

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan

On: Wednesday 3 February 2016

Present: Richard Cooke, Chairman
Ron Smith, Vice Chairman
Dick Playfair, Secretary
Jamie Hammond, SNH
Donald Fraser, SNH
Anton Watson, SNH
Ian Fergusson, FES
Colin Edwards, FCS
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland
Alex Hogg, SGA
John Bruce, BDS
Nicolle Hamilton, BASC
David Fyffe, SLE
Daye Tucker, NFUS
Alex Stoddart, SACS
Ian Talboys, City of Aberdeen
Peter Semple, I&DDMG
Richard Knight, SLDG
Robert Tennant, SLDG
David Ferguson, NLDG
Robert Sharp
David Bruce, UPM Tilhill
Mark Lazzeri, Falkland Estate

Attending: Rachel Kennedy, Scotland Transerv
Jonathan Whitehead, SQWV

Apologies or not present:

Angus Corby, Transport Scotland
James Govan
Alex Paul, WLDG
Andrew Treadaway
George Ritchie, BBDG
Colin Shedden, BASC Scotland
Malcolm Muir, South Lanarkshire Council
Deirdre Stewart
Mike Flynn, SSPCA
Maggie Keegan, SWT

1.	Previous minutes (14.10.15) and matters arising There were no matters arising that would not otherwise be dealt with under the meeting agenda.
2.	Chairman's report 2.1 RC said that it had been very busy on the political front, including briefings for the Minister and RACCE Committee and continued misreporting from the National Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS). There had been much misinformation spread in briefings on the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, during the evidence/amendments sessions.

	<p>2.2 CE said that every effort had been made by FCS and others to present the NWSS analysis correctly, including deer issues.</p> <p>2.3 RC said that the RACCE Committee was holding its second session to discuss amendments that day. He had met with Michael Russell MSP, who had said that the effectiveness of deer management in lowland Scotland was “probably even worse than the uplands.” It was noted that Robert Sharp had also met with him. There was no objection to give further powers to SNH to act in particularly bad cases, with a proposed ‘surgical’ rather than ‘blunt’ instrument. The Land Reform (Scotland) Bill was at Stage 2 and to meet the Parliament timetable it would need to be enacted by 23 March. There would still be the opportunity to submit amendments at Stage 3 through MSPs.</p> <p>2.4 RC said that the 2016 review of deer management was about to start. There were strong views in certain quarters that Government should not wait for its outcome but regulate now. There was also considerable focus on the uplands and the performance and transparency of DMGs is to be assessed again between April and June.</p> <p>2.5 A letter would be sent by SNH to all local authority (LA) chief executives – the absence of LA participation in most cases had been noted both by the RACCE Committee and the Minister.</p> <p>2.6 JH said that a slightly different approach was to be taken reminding LAs of their responsibilities under the Deer Code, and placing the onus on them to respond. Some were clearly doing well (such as Aberdeen City) but others had not woken up at all to their responsibilities.</p> <p>2.7 RC referred to the <u>Authorisations Review</u> (see 5.) and the Panel was now set up. He said he had every confidence that the Panel would give every consideration in assessing if the system was working effectively and whether too many night shooting and out of season authorisations were being issued.</p> <p>2.8 RS and AH said they thought the Panel was ‘top heavy’, and that no real lowland practitioners had been included on it. RC said that there was every opportunity for individuals and organisations to input information and evidence to the Panel for its consideration.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Financial update</p> <p>3.1 RC presented the financial report covering the period to 3 February 2016. The year end falls at 31 March 2016.</p> <p>3.2 Total income to date amounted to some £22,300 with expenditure of £25,600 showing an excess of expenditure over income of some £3,300. However, taking into account an opening bank balance of around £14,000, there was a positive account balance of c £10,600.</p> <p>3.3 RC commented that £1200 had already been paid towards the PACEC study and a further payment would need to be made in 2016.</p>

	<p>3.4 DFy said that LDNS could present a good case to the Land Use Strategy process as a public/private partnership also acting for communities and in the wider public interest.</p> <p>3.5 Also that there would be no harm in presenting a case direct to the Minister outside the Land Use Strategy consultation. The deer management review possibly presented the opportunity to do this.</p> <p>3.6 CE said that if a strong case was made then there might be opportunity for FCS to supplement its current contribution to LDNS. However, FCS funding for LDNS remained under close scrutiny.</p> <p>3.7 DP talked through the draft budget for 2016/17, showing income (including carry forward) of £33,380, a forecast expenditure of £34,480, and shortfall at year-end of £1060. It was noted that the second payment to PACEC would need to be included.</p> <p>Action: DP to redraft budget taking second PACEC payment into account.</p>
4.	<p>PACEC</p> <p>RC said that the latest PACEC survey had been designed to cover all deer management and not just stalking as in the 2006 report. There had been a good response from upland deer managers, although poor from the lowlands – around 20 total. The headlines for the report and comparisons with 2006 are still being assembled. The report is expected to be finalised mid February.</p>
5.	<p>Authorisations Review</p> <p>5.1 PS, who is on the Review Panel, advised that its first meeting would be in one week, and that he had been somewhat apprehensive when first approached. He had taken a lot of 'soundings' and advice from various contacts, and had others to call on if need be.</p> <p>5.2 RC said that anyone from the LDNS Committee should talk to PS so that he is fully briefed. He also reminded the meeting that SNH did not have to hold a review, and it was wrong to assume, as some had, that its outcome was a foregone conclusion.</p> <p>5.3 RSh said that he and others were not happy with the make-up of the Panel and that George Macdonald or David Quarrell should have been invited.</p> <p>5.4 RC said that those who had concerns about the make-up of the Panel should note that the evidence gathering process had started. The Panel would not be changed, and those who felt aggrieved should get on and submit their views to it.</p> <p>5.5 JB said that SNH had honoured the request to set up the Review. BDS would be engaging with the Panel to ensure that a proper account could be given in terms of deer welfare.</p>

	<p>5.6 PS said that the Panel is to meet four to five times, but that a three month timescale to report was probably unrealistic.</p> <p>5.7 RC asked whether outsiders might attend the Panel to which DF responded that only members of the Panel would attend meetings although minutes would be made available.</p> <p>5.8 PS said he suspected some discussions would not be reported. It was important for people to speak frankly and it might not be possible to place all information discussed in the public domain.</p> <p>5.9 DF said that issues in relation to the Panel's transparency would be discussed at its first meeting.</p> <p>Actions: (1) DP to circulate LDNS submission to Authorisations Review to the Committee. (2) RC to consider a separate submission to the Panel from LDNS.</p>
6.	<p>Wild deer research to support the delivery of sustainable deer management</p> <p>6.1 CE said that the Scottish Government had awarded a research project to review existing research on wild deer management, identify research gaps, gather stakeholder views and facilitate knowledge exchange, to deliver targeted, informed and sustainable deer management in Scotland. SRUC would be running a series of four stakeholder meetings – one in the lowlands, with three more in Perthshire, NE Scotland and NW Scotland to undertake this. Information would be circulated to the LDNS Committee for onward circulation to members.</p> <p>6.2 The project would also establish gaps in research and produce recommendations for future work.</p> <p>Action: DP to circulate details of project and dates of stakeholder meetings to LDNS Committee and LDNS database.</p>
7.	<p>SNH paper on priorities, roles and actions</p> <p>7.1 JH had circulated this paper in advance of the meeting reviewing where LDNS is, the role it is fulfilling, and how it could be more effective in delivery.</p> <p>7.2 The paper outlined a new way forward for LDNS with (a) the Agencies taking responsibility for sourcing and assembling better information and tackling LAs, and (b) LDNS more effectively delivering events and communications.</p> <p>7.3 DT said that LAs still remained one of the biggest challenges.</p> <p>7.4 Suggested that M8 corridor/CSGN area could form the basis of landscape scale demonstration project.</p> <p>7.5 A recommendation was made for an Events and Communications sub group to be set up comprising 2 x deer groups or stalkers, 2 x</p>

	<p>organisations, and 1 agency, chaired by ML to oversee delivery of local and LDNS headline events.</p> <p>Actions: (a) DFy said that he would take forward the Deer on your Doorstep (DOYD) project in Aberdeenshire and set up a number of opportunities to use it locally.</p> <p>(b) DT said that she could make use of DOYD materials for local community council meetings.</p> <p>(c) JB said that BDS was already running events where LDNS possibly could become involved.</p> <p>(d) There was support in the Fife area and, although an event was already happening with BDS, consideration could be given towards staging another with LDNS.</p> <p>(e) Doug McKenna was named as a possible link for activity in the Borders. Who to contact?</p> <p>(f) DFe said that NLDG was already staging a DSC 1 event, although possible that DOYD could also be given exposure.</p> <p>(g) PS said that I&DDMG remained small with only 9 members. However it does have first aid event happening soon that could be opened up to other Groups.</p> <p>(h) It was suggested that there was potential for the new Groups in SW Scotland to do something. Possibly encourage this once Events sub group is set up.</p> <p>(i) RC asked DB whether LDNS could link into any future forestry company training events. DB to investigate</p> <p>(j) DP to recirculate SNH paper.</p>
8.	<p>Planned events to date</p> <p>8.1 DP gave a run-down on events that had been advised to date, these being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLDG DSC 1 event • Lost Lamb Restaurant event (with Minister for Environment attending) • Banff and Buchan Scent Hounds event (2 days) <p>8.2 In addition there was discussion planned with Scottish Land and Estates for an event in central Scotland/Borders along the same lines as the previous Dalkeith Palace 'Walk and Talk' morning and open to all.</p>
9.	<p>AGM</p> <p>9.1 The 2016 AGM was discussed. This would be a shortened AGM to be held after the next LDNS Executive Committee meeting. Notice of elections for the AGM are as follows:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due for re-election for 2016/17/18: Alex Paul, Glen Heggs, Alex Hogg, Jim Govan, Rob Sharp • To be elected to Committee: Mark Lazzeri (Fife) • A new Vice Chair to be elected this year to replace Ron Smith for 2016/17/18
10.	<p>Any other business</p> <p><u>10.1 BDS 10 year deer presence survey</u> JB advised that BDS was undertaking its 5 year UK Deer Presence Survey again and the LDNS network would be used to help communicate this.</p> <p><u>10.2 E Coli O157</u> DP advised of steps that were being taken following the venison E Coli O157 incident in October last year, and that Food Standards Scotland was expecting the sector to improve its standards, practices and traceability.</p>
11.	<p>Date of next meeting Date of the next LDNS Committee (short): Wednesday 27 April, 10.00am</p> <p>Date of the LDNS AGM (short): Wednesday 27 April, 11.30am</p>