July 2014 and that LDNS would be stand-sharing with ADMG. Members of the Committee were asked if they might help to man the stand during the event.</p>	<p>DP</p> <p>All</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Local and National Deer Issues 12.1 Carcase tagging 12.1.1 AH said that gamekeepers in England were campaigning to get tagging linked to firearms certificate numbers, and that all carcasses going into the food chain should be tagged. However, under current legislation no tag is required. He said there needed to be a tighter system to prevent poached venison going into the food chain.</p> <p>12.1.2 AM said that the National Wildlife Crime Unit wanted local authorities to get a tighter grip on venison and stop unlawful trade, and that the buyer should have a venison dealer's license. He said that NWCU wanted to get this higher up the Police Scotland agenda.</p>	

<p>12.1.3 JB said that the legislation existed but it was a question of its enforcement. The local authorities were key players.</p> <p>12.1.4 DP said that the legal position was highlighted on the Scottish Venison website and on a Scottish Venison produced leaflet. There was no venison dealer's license requirement in England or Wales which is why they were looking for a workable system.</p> <p>12.1.5 DP to take to next Scottish Venison Partnership meeting.</p> <p><u>12.2 SACS</u> AS said that SACS membership was predominantly lowland stalkers so a good fit with LDNS, and he was looking forward to getting involved.</p> <p><u>12.3 Aberdeen</u> IT said that B&BDMG could be approached to help to deal with deer issues on the City's western periphery.</p> <p><u>12.4 SSPCA powers</u> AM highlighted proposal for the extension to SSPCA powers, and that there was a consultation running until 01.09.2014. It was suggested that Mike Flynn should be invited to come and talk to the committee about how the SSPCA proposed new powers would work in practice.</p> <p><u>12.5 SW Scotland</u> JH said that this was one of the biggest groups and that it was not working well as currently set up. One option being explored was to split into three.</p> <p><u>12.6 Other points</u> 12.6.1 JG said that he was having difficulty informing Police of his plans on 101. AM said that this number should continue to be used. JH said that there were issues to be addressed with this and that the Police system did need to be streamlined.</p> <p>12.6.2 DF said that there had been some feedback in connection with night shooting.</p> <p>12.6.3 AM said he would investigate and speak to firearms licensing.</p> <p>12.6.4 KW asked whether more schools engagement should be considered, and that BASC was fully disclosed to undertake school visits.</p>	<p>DP</p> <p>RC, DP</p>
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	<p>12.6.5 Regarding forestry company involvement, GH said that he had met with UPM Tillhill and Scottish Woodlands regarding putting forward a representative for the Committee.</p> <p>12.6.6 DP advised that the application form for membership on the website needs to be updated.</p>	DP
	<p>Date of next meeting Wednesday 2 July, 10.00 for 10.30am at The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan</p>	

DRAFT