

LDNS moving forward with increasing local emphasis



Richard Cooke, Chairman, LDNS

The Lowland Deer Network Scotland has continued to make steady progress during 2015/16. The network has supported an increasing number of events during the year and the focus is continuing to move to a local level. That being the case, as a result of a decision at the AGM on 27 April 2016, the modus operandi of LDNS has been slightly modified. While the main Committee will continue to meet every four months we have now set up a small events sub-committee to promote and support the programme of local events and ensure that the events budget is allocated as widely and fairly as possible. You will find more details about our events in this Newsletter.

We have also ceased to hold an AGM/Seminar on a wet Sunday afternoon in February. These have been poorly attended and, although we have had some extremely good speakers over the last four years, it has not been a model that contributes effectively to our overall purpose of supporting collaborative management, providing information across the sector and promoting education and training. All of these objectives can be achieved more effectively by local delivery, as above.

The AGM this year therefore was a short meeting to deal with the formalities required under the Constitution, office bearer and member elections to the main Committee, approval of the Annual Accounts and consideration of this year's forward budget. It was also agreed that, as most of our communications to members are now online by way of an e-bulletin, a single annual newsletter incorporating our annual report, would be sufficient, and this is it for 2016. This will save mailing and printing costs and allow that money to be redirected to event support.

Apart from the workings of LDNS as reported above we are in the middle of a period of major change in the deer sector as a whole with a further Scottish Government review pending in autumn this year. Debate in the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs Committee sessions leading up to the passing of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in March have at least acknowledged that lowland and urban deer management, mainly relating to roe deer, is very different from red deer management in the Highlands. While some unfounded concerns were expressed about effective deer management in the lowlands during those discussions, the point has been well taken at Parliamentary level that a one-size-fits-all approach to deer management in Scotland would be unworkable.

The number of lowland deer groups (LDGs) continues to increase and geographical gaps in collaborative management are closing, but these new LDGs will continue to need the support which LDNS is there to provide. Practice standards are generally high and training events are invariably fully booked. An emerging theme is the need for more deer larders. In some areas the lack of available carcass handling facilities may indeed be a constraint on the level of cull being taken. This point has been made to Government and its agencies and information will be gathered to support the case for public investment.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the three key public agencies, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Transport Scotland. On the basis of an annual plan developed in conjunction with the agencies, additional money has been found for 2016 to support event development and clearly this is evidence that LDNS is recognised as the best available current means of supporting the management of deer in the public interest across the Scottish lowlands and urban areas.



Photo: Deer dogs, Yair Forest

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Includes Annual Report
and Accounts 2015/16

Lowland Deer Network Scotland: Income & Expenditure account for the year to 31 March 2016

Income	2016	2015
Membership	£335.14	£222.33
SNH Grant Funding	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Transport Scotland Grant	£7,000.00	£7,000.00
Forestry Commission Scotland Funding	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Bank Interest	£4.18	£4.42
Contribution to leaflets - Swillington Shooting	-	£100.00
Urban Deer Awareness Event	-	£202.00
	£27,339.32	£27,528.75

Expenditure	2016	2015
<i>Administration</i>		
Chairman's Expenses	£1,128.40	£1,168.78
Secretarial and Administration Expenses	£2,400.00	£2,400.00
	£3,528.40	£3,568.78
PR consultants fee and expenses	£14,400.00	£14,000.00
Game fairs	£1,029.15	£998.55
Newsletter costs	£3,007.20	£1,545.60
Meeting room expenses	£512.80	£619.20
AGM expenses	£386.42	£1,924.55
Miscellaneous	£1,058.00	£1,458.00
Website Costs	£499.20	£978.00
Travel Expenses	£341.60	£619.45
Accounts	£300.00	£300.00
East Kilbride Urban Event Contribution	-	£710.00
Hoggart Creative Urban Guide Print	-	£97.98
Inverclyde & Dumbarton Launch	-	£200.00
PACEC Report 1/3 Share	£1,200.00	£1,200.00
Deer on Doorstep Project	£2,096.40	-
SLDMG Events	£650.00	-
	£29,009.17	£28,620.11
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	(£1,669.85)	(£1,091.36)

Lowland Deer Network Scotland: Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2016

Current Assets	2016	2015
Cash at bank	£7,167.31	£13,837.16
	£7,167.31	£13,837.16

Current Liabilities	2016	2015
Prepaid SNH grant funding	-	£5,000.00
Accruals	£300.00	£300.00
-	£300.00	£5,300.00
Net Assets	£6,867.31	£8,537.16
Net Surplus/(Deficit) b/fwd	£8,537.16	£9,628.52
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	(£1,669.85)	(£1,091.36)
	£6,867.31	£8,537.16

Accountant's Report to the Lowland Deer Network Scotland

We have prepared, without carrying out an audit, the approved balance sheet and income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 March 2016 from the books and information supplied.

Johnston Carmichael LLP 27 April 2016
Chartered Accountants
15 Academy Street
Forfar DD8 2HA

We approve the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 and confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Richard Cooke 27 April 2016
Chairman, Lowland Deer
Network Scotland

Local Events

A 'Meeting of Minds'



Richard Cooke, Chairman, LDNS

On 21 March I attended on behalf of LDNS a lunchtime event at the Lost Lamb Restaurant at Auldhouse near East Kilbride. This was organised by David Quarrell, Chair of the South Lanarkshire LDG, and was titled 'A Meeting of Minds.'

The former Environment Minister, Dr Aileen McLeod MSP was present and the event was chaired by Linda Fabiani MSP. Others of the 40 or so present were members of the public, farmers, and representatives of SNH, Forestry Commission and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association - a real mix of interests.

We enjoyed an excellent lunch, venison for all three courses, including venison lollipops for dessert!

Following a number of short presentations there was a very good discussion and it seemed to me that David's intention of creating a "meeting of minds" was exactly what took place. This was a new way of raising awareness of lowland and urban deer management among a broad range of interests and is a formula that LDNS will certainly hope to see repeated in other areas



Busy lunchtime at the Lost Lamb, hearing about urban deer. Linda Fabiani MSP makes the introductions. Photo: Kenneth Stephen, SGA

in future. In particular it was very valuable to have the Minister present so that she could see at first hand deer managers promoting professionalism, engaging with members of the public and cooperating effectively in an event involving both public agencies and some of the other industry organisations. My thanks to David Quarrell for his considerable efforts in arranging a first class event.



Meeting of Minds event at The Lost Lamb, Auldhouse, (l to r), Linda Fabiani MSP, former Scotland Environment Minister Dr Aileen McLeod MSP, and David Quarrell, Chairman, South Lanarkshire Deer Group. Photo: Kenneth Stephen, SGA

Borders Walk and Talk event - lowland deer management

Around 40 stalkers, foresters, land managers and other interested parties attended a 'walk and talk' event centred on Caddonfoot Hall, Clovenfords, in the Scottish Borders. The event was staged by LDNS jointly with Scottish Land & Estates.

An indoor programme of short talks consisted of presentations by Richard Cooke of LDNS, Anton Watson, SNH, Colin Edwards, FCS, PC Jamie Hood, Wildlife Crime Officer for Lothian and the Borders, Police Scotland, and James Pringle, Torwoodlee and Buckholm Estates, who had also assisted in the planning of the event.

Following the hall session there were visits to Yair Forest led by the local FCS Ranger Jim Cowe, stopping at a viewpoint with a spectacular outlook over the forest, a new planting scheme and neighbouring farmland. Second stop was Torwoodlee to look at a site where there was new and established planting, farmland and grazing, trunk road, railway and the old Ettrick Deer Forest in the distance, as well as interaction with the public on the Torwoodlee Golf Course. A brief run down of the issues affecting local deer management on this corner of the estate was given by James Pringle and Innes Anderson, his stalking tenant.

In addition to the above, the year so far has seen among other events the running of two first aid courses by Inverclyde and Dumbarton DG and South Lanarkshire DG respectively. The Deer on Your Doorstep display has also been out and about at the Bennachie Centre in Aberdeen and the RSPB Big Nature event at Musselburgh thanks to BASC Scotland.

Looking forward, events include 'Wild about Aiden' from 9 to 10 August for the Deer on Your Doorstep display, a Scent Hound Seminar in Dalkeith on 30 September, and a shot site event/scent hounds on 2 October Strathdon, both of these organised by the Banff and Buchan Deer Group.



James Pringle, Torwoodlee and Buckholm Estates explains the estate's approach to deer management



Jim Cowe, FCS Forest Ranger

Future advertising and tendering of deer culling contracts and deer management permissions on the National Forest Estate

Ian Fergusson

Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 came into force on 18 April 2016, and this now affects the way in which Public Sector bodies manage and deliver their procurement process.

Procurement activity from a threshold of more than £50k for goods and services and more than £4million for works will be subject to a regulated process. The new regulations require all public sector bodies to advertise all regulated contract opportunities and award of a contract on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS).

Forestry Commission Scotland will be adopting an electronic platform to manage its tendering activities. This will introduce a greater degree of standardised tendering and best practice in line with the Scottish Government Procurement Journey <https://www.procurementjourney.scot/>

To allow more opportunity for public sector contract opportunities, it will be beneficial for suppliers to register with Public Contracts Scotland <http://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/>

Forest Enterprise Scotland will also use Public Contracts Scotland to run non-regulated opportunities. To find out more about the registration process, please access the Public Contracts Scotland Supplier Registration Guide at http://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/sitehelp/help_guides.aspx

Forestry Commission Scotland will advertise as a result of the regulations on PCS; however regulated tenders will be delivered by PCS-Tender (see link

below). It would be an added advantage for suppliers to also register with PCS-Tender. Once registration is complete for both systems, a single sign-on can be set up. PCS-Tender has the following advantages:

- Users will have instant access to tender document responses from any location, at any time.
- Reduce duplication of effort with the ability to store and re-use answers to standard ITT questions multiple times.
- Previous submissions and documentation will be saved in supplier profiles for future reference.
- Improved communication with a standardised message service with buyers.
- Time and resource saving.
- Single sign-on through Public Contracts Scotland service.
- The ability to edit responses as many times as necessary up to the tender submission deadline.

Both PCS and PCS-Tender are both free and easy to use, and an online helpdesk is provided to support suppliers with every process.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact:

Procurement.Scotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

The link for PCS-Tender is: <http://bit.ly/1yqKIDL>

Ian Fergusson is Forest Enterprise Scotland Deer Management Officer (South).

Market for venison remains strong



Dick Playfair

It has been a challenging year for Scottish venison. Whilst from a UK market perspective sales of venison have continued to rise there has been a set back in the form of the E. coli O157 outbreak in September last year. The market however remains extremely buoyant with Mintel reporting that by the end of 2015 UK game meat sales would reach £106 million, up from £98 million in 2014, with growth expected to continue, and forecast to hit £143 million by 2020.

Mintel stated that: *"It is venison which is the star performer in the market, fuelling growth in game meat. Indeed, usage of venison has increased from 13 per cent to 17 per cent over the last 12 months."*

Also, in its report, 'The 50', published last year, Mintel said: *"Soaring venison sales have put game meat in the spotlight. While the size of the game meat market is dwarfed by that of poultry (with sales of £97 million in 2014, versus £1.7 billion for poultry) the game meat market has enjoyed strong growth in 2014, increasing around 9% from 2013. This rise in sales has largely been thanks to the popularity enjoyed by venison. The fact that many more UK consumers have expressed an interest in trying game than have eaten this type of meat before, highlights the significant growth potential in this sector. Leveraging the health credentials of game such as venison will help to position it as a better-for-you alternative to red meat, thus boosting sales further."*

Another highlight was the announcement by Sainsbury that its venison sales were up 115 per cent in December 2015 over the previous year. So indicators are that the market remains strong.

E. coli O157 however came as a wake-up call for a sector that has been virtually trouble-free in terms of health scares. 11 cases of the potentially killer bug were reported, traced back as far as could be possible to one batch of wild venison. The Scottish Venison Partnership is working with SQWV and Food Standards Scotland to address those areas of greatest risk in the supply chain, and demonstrate that the necessary steps are being taken. There are expected to be modifications to the SQWV standards, additional training made available on food hygiene, and increased checking and sampling. There is also discussion, in its very early stages, for an E. coli O157 research project to assess the scale of presence of the bacteria in wild and farmed deer.

A thorough refresh of the Scottish Venison website was undertaken in advance of Scottish Venison Day on 4 September and all entries on the site (under buy, stock, sell) updated as appropriate. Activity for Scottish Venison Day itself centred on an online recipe competition with the prize of a weekend at the acclaimed hotel and restaurant Monachyle Mhor, its owner/chef Tom Lewis being one of the judges. Winner of the competition was Graeme Taylor from Glasgow with his recipe for 'venison and haggis en croute'.

The Deer Farm and Park Demonstration Project concluded in 2015. The Scottish Venison Partnership was one of the partners in this project with Scotland Food and Drink, NFU Scotland and SQWV Ltd. The project was designed to deliver 10 demonstration days over two years at deer farms and parks in Scotland. Ultimately the days took place at five locations, Culquoich, Strathdon; Gledpark, Dumfries & Galloway; Clathic, Perthshire; and Wester Balcormo and Downfield in Fife, the latter also being the site of the new dedicated deer abattoir. A starter guide to deer farming is also now available on the project website <http://deerfarmdemoproject.scottish-venison.info/>

In terms of results, an analysis of attendance over both years of the project shows a total of 324 individuals after de-duplication of names for 2014 and 2015. The total number of visits over the two-year programme was 580.

Also, whilst there were fewer attendees overall in 2015, a slightly higher number of farmers and landowners attended (135) than 2014 (125). This may have been as a result of the project covering three different locations (Perthshire, Dumfries & Galloway, and Fife) in its second year and therefore reaching a wider potential audience rather than just the one location (Strathdon) in 2014.

It also should be noted that during the period of the project a number of notable and related successes for the sector have taken place:

- The largest deer farm in Scotland (and potentially in the UK) is now under development in Midlothian.
- Deer farming is now covered by the Basic Payment scheme.
- A dedicated facility for killing deer is now operational in Fife (previously the closest abattoir for deer was Yorkshire).
- The first Deer Park to gain accreditation under the new BDFPA/SFQC Quality Assurance Scheme was Gledpark, one of the project's selected demonstration units.

Finally, the Scottish Venison Partnership with SNH has for some time been developing an application for Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status for Scottish Wild Venison. The draft application is now with SAC Consulting who will take it forward on SVP's behalf. The designation is being sought for all Scottish wild venison from animals culled (although not necessarily processed in Scotland), and discussion is ongoing as to whether this proposal can apply to all Scottish wild venison legally produced, or only that produced under the SQWV scheme.



Venison and haggis en croute. Photo: Graeme Taylor

Spongiform encephalopathy found in reindeer in Norway



John Bruce, BDS

In March this year, a Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy, TSE, referred to as Chronic Wasting Disease when found in a deer was diagnosed in a free-ranging reindeer from southern

Norway by the Norwegian Veterinary Institute who are monitoring the reindeer herd.

It has been confirmed that this case of disease is associated with prion infection. Prions are miss-folded versions of proteins commonly associated with the central nervous system. Please see link below. <http://bit.ly/1Q7IWX2>

The Animal & Plant Health Agency became aware of the event on 5 April 2016, and alerted DEFRA.

DEFRA published in March 2016 a revised assessment of the risk of CWD to Great Britain. The revised assessment includes evaluation of the risks posed by importation of deer urine lures from North America to the UK, following the BDS survey on use of urine lures by stakeholders, see; <http://bit.ly/1WOvKYg>

At present, there remain many unknowns with respect to the Norwegian case:

- The origin of the prion is not known. Prions are transmissible between individuals within a species, and some are transmissible between species. However, they can also arise spontaneously. It is not yet possible to conclude whether this prion was imported into Norway or arose there independently.

- It is not clear which prion has caused the disease in this reindeer. Scrapie in sheep and goats, BSE in cattle, FSE in cats, TME in mink, CWD in cervids and CJD in humans are all caused by prions. It is not possible clinically to distinguish between TSEs caused by prions from different sources (e.g. CWD and BSE) within the same species.

It is not clear whether this is a single case or is indicative of wider infection in the herd. However the Norwegian Veterinary Institute is continuing its routine surveillance, which detected this case. The initial speculation that the case in the reindeer could have been a sporadic prion disease was ruled out by the confirmation of CWD by the OIE reference lab in Canada.

The British Deer Society has been monitoring CWD in North America and has established connections throughout the scientific world on this topic, the Society is well informed and well connected, it will bring news on this event to you as soon as it is available, meantime we propose that we should all maintain our duty of care, and responsibilities if travelling around the world by being as hygienic as possible with our outdoor clothes and footwear and by minimising traffic in un-proven disease-free animals or their body parts.

Subsequent to this initial report a second incident of TSE was diagnosed in Norway in May in a young adult, pregnant, moose (referred to as elk in Norway). The moose had shown abnormal behaviour and was in poor bodily condition. The moose comes from a different area (Selbu municipality in Sør-Trøndelag, close to the Swedish border) than the CWD case in the reindeer reported in Norway in April this year. The situation is being closely monitored and further updates are available on the BDS website www.bds.org.uk



The threat of CWD in the deer population across this type of landscape cannot be underestimated.

Deer on your Doorstep



Dick Playfair

Deer on your Doorstep is a community education project – an initiative to take information about deer into local areas at a number of levels in order

to achieve a number of defined objectives, among these:

- To inform the general public about deer species (particularly roe) that they are likely to encounter in their neighbourhood.
- Advise about deer management, how it is undertaken and why it is necessary.
- Encourage the public to interact with the project through the reporting of sightings and incidents involving deer.
- Through elected local councillors impress on Local Authorities their obligations with regard to sustainable deer management.

In outline, Deer on your Doorstep can be rolled out in a number of different ways:

- Portable, temporary exhibition in church hall, community centre or similar.
- Display of information about deer species in that locality.
- Thermal imaging pictures of deer in the neighbourhood if available.
- Detailed area map, allowing members of the public to mark on deer sightings, deer damage, road traffic accident sites, deer carcasses etc.
- Online link to the Deer in Scotland Education Zone.
- Short talk from LDNS or SNH about deer and deer management, and the opportunity for questions and dialogue.

Other supporting activity could include:

- Advising local media.
- Promoting the exhibition with prior PR or an advertisement in the local paper.
- Producing a poster for libraries, schools, community centres etc.
- Circulation of poster Dogs Chase Deer to local veterinary practices.
- Other engagement with local schools – such as poster or photographic competition.



Authorisations Review

The Authorisations Review Panel has met four times to date, has seen written submissions and also taken verbal evidence from a number of organisations including ADMG, LDNS and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association. The report is due from the Panel at the end of August to be shared with the SNH management team, and made public thereafter.

All information about the Panel's procedure, terms of reference, members and meetings of the Panel including minutes of meetings can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/1sHxWEf>

This Newsletter is produced by:

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