

## Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

**At:** The Hotel Colessio, Stirling  
**On:** Tuesday 29 November 2016

**Present:** Richard Cooke, Chairman  
Dick Playfair, Secretary  
Donald Fraser, SNH  
Jamie Hammond, SNH  
Colin Edwards, FCS  
Ian Fergusson, FES  
Angus Corby, Transport Scotland  
Colin Shedden, BASC  
Alex Hogg, SGA  
Alex Stoddart, SACS  
Iain Robertson, MOD  
Ian Talboys, City of Aberdeen  
David Quarrell, SLDG  
Mark Telfer, ELEDG  
Ron Smith, Fife  
Glen Heggs, SW Scotland DG  
Jimmy Simpson  
James Govan  
Robert Sharp  
David Bruce, UPM Tilhill

### Apologies or not present:

Alex Paul, WLDG  
Richard Knight, SLDG  
Ian Semple, IDDG  
David Ferguson, NLDG  
George Ritchie, BBDG  
Andrew Treadaway, SE Scotland DG/Barony College  
Maitland Rankin, S Scotland DG  
Daye Tucker, NFUS  
Lisa Roberts, NFUS  
David Fyffe, SL&E  
John Bruce, BDS  
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland  
Malcolm Muir, S Lanarkshire Council  
Mike Flynn, SSPCA  
Maggie Keegan, SWT

1.	<b>Previous minutes and matters arising</b> <u>1.1 Sporting rates</u> RC said that the forms were now going out from the Assessor, and that there were some 55,000 holdings to value. A lot may fall well below the small business exemption. There was a warning that where there were other commercial business then sporting in addition may take some over the limit for this. Culling for management and not sport should still be highlighted on the return, plus adding if in a QA scheme, active member of an LDG etc.
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	<p>RC said that suspension of shooting, or not renewing shooting tenant's leases would not protect against being rated.</p> <p><u>1.2 SNH letter to Local Authorities</u>  JH said that 14 responses had been received from 32 letters, with those relevant from the non-responders being followed up. There is to be a 'sharing best practice' event for LAs in April 2017.</p> <p><u>1.3 Firearms licensing</u>  CS said that the majority of medical practices were complying with Police requests re licensing. However, some were charging up to £200. The average is around £50.</p>
2.	<p><b>Chairman's Report</b></p> <p>2.1 RC said that the deer management review, currently in process, was important for all, and ADMG and LDNS would do what they could to correct any points that they felt were misplaced in the SNH report.</p> <p>2.2 Factual written evidence to the review on the basis of what LDNS is, what it does and what has been achieved to date would be submitted to the ECCLR Committee. The ADMG submission was far more complex following the assessment of Deer Management Groups. Both LDNS and ADMG would be giving verbal evidence to the ECCLR Committee. DP would be giving evidence for LDNS.</p> <p>2.3 RC had also had recent meetings with both rural Cabinet Secretaries.</p>
3.	<p><b>Financial Report</b></p> <p>3.1 RC presented the financial report to date (for part year ending 31 March 2017). This showed an increased contribution by the Agencies of £30,000, with membership income to date for the year totaling £386.82, and a total overall income including bank interest of £30,391. Expenditure stood at £16,189 to date and a balance at the bank of £21,368.</p> <p>3.2 RC reminded Committee members that if they wished they could reclaim mileage for meeting at a rate of 45p/mile.</p>
4.	<p><b>Review of Deer Management</b></p> <p>4.1 There was discussion about the current review. RC said that it was likely to be less critical of the low ground, although concerns were heard that the review should reinforce the call for more rigorous and applied deer management in lowland areas. Just because there was no LDG did not mean that there was no management being undertaken, and it was important that this was understood by the ECCLR Committee.</p> <p>4.2 RS was critical of the Agencies lack of action through the central belt. He felt that there was insufficient management on public ground at present, lamping was still an issue, and that a scientific review should be carried out regarding management of urban deer and use of lamps.</p> <p>4.3 He said that cull targets in certain areas were increasing year on</p>

year that clearly showed that issues and rising numbers were not being addressed.

4.4 DQ said that there was also little management next to roads or on nature reserves and that the LDNS funders were not working to the Deer Code. RC said that it had to be remembered that FE was foremost in the business of growing trees and its objectives were different from those with recreational interests.

4.5 RS asked how LAs were going to address sporting rates if they did not understand deer management anyway. RC said the question of rates would force LAs to focus on the issue, and that SNH could use its powers to force LAs to take action.

4.6 DF said that SNH favoured a co-operational approach rather than one of confrontation. He said that where LDGs were operating effectively then the Review should present little of concern, but where there was no Group or no action then a collaborative approach was required.

4.7 The point was made that DVCs presented a significant evidence base.

4.8 CE said that more could be done to align with the SRDP grant process, with more planning and setting cull targets particularly in relation to native woodland projects. Collaboration however was needed to address this on a landscape scale.

4.9 DQ said deer managers needed to know where these impacts on native woods were happening, that deer managers generally had little understanding of trees, and that damage could be caused by other species like rabbits. Also that it was not just about herbivores, but there were issues also with invasive and non-native tree and plant species.

4.10 RC said that some important gains had been made so far through the Review – that there was recognition for example that one-sized deer management does not fit all, and that the Review also acknowledges that considerable progress has been made even though saying it is not enough.

4.11 RS said that cull returns should be mandatory and submitted to SNH. An easy 'fix' would be for the Police, as a condition to giving a license, to require a cull return to be made. At least then there would be some indication about how many deer were being shot. RC said the link between licenses and cull returns was not ideal and that a box on the agri-return should be reinstated. The sporting rates database might also present an opportunity.

4.12 DF asked the Committee members to read the Review and to let him have feedback on it.



	<p><b>6.2 Meeting of Minds</b> RC asked DQ to reconsider taking on organising the Meeting of Minds event intended for March 2017, but that it was his decision on whether to run with it. DQ said that he would not take this on again given the amount of time involved (having organised the previous MOM event in his own time) and that the system for funding support had become over-bureaucratic.</p> <p><b>6.3 Urban Deer Management Training day</b> DQ said that AT was meeting with DMQ to discuss this. The suggestion now is that the course presented at the previous LDNS meeting should be run on a pilot basis and that it would not result in a qualification or require a written test but that a 'Certificate of Attendance' would be awarded.</p>
7.	<p><b>SVP Central Chill/Larder Project</b></p> <p>7.1 DP gave a short report. He said that an expanded report would be given to the SVP meeting on 22 February.</p> <p>7.2 Further to the general discussion/workshop held on 16 August there had been 10 responses to requests for information.</p> <p>7.3 However, unfortunately there was not yet enough detail/data to build a business case for a central deer larder/chill given the very limited information supplied and particularly what additional throughput might be achievable. Two possible commercial options were being explored although either of these would be bound to require additional, robust data to progress.</p> <p>7.4 DQ said that Business Gateway, following exploration of the concept in his area, would need funding for a feasibility study and business plan. SLDG was proposing a not-for-profit enterprise. RC said that LDNS was supportive of such local initiatives but was not in a position to provide capital funding for projects.</p> <p>7.5 AS said that the business angle should not be overlooked – the potential for employment, and the economic benefits of sustainable deer management.</p> <p>7.6 Crowdfunding was suggested as an option for raising finance for the SLDG project. The cost of a larder/chill was estimated to be in the region of £25,000.</p> <p>7.7 RS had suggested that the abolition of the Venison Dealers' License would enable all butchers to handle venison, would remove the need for a central facility and would significantly broaden availability.</p>
8.	<p><b>Authorisations Review</b></p> <p>8.1 14 recommendations had come from the Panel and these had been accepted by SNH. All detail would be available by end March 2017. Effectively the work of the Panel and the Review has now normalised the use of authorisations and night shooting, which is not to everyone's liking. Previously a last resort, now it had become normal practice.</p>

	<p>However there was still a process to go through and night shooting remained illegal without an authorisation.</p> <p>8.2 DF said that SNH was considering an event trialing night vision and thermal imaging equipment. BASC is organising events in Inverness, Dunkeld and Castle Douglas also.</p>
9.	<p><b>External briefing about LDNS</b></p> <p>DP explained his concern that there was negative opinion about LDNS being promoted on social media that had been drawn to his attention. He said that where individuals or LDGs were receiving funding from LDNS to support initiatives in their areas it was clearly disingenuous for them to put out negative messages.</p>
10.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>10. 1 DP said that a joint meeting was being planned for the three SW Scotland LDGs and that suggestions for a date early in 2017 were being circulated.</p> <p>10.2 DP said that Food Standards Scotland had now set up a Food Crime Hotline so that consumers and industry could report instances of food crime to the relevant authorities in confidence by calling 0800 028 7926.</p> <p>10.3 DP advised that two short films on gralloching and larder work were to be produced by SVP and SQWV, and that funding support for these would be sought from SNH and Food Standards Scotland.</p> <p>10.4 Ongoing concerns about CWD were noted, with further cases being discovered in Scandinavia, and the Norwegian cull being analysed. The reindeer herd killed by lightning had been analysed and found to be all clear from CWD.</p>
11.	<p><b>Future dates</b></p> <p>27 April 2017: Sharing Good Practice day (SNH)</p> <p>28 April 2017, 10.00 – 13.00hrs: LDNS AGM, Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth FK3 9BX.</p>