

## Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

**At:** The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan

**On:** Wednesday 15 April 2015

**Present:** Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman  
Ron Smith (RS), Vice Chairman  
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary  
David Bruce (DB), UPM Tilhill  
John Bruce (JB), BDS  
Colin Edwards (CE), FCS  
David Ferguson, NLDMG  
Ian Fergusson (IF), FES  
Jim Govan (JG)  
Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH  
Alex Hogg (AH), SGA  
Derek Kneller (DK), NLDMG  
Andy Mavin (AM), Police Scotland  
David Quarrell (DQ), SLDG  
Peter Semple (PS), IDDMG  
Rob Sharp (RSh)  
Ian Talboys (IT), Aberdeen City Council  
Andrew Treadaway, (AT)  
Daye Tucker (DT), NFUS  
Anton Watson (AW), SNH  
Kenny Willmitt (KW), BASC

**Apologies or not present:**

Angus Corby (AC), Transport Scotland  
Mike Flynn (MF), SSPCA  
Donald Fraser (DF), SNH  
David Fyffe (DFy), SL&E  
Maggie Keegan (MK), SWT  
Alex Paul (AP), (WLDG)  
George Ritchie (GR), Banff & Buchan DG  
Helen Sellars (HS), FCS  
Deirdre Stewart (DS), Angus Deer Initiative  
Alex Stoddart (AS), SACS

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| 1. | <b>Welcome and introductions</b><br>As there were new members present RC asked all to introduce themselves, and welcomed Colin Edwards (who replaces Gordon Paterson) for FCS and David Ferguson (who replaces Derek Kneller) for NLDMG to the Committee. |  |
| 2. | <b>Minutes of previous meeting 22.02.15 and matters arising</b><br>The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 22.02.15 were proposed by RS and seconded by JH.   |  |
| 3. | <b>Matters arising</b><br>3.1 A draft LDG constitution is now on the web for those who wish to use it as a guide.   |  |

3.2 AW reported that the Photography Competition had closed, and that a shortlist was being compiled by the judges. All entries would be available for use by LDNS, SNH, ADMG etc with copyright of the pictures staying with the photographer. Pictures can be used for promotional purposes but not financial gain. An exhibit will be created to go on the road, and a gallery of the photographs will go on the LDNS website.

3.3 The Woodland Seminar takes place at Battleby on 29 May.

3.4 DP reported that he had contacted Carol Walker at Transweb and Richard Harrison at Dundee City Council following approaches to LDNS at the Borders Stalking Fair. DP to pass details to JH. JG to pass other contact information from the event to DP.

DP  
JG

3.5 AT said that he felt the event had been a valuable exercise for LDNS to be seen at.

3.6 Deer management in Germany will be the topic of an article by JB in the Summer newsletter. RC said that there was a stream of misinformation emerging that Scotland's deer managers were generally not proficient and also inaccuracies comparing the Scottish system with other countries in Europe. It was noted that the Hunt Report was still being quoted. DP asked JB for up to 1200 words for the article.

JB

### 3.7 Discussions with PAW

3.7.1 JB said that there was much progress with PAW and that poaching was being dealt with far more thoroughly than in the past, although there was a lot more improvement to come, particularly on communications. A recording notebook had been produced by BDS, BASC and SL&E to help land managers to write down details of incidents but it was stressed by JB that this should not replace dialing in to report suspicious activity or crime.

3.7.2 AM said that there was also a wildlife crime app on the PAW Scotland website although only available for Apple. An android app is currently in development.

3.7.3 DT said that an app had been developed by Scott Petrie for fisheries records and this might possibly adapt to wildlife crime reporting.

3.7.4 AM said there was also an internal guide for WLCOs on the Police Scotland intranet, available as a booklet and electronically.

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|    | <p>3.7.5 A one-day training course had been held attended by 40 officers.</p> <p>3.7.6 RC asked whether the guide had 'external' relevance. AM said that it mostly concerned what a Police Officer should do. There was however an external page on the website and also links through social media.</p> <p>3.7.7 JB said the most important thing was to pick up the phone and report, and also to write down as much information as possible as Police Scotland follow-up had become more sophisticated and able to search for example by accent, physical features, tattoos etc.</p> <p>3.7.8 AM said that 101 should be called rather than individuals WLCOs as 101 leaves an audit trail and logs each incident centrally.</p> <p>3.7.9 RSh raised the issue of Fiscal powers as wildlife criminals did not receive proper penalties. AM said there had been a review of penalties and a report would go to the Minister. What happened thereafter would be up to Scottish Government.</p> <p>3.7.10 KW said that there was definitely progress with PAW and BASC had signed up to 3 community policing schemes.</p> <p>3.7.11 Agreed that JB and AM should give a short joint report at the next meeting on progress to date.</p> | JB, AM |
| 4. | <p><b>Financial report</b></p> <p>4.1 RC gave the financial report for the year to 31.03.15 showing total income of £32,528 and expenditure of £28,620, and an excess of income over expenditure of just under £4000, with funds at bank of £13,800.</p> <p>4.2 RC said that there were anomalies in distinguishing whether some members were covered by Deer Group membership or as individuals and that work was being done to clarify this.</p> <p>4.3 DP circulated the LDNS budget for 2015/16 showing income of £35400 against expenditure of £36900, forecasting a small deficit of just under £2000 if all activities are undertaken.</p>   |        |
| 5. | <p><b>Project Plan</b></p> <p>DP had met with AW to update the plan. An amended version had been circulated. Further suggested amendments should be given to DP/AW. The plan will be revisited at each Committee meeting.</p>   |        |

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| <p><b>6.</b></p> | <p><b>SNH Report</b></p> <p>6.1 JH said that LDNS progress had been reviewed by himself, DF and Robbie Kernahan and although there was “lots of good stuff going on”, new initiatives were needed. He admitted it would be challenging to go through 20 new ideas with 22 people, but said he thought that the Committee could show more initiative in bringing forward new ideas. The view was that a smaller group was required to achieve this, and that LDNS was in danger of “treading water”.</p> <p>6.2 DT mentioned the ‘Farming in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ initiative where there could possibly be some funding for training of farmers in relation to deer management issues.</p> <p>6.3 PS raised a question re designated sites and their selection. RC said that site condition monitoring ran on a 6 year cycle and generally planning for action on designated sites was outside an individual deer manager’s or Group’s control, lying with SNH.</p> <p>6.4 RC endorsed JH’s earlier words. He said there was not yet enough happening, and that more needed to be going into the work programme. He charged every member of the Committee to come back with a proposal for the next meeting with what they could do to broaden the reach of the network. RC said he was looking for ideas to be circulated before the next meeting with potential cost and a short plan for implementation</p> <p>6.5 There were good examples of what could be done, and more engagement with local authorities was still required.</p> <p>6.6 JB suggested a ‘scoping paper’ for tackling local authorities, reiterating their responsibilities under WANE and identifying contacts at each local authority. AH said that much of this information already existed. AT said that all could produce a contact list to build up this database.</p> <p>6.7 RC said that the Chairman of SNH had agreed to write to all local authorities reminding them of their responsibilities. JH to check when this will happen.</p> <p>6.8 JH said that SNH was engaging with some local authorities, but not all; also that until specific deer-related issues arose (as with Perth) then it was difficult for SNH to become involved.</p> | <p><b>ALL</b></p> <p>All</p> <p>JH</p> |
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|    | 6.9 AH asked whether SNH could do more, how good their contacts were, and whether these were with elected Councillors or Officials.   |                                 |
| 7. | <p><b>PACEC</b></p> <p>7.1 RC asked for a final push to draw more responses from lowland deer managers.</p> <p>7.2 JH said that he recognized that there were data protection issues and that there were concerns, wrongly, that information submitted could become public. RC said that no activity in the final report would be traceable back to any individual.</p> <p>7.3 The Stalking Directory as a means to promote the study was discussed.</p> <p>7.4 RC said that where parts of the questionnaire were too difficult or complex to answer then an “educated guess” was better than no answer at all.</p> <p>7.5 DT said it was important to include ‘time’ as a cost.</p> <p>7.6 JG said it was a case of filling in what you could and not that all of the questionnaire had to be completed.</p> <p>7.7 DT suggested that Andy Richardson could be asked to circulate the link on his Facebook page. Similarly AH and DT would promote on theirs.</p> <p>7.8 JH said that SNH was soon going to start to translate the work with upland DMGs to a low ground context, and that this should be a future agenda item for LDNS. RC said the application of new upland practices to the lowlands needed very careful consideration.</p> <p>7.9 RSh said the media were also pursuing an agenda, although RC cautioned that nothing could be resolved through the media where views tended to be polarised. It was important to make actions work on the ground and balance was the answer.</p> <p>7.10 RSh said that all Government agencies were perceived to be “anti-deer”. RC reminded all that FCS was paid by the taxpayer to grow trees so they had a difficult line to tread.</p> <p>7.11 AT said that more could be done with rural colleges to promote deer awareness/issues on the forestry courses.</p> | <p><b>ALL</b></p> <p>DT, AH</p> |
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| 8. | <p><b>Authorisations Review</b></p> <p>8.1 RC reported that a sub-group of volunteers had been assembled but that the make-up of that group had changed with the introduction of both upland and lowland interest.</p> <p>8.2 He said that other organisations were not now included in this group as each would most likely be making their own representations. RC was to chair the group that now comprised Ron Smith, Daye Tucker, Rob Sharp, Rory Galloway, George Macdonald, Mary Walker Smith and Susan Stephen.</p> <p>8.3 The Minister had not formally announced the Review into the Authorisations process.</p> <p>8.4 SNH's Sponsor team had given the Authorisations Review a 'green light' and a paper would be circulated to SNH's management team for approval. This would then initiate the process of how the review would be carried out and by whom</p> <p>8.5 RC stressed it would be an independent process to which SNH was providing a lot of information. It was felt that there was room for improvement, more use of local resources and local contractors, and that some criticisms and concerns were probably justified.</p> |                               |
| 9. | <p><b>Events</b></p> <p>9.1 <u>Deer on Your Doorstep</u><br/> DP gave an update, availability of a local hall in EH10 had been sought, plus a date booked for a thermal imaging exercise on the Mortonhall Estate. SL&amp;E had asked if the project could be included as a case study in their <i>Helping it Happen</i> programme.</p> <p>9.2 Other events:<br/> 9.2.1 <u>Kelso Stalking Fair</u><br/> Covered under 3.4.</p> <p>9.2.2 DP suggested that Transerv should be invited to the next meeting LDNS meeting on 15 July to give a presentation on their DMP.</p> <p>9.3 <u>Fife Show</u><br/> LDNS to be represented at the Fife show on 23 May via Ron Smith. DP to organise delivery of display, banner and print to Ron or to Colin Johnstone at BDS.</p> <p>9.4 <u>Haddington Show or Dalkeith Show</u><br/> 9.4.1 Other possible events for LDNS are the Haddington Show, 27 June (applications by 29 May) and Dalkeith Show on 11 July (applications by 15 May).</p>   | <p>DP</p> <p>DP</p> <p>DP</p> |

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|     | <p>9.4.2 Each requires proof of public liability insurance up to £2 million. This may be an issue for LDNS booking public events directly.</p> <p>9.5 <u>Scottish Game Fair, Scone, 3 – 5 July</u><br/>DP advised that LDNS would once again be stand-sharing with ADMG at Scone, and asked for volunteers to help on the stand on any of the days.</p> <p>9.6 <u>Deer Dog Event</u><br/>Discussion is ongoing regarding a possible deer dog event organized by BBDG to run in conjunction with SLDG at a central belt location. DQ said that a pilot demonstration had run successfully at the Stalking Fair.</p> <p>9.7 <u>Dumfries Show</u><br/>9.7.1 AT said that Barony College would have a stand at the Dumfries Show on 31 July – 1 August 2015 and it might be possible for LDNS to have a presence on this.</p> <p>9.7.2 RC reiterated that he would like all on the Committee to come back with ideas for possible events and initiatives for LDNS either ahead of or at the next meeting in July.</p>   | <p>All</p> <p>GR,<br/>DQ</p> <p>AT</p> <p>ALL</p> |
| 10. | <p><b>LDGs Update</b></p> <p>10.1 <u>SW Scotland</u><br/>10.1.1 AT said an event would be organised for the launch of the Group, and would co-ordinate with Chris Dalton and Maitland Rankin. Also a walk and talk event was being planned for Chris and Glenn's Group with SL&amp;E.</p> <p>10.1.2 JH said that he had met with all involved in the new LDGs in SW and all was on track although there were admin issues to sort with SNH and FCS.</p> <p>10.2 <u>NE Fife</u><br/>RS said that what was currently only a discussion in NE Fife could possibly be formalised further.</p> <p>10.3 <u>IDDMG</u><br/>10.3.1 PS said that 2 years on the Group had 10 members with potentially 3 more. Although they only had one FCS lease this was quite work-intensive. All members had separate stalking away from the Group, but collectively were doing a lot within the Group too.</p> <p>10.3.2 RC said it was perfectly normal for members to have other stalking interests, but wondered if the areas covered by individuals could also be 'aggregated' within that of the Group to show a greater area covered.</p> | <p>AT</p> <p>RS</p>                               |

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|     | <p>PS thought that this might be possible.</p> <p>10.3.3 JH said they should also consider including in a report what public interest objectives were being met.</p> <p>10.4 Renfrewshire and North Ayrshire<br/>RS said that he was aware of a number of stalkers operating independently over Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and North Ayrshire although they were not formalised into a Group structure.</p> <p><u>10.5 LDGs and individuals reporting</u><br/>10.5.1 RC asked AW to look at producing a proforma that could be completed by Groups and individual stalkers that would in broad terms act as an annual report from LDGs or from groups of stalkers, so that this information could be fed into the system. DQ said that in his view this would not be a problem although individual stalkers did keep a lot of information private.</p> <p>10.5.2 JH said cull data received by SNH related to the landholding and if individuals or Groups were also to submit cull data then this could help build a picture of the public service being delivered by deer managers as well as an idea of the numbers of individuals involved.</p> <p>10.5.3 AT said there would be instances where people had land over which they shot in another LDG area so there might be a risk of duplication of information.</p> <p>10.5.4 It was suggested that FCS/FES and private forestry companies could also input data. DK said that this was likely.</p> <p>10.5.5 RS asked whether social media could be used to encourage stalkers to submit this information.</p> | <p>PS</p> <p>AW</p>                               |
| 11. | <p><b>Summer Newsletter</b><br/>11.1 Ideas for content as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deer on your Doorstep – development/report (DP)</li> <li>• Deer stalking in Europe (JB)</li> <li>• LDGs reporting proposal (AW)</li> <li>• Profile of a deer group – IDDMG (PS)</li> <li>• Article from SNH Chairman (RK, DP to coordinate)</li> </ul> <p>Other ideas to be forwarded to DP asap.</p>  | <p>DP<br/>JB<br/>AWW<br/>PS<br/>RK</p> <p>ALL</p> |
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| <p>12.</p> | <p><b>Local and National Deer Issues</b></p> <p><u>12.1 FES permissions</u></p> <p>12.1.1 DQ said he had discussed permissions with IF, and had concerns that as FES permissions were granted to individuals and not to Groups when an individual moved on then the permission lapsed.</p> <p>12.1.2 IF agreed that permissions were presently not transferable; however he stated that DQ's question was timely as FES was presently reviewing its Deer Management Permissions policy and procedures and he would ensure this issue would be include this in the review.</p> <p>12.1.3 RSh said there were small areas of ground covered by contracts and some way from the nearest larder. He asked whether FE could amend the rules so that the deer would count as part payment. IF said that it might be possible to reduce the rate/deer although all FE venison was contracted to one dealer and all under the FE system had to be formally tendered.</p> <p>12.1.4 IF said that FES only had a one year agreement with an option to extend beyond this to take account of changing circumstances within the forestry environment. Contracts were used by FES to specifically direct contractors to undertake work within a specific time frame.</p> <p>12.1.5 RC said a note clarifying the process regarding contracts and permissions and any changes should be included in a future Newsletter.</p> <p><u>12.2 Photographs</u></p> <p>DQ said that LDNS should have access to use some of Linda Mellor's photographs that were taken when out with him.</p> <p><u>12.3. Carcasses for butchers</u></p> <p>AH said that a change to the law should be considered so that butchers could take carcasses "in their jackets" and then skin them rather than having to take them "jacket off". It was thought that a meeting between Scottish Venison Partnership and the FSA would be helpful to clarify the rules.</p> | <p>IF</p> <p>DP</p> |
| <p>13.</p> | <p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p><u>13.1 Competence</u></p> <p>13.1.1 DQ asked for an update on competence. RC said that the agreed standard had been set at DSC 1 although moving up to DSC 2 was encouraged. There remained resistance from farming and crofting sectors.</p>   |                     |

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|            | <p>13.1.2 JH added that the review to date had been all to do with welfare. DQ said he was concerned that people seemed to be thinking that the Competence review was not happening.</p> <p>13.1.3 KW said that surveys undertaken by different organisations showed that a very high number of members of those organisations had DSC 1 (between 70 and 90 per cent), and that 3 separate surveys had been undertaken on the positive and negative impacts of competence on welfare.</p> <p>13.1.4 RC suggested that SNH might provide an article for the Newsletter giving update on Welfare research, Competence, Best Practice. DP to discuss with AMcG.</p> <p>13.1.5 KW said that BASC was fundamentally opposed to mandatory testing for Competence, and that no mandatory testing did not mean a higher number of accidents/incidents.</p> | <p>JH,<br/>AMcG?</p> |
| <p>14.</p> | <p><b>Date of next meeting</b><br/>Wednesday 15 July, Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan</p>   | <p>All</p>           |