

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan

On: Wednesday 15 July 2015

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
Donald Fraser (DF), SNH
Anton Watson (AW), SNH
Colin Edwards (CE), FCS
Ian Fergusson (IF), FES
Kenny Willmitt (KW), BASC
John Bruce (JB), BDS
Alex Hogg (AH), SGA
Alex Stoddart (AS) SACS
Peter Semple (PS), IDDMG
Craig Paterson (CP), NLDG
David Quarrell (DQ), SLDG
Alex Paul (AP), WLDG
Jim Govan (JG)
Mark Lazzeri (ML), Fife
Rob Sharp (RSh)
Andrew Treadaway, (AT)

Apologies or not present:

Ron Smith (RS), Vice Chairman
Jamie Hammond (JH)
Angus Corby (AC), Transport Scotland
Malcolm Muir (MM), South Lanarkshire Council
Ian Talboys (IT), Aberdeen City Council
David Bruce (DB), UPM Tilhill
David Ferguson (DF), NLDG
Daye Tucker (DT), NFUS
Maggie Keegan (MK), SWT
Andy Mavin (AM), Police Scotland
David Fyffe (DFy), SL&E
George Ritchie (GR) Banff & Buchan DG
Rory Galloway (RG), Angus Deer Initiative
Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA

1.	Welcome and introductions RC welcomed Mark Lazzeri (Fife, representing RS) and Craig Paterson (NLDG, representing DF) to the meeting.	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting – 15.04.2015 Last minutes were approved as a fair record of the meeting.	
3.	Matters arising 3.1 <u>Photo competition</u> AW reported that the photo competition had concluded and that entrants were being contacted for hi res files. Images could now go on the LDNS website.	AW, DP

3.2 Woodland Seminar, Battleby

This had been well attended by around 50 with all major forestry companies and public sector well represented. RC said that forestry companies were becoming better engaged. DF said that there was however still some way to go, and that new grant schemes were now open.

3.3 Deer Management in Germany

3.3.1 JB has a second article ready for publication in the next LDNS newsletter. RC said he hoped that he might have another article from a Scandinavian perspective from Doug McAdam, SL&E.

3.3.2 AT said that the Level 2 qualification was also now being recognized in certain European countries.

3.4 Incident reporting notebook

JB said that that the notebook had gone well at Scone, and that written evidence could become primary evidence in Court.

3.5 Wildlife Crime Report – JB

3.5.1 JB gave a short report on PAW actions and wildlife crime generally, saying that the Police had moved forward considerably under AM and that Scotland was now well ahead of England. He reminded all that personal and physical details of suspects were important to note as potential evidence, and just as important as a vehicle number plate for example. The new incident notebook would be an important tool, and the expert witness network was being developed.

3.5.2 JB said that the PAW Group met three times yearly to move issues forward, and whilst Police Scotland could not be instructed by PAW the PAW forum could be used to 'discuss and persuade'.

3.5.3 ML said that he had met with the new N Fife Community Police Officer and that wildlife crime was moving up their agenda to Inspector level, with extra money being made available for vehicles and overtime as the links between wildlife crime and other criminal activity were gradually recognized.

3.5.4 RS said that the Police were getting better at differentiating between legitimate and non-legitimate activity.

3.6 LDNS Membership

RC said that anomalies in the LDNS membership list had now been resolved and that around 100 subscription reminders had been issued.

	<p>3.7 <u>PACEC</u> A final submission from FE was awaited. IF said that this was complete and awaiting sign-off before submission.</p> <p>3.8 <u>Deer management planning for LDGs</u> 3.8.1 RC said that there was much expectation that would filter down from what was happening on the upland red deer range and that LDGs should start to compile detail on, for example, areas they covered, record of members, level of experience etc although this would not be required for the 2016 review.</p> <p>3.8.2 DF said that this was not just about information about make up of LDGs but also strategy and delivery of public interest. SNH could help/support in compiling this information.</p> <p>3.8.3 RC said that LDGs would find that they delivered more in terms of public interest than they thought. Clearly there were also large areas where there was no cover by LDGs.</p> <p>3.8.4 RC said that a proforma could be produced to simplify how LDGs can record what they are delivering.</p> <p>3.8.5 As an aside, PS said that he was discovering a lot of abbreviations and acronyms generally and it might be helpful to compile a 'glossary' of these.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>SNH</p> <p>SNH?</p> <p>PS</p>
4.	<p>Declarations of interest Nothing was declared.</p>	
5.	<p>Chairman's report 5.1 RC said that LDNS continued to move forward between meetings in terms of extending the network, in political circles, and in terms of broader awareness.</p> <p>5.2 There had been a launch meeting of the Wigtownshire/South Ayrshire LDG at Stair Estate that had been well attended by owners, managers, agents and forestry interests, and the other two Groups in the SW were also moving forward.</p> <p>5.3 LDNS had had a presence throughout the Scottish Game Fair.</p> <p>5.4 RC drew attention to the latest newsletter now on the website with printed copies available at the meeting for LDGs and other organisations to take away.</p>	

6.	<p>Financial report</p> <p>6.1 <u>LDNS accounts to 31.03.2015</u></p> <p>6.1.1 RC tabled the annual accounts to 31.03.2015. These would be proposed for formal adoption at the AGM in early 2016.</p> <p>6.1.2 JB asked whether any resolution had been reached on the 'irrecoverable VAT' issue.</p> <p>6.2 <u>Income and expenditure – year to date</u></p> <p>6.2.1 RC reported that the funding organisations had not yet been invoiced, but SNH had paid half for 2015/16 in the preceding year.</p> <p>6.2.2 Re PACEC, the final cost was expected to be in the region of £9000, of which LDNS would be paying one third.</p> <p>6.2.3 It was agreed that the 2013/14 accounts could now go on the LDNS website.</p>	DP
7.	<p>Project plan</p> <p>AW and DP had reviewed and updated the Project Plan in April 2015 and again prior to the July meeting.</p>	
8.	<p>Political update</p> <p>8.1 <u>Land Reform Bill</u></p> <p>8.1.1 This had been introduced to the Parliament and Stage 1 was now in process. The RACCE Committee would be taking the Bill through Stage 1 and had requested written evidence by 14 August. RC encouraged all with an interest to make representations regarding their views on where the Bill might affect sustainable deer management and said that LDNS would be putting in a response.</p> <p>8.1.2 RC said that much of the emphasis in the Bill had an upland focus although inevitably it would cross over to the low ground. There was no compulsion to undertake deer management, apart from public bodies that had a duty to do so, but there was already extensive regulation and guidance in place across the sector – the 1996 Deer Act, WANE Act, WDNA, the Deer Code, and now new measures proposed in the Land Reform Bill. Current legislation was supported by Best Practice Guides, and action on promoting Competence.</p> <p>8.1.3 RC encouraged all to respond to the Bill consultation. He said that the <u>proposed SNH new powers of intervention</u> were 'surgical' and could be helpful in certain situations.</p>	RC, DP

8.1.4 RSh sought clarification on whether small plantations under 50Ha required a DMP [*CE has subsequently confirmed that grant funded woodland of less than 100Ha does require a DMP approved by FCS*]

8.1.5 Also RSh said that Local Authorities continued to ignore their responsibilities, with the reason being primarily one of money.

8.1.6 DF said that the bid to engage with Local Authorities effectively was ongoing, particularly through promoting priorities of public safety, health and wellbeing. A new approach was being adopted through Community Planning Partnerships.

8.1.7 RC requested that the proposal for a letter to Local Authority Chief Executives from Ian Ross be followed up.

DF

8.1.8 CP said that more could be done, and it wasn't just a question of funds, but that the grant system should be amended to make a DMP a requirement for grant funding.

8.1.9 RSh said that Local Authorities should engage with LDNS to advise them on how to approach deer management and whether an SNH organized conference for designated officers/officials would work.

8.1.10 PS said that woodland trusts of which there were an increasing number should also be made aware of their deer management obligations.

8.1.11 DQ said that current policy favoured tree planting and fencing and, with no compensatory cull, deer were simply being shifted around, and onto roads.

8.1.12 RC said that LDNS would be putting in a response to the Bill consultation picking up on these points as appropriate.

8.1.13 The proposed reintroduction of sporting rates could mean that rates would be applied to all land where there was deer. Assessments would be necessary across the board for most landholdings. There were many questions, for example whether assessment would be based on the number of deer culled, or deer per acre, and how the cull would be split for sporting and management.

	<p>8.1.14 RC said that grounds for exemption should be considered – eg where a DMG had a fully functioning DMP, or possibly where an estate was a member of Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES).</p> <p>8.1.15 JB said that he had contact with the regional assessor’s office in Perth and would ask how the process might work.</p> <p>8.1.16 PS also said that aspects such as greater community involvement could result in increased deer habitat that would make management yet more challenging.</p>	
9.	<p>SNH report</p> <p>9.1 DF said that a lot of work was being done with DMGs to deliver the public interest. JH and AW were developing how this would apply across the low ground.</p> <p>9.2 The Authorisations Review would be going ahead with a panel of five. Terms of reference for the review would be circulated, panel members would then be appointed and there would be a three month review period during which time evidence would be sought. The first meeting would take place towards end July/early August. Review might take longer than 3 months.</p> <p>RC said that a joint sub-group representing upland and low ground interests had been set up and was due to meet soon with a view to reporting to the review panel in September. SNH had provided a lot of background information to this group.</p> <p>RC said that all organisations and individuals should still input to the Review and makes their own case. JB asked whether information concerning the Review would be circulated to all. DF confirmed this was the case.</p> <p>RSh asked how the Panel was constituted. DF said that this would be discussed at the first meeting of the Group.</p>	DF
10.	<p>Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)</p> <p>10.1 CE said that an action plan was being prepared as part of the action to deliver improved woodland condition against the recently published Scottish Government document ‘Scotland's Biodiversity - a route map to 2020’. The NWSS condition indicators used for reporting by FCS are different from, but compatible with, those used by SNH for designated habitats.</p>	

	<p>10.2 The action plan will focus on four main areas including reducing browsing pressure, promoting natural regeneration and tree recruitment and increasing woodland canopy cover. The deer control aspects needed to be addressed.</p> <p>10.3 All data in the survey is 'spatial' and freely available via the data portal on the FCS website which showed woodland type, conditions etc.</p> <p>10.4 CE said that FCS was working with SNH and others to develop Deer Plans, and that LDNS members should take advantage of the NWSS survey and interrogate it for information.</p> <p>10.5 RC said it would be wrong to assume that deer were the only cause of lack of condition in woodland. CE said that those in receipt of grants would be doing their utmost to restrict pressure from browsing, no matter by what species.</p> <p>10.6 RC said that the challenge was for all interests to get native woodland in their respective areas into satisfactory condition, that new woodland plantings needed to be protected, and that there was also an opportunity to show Local Authorities and others through working with the survey data what good control was about. LDNS would welcome being engaged in this process.</p> <p>10.7 CE said that input from individuals, Groups and LDNS would be sought for the draft action plan.</p> <p>10.8 AT said that a survey of fencing also needed to be undertaken as fencing information had not been captured in the NWSS.</p> <p>10.9 CE emphasised that the baseline was one of condition and not herbivore impact. Prior to any grant being awarded further evidence would be collected.</p> <p>10.10 RC asked all to note that the survey and data were available, and its data could be used now to inform future actions.</p>	
11.	<p>Events</p> <p>11.1 <u>Deer On Your Doorstep</u> DP advised that logo and display was to be produced for a test run of DOYD presentation to Fairmilehead Community Council meeting in Edinburgh on 6 October.</p>	

11.2 DQ said that that the Deer Dog days would not now be taking place this year.

11.3 RC said that he was in discussion with RG about revitalizing the Angus Deer Initiative.

11.4 Fife

ML said that although there was no formal LDG in Fife there was a lot of deer management activity and a number of related events including those run by Police Scotland, and at Elmwood.

11.5. IDDMG

11.5.1 PS said that north of the Clyde his Group had been proactive in approaching the local authority for a contract in West Dunbartonshire. South of the Clyde the Group had secured management of an FC lot.

11.5.2 A liaison officer had been appointed to recruit and retain members, a range day was planned as well as a first aid event (with deer management and forestry bias – chainsaws, firearms etc).

11.5.3 The Group planned to recruit and mentor less experienced members.

11.5.4 There was a frustration within the Group regarding the promotion of locally sourced venison.

11.6 BDS

11.6.1 JB said that BDS provided more than 120 public events each year. A deer dog registration service was to be set up. The BDS stand at Scone had been very busy. Promotion of competence was ongoing. The incident notebook had been introduced.

11.6.2 RSh asked whether the price of courses offered had an impact on their uptake. JB said that the overheads were taken into consideration when pricing a particular course.

11.7 SACS

AS said that SACS would be providing a number of firearms training and deer courses from the end of the year.

11.8 NLDMG

NLDMG had held both a range day and a Best Practice day, and would be holding a further Level 1 day in 2016. There had been a wildlife crime issue in relation to a dead badger.

	<p>11.9 <u>WLDMG</u> AP said there was an ongoing issue with poaching and long dogs. Police were involved.</p> <p>11.10 <u>South West Scotland (AT)</u> 11.10.1 AT said that the Group had held 3 meetings and had a membership of 18 – 20. The Group would be represented on the SRUC stand at Dumfries Show, and from the Autumn would start to push to become more widely known. The south Scotland groups would initially have a shared website.</p> <p>11.10.2 RC said that he was aware that the South Scotland Group (Maitland Rankin) had a meeting imminent.</p> <p>11.10.3 DF summed up saying it would be good to link in the activity happening on the ground to the project plan and that AW should build this in where possible.</p>	
12.	<p>New LDGs There was the prospect of a new Group based at Thornhill, Stirlingshire covering the Flanders Moss area (SSSI managed by Cardross Estate), and development was currently being facilitated by SNH</p>	
13.	<p>Local deer issues and any other business 13.1 <u>Local supply chains</u> 13.1.1 The issue was raised again about guidelines regarding the sale of local venison locally. IF said that as soon as the skin came off then carcass was effectively being processed. The Game Meat Regulation provided a compromise but was better than the alternative.</p> <p>13.1.2 DP said that there remained confusion regarding what was permissible and what was not and that rules were being interpreted in different ways. RC asked for this to be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.</p> <p>13.1.3 JB said that there was currently a review of Venison Dealer Licenses taking place as part of the Operation Moon, that local authorities clearly interpreted the law in different ways, although there was evidence that the number of licensed venison dealers in Scotland was increasing.</p> <p>13.1.4 ML said that there was also an issue of the discharge of wastewater as no discharge of blood into the domestic main was allowed.</p>	

	13.1.5 DF to ask Alastair McGugan to give the meeting a full run down on all aspects relating to butchery and processing at the next meeting.	DF
14.	Date of next meeting Wednesday 14 October 2015 at The Ivy Hotel, Bridge of Allan (Royal Hotel is closing for refurbishment).	DP

FINAL