

LDNS Annual Review – 2016 / 2017



Richard Cooke, Chairman, LDNS

Everything seems to be about politics these days and deer management is no exception. We seem to have had more than our share over the last 12 months.

Here are a few highlights:

- > *The Land Reform (Scotland) Bill became an Act 12 months ago.*
- > *SNH has been granted more powers.*
- > *The penalty for non-compliance in relation to deer management was increased to £40,000.*
- > *All land holdings are being assessed for business (sporting) rates.*
- > *All upland DMGs were assessed on progress since 2013 by SNH.*
- > *SNH prepared a Report for Scottish Ministers on the deer sector.*
- > *The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee of the Scottish Parliament carried out a review of deer management and has recently reported with recommendations to Government.*
- > *The prospect of Brexit and any consequences from the recent UK General Election. "Uncertainty" is the word used frequently in both contexts - and that probably applies as much to deer management as to anything else. I have no crystal ball.*

At time of writing the Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham has yet to make known any conclusions or decisions arising from the Review.

The lowland situation came in for criticism during the ECCLR Committee's review process, being referred to as possibly in a worse state than the uplands.

LDNS gave evidence to the Committee but, whilst Committee members grasped that a 'one size fits all' approach was not a realistic expectation, it was apparent that they still saw the upland DMG structure as one that could translate to the lowlands as one of their criticisms was the lack of widespread coverage of the lowlands by deer groups.

LDNS and others have repeatedly pointed out that the lack of deer management groups does not mean that there is no deer management going on. There are an estimated 6000 stalkers with DSC1 in Scotland and the majority of these are active in the lowlands, and their efforts, with many operating outside any Group structure, make a significant contribution to the national cull.

Recognising the wide variety of very different circumstances across Scotland's lowland and urban areas, it is likely that a range of collaborative deer management models will be appropriate and in some circumstances where existing management has been sufficient to prevent damage to environmental or economic interests, change may indeed not be necessary at all. In any event, consideration of appropriate deer management approaches for the lowlands is likely to be an area of particular attention for SNH and stakeholders following the Review. LDNS, representing as it does a very broad range of deer management interests, will without doubt be closely involved in this debate.

LDNS has a day job to do as well. In particular we have an events programme some of which is public facing, and some covering training and education. That is part of our core work, it will continue to develop, and will be one of the main areas of activity in which we are engaged. A clear objective is to expand our membership and broaden our reach.



Photo: Speakers at the Where the buck stops event in Gullane, East Lothian, left to right, Nick Morrall, EELDG; Jamie Hammond, SNH; Angus Corby, Transport Scotland; Prof Jochen Langbein; John Bruce, BDS and Chair for the session; Tracy Smith, Arney

In this issue:

Page 2 & 3: Annual Accounts

Page 4: Chairman's Report – continued

Page 5: Scottish Venison Report

Page 6 & 7: Events Round-up

Page 8: The Lead vs Non Lead Bullets Debate

Includes Annual Report and Accounts 2016/17

Lowland Deer Network Scotland: Income & Expenditure account for the year to 31 March 2017

Income	2017 (£)	2016 (£)
Membership	£515.20	£335.14
SNH Grant Funding	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Transport Scotland Grant	£10,000.00	£7,000.00
Forestry Commission Scotland Funding	£15,000.00	£10,000.00
Bank Interest	£5.28	£4.18
Urban Deer Awareness Event	£10.00	-
	£35,530.48	£27,339.32

Expenditure	2017 (£)	2016 (£)
<i>Administration:</i>		
Chairman's Expenses	£554.74	£1,128.40
Secretarial and Administration Expenses	£2,400.00	£2,400.00
	£2,954.74	£3,528.40
PR Consultant's Fees and Expenses	£14,400.00	£14,400.00
Game Fairs	£912.00	£1,029.15
Newsletter Costs	£1,359.60	£3,007.20
Meeting Room Expenses	£753.35	£512.80
AGM Expenses	£184.80	£386.42
Miscellaneous	£1,306.80	£1,058.00
Website Costs	£190.80	£499.20
Travel Expenses	£374.48	£341.60
Accounts	£300.00	£300.00
Training Costs	£710.00	-
PACEC Report 1/3 Share	£1,200.00	£1,200.00
Events	£1,274.20	£2,096.40
SLDMG Events	£950.00	£650.00
	£26,870.77	£29,009.17
Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year	£8,659.71	(£1,669.85)

Lowland Deer Network Scotland: Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2017

Current Assets	2017 (£)	2016 (£)
Cash at Bank	£15,827.02	£7,167.31
	£15,827.02	£7,167.31

Current Liabilities	2017 (£)	2016 (£)
Accruals	£300.00	£300.00
	£300.00	£300.00
Net Assets	£15,527.02	£6,867.31
Net Surplus (Deficit) b/fwd	£6,867.31	£8,537.16
Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year	£8,659.71	(£1,669.85)
	£15,527.02	£6,867.31

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 2017 from the books and information supplied.

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

28 April 2017

We approve the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2017 and confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Richard Cooke
Chairman, Lowland Deer Network Scotland

28 April 2017

Chairman's Report - continued



Richard Cooke, Chairman, LDNS

At this time of rapid and significant change it is perhaps appropriate to restate what LDNS is and is not; and what it can do and what it cannot:

So, what is the Lowland Deer Network Scotland?

- > LDNS is a network to bring together all individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in deer management in the lowlands of Scotland. We have had some success so far but there is still a major gap with, for example, local authority engagement. A well-attended recent SNH Sharing Good Practice event should help with that. We have also been short on farming representation but that has now been resolved.
- > LDNS is a voluntary membership organisation. We may receive most of our funding from the public bodies but we do still receive membership subscriptions and are independent of the public sector.
- > LDNS supports the lowland deer groups. It encourages development and training and can provide funding assistance for training events.
- > LDNS is public facing too. We engage with the public through, for example, our Deer on Your Doorstep campaign and material, and we also contributed to the excellent Meeting of Minds lunch in 2015.
- > LDNS engages with the Scottish Government and its agencies to ensure that they are informed about lowland deer management.

What LDNS is not:

- > LDNS is not a Government body and makes its decisions based on consensus among its committee and members at its AGM. Although it is funded largely by the public bodies it is not under their control.
- > LDNS is not a political or lobbying organisation. LDNS provides information to Government but it is for individuals and organisations to make any political points. For example the evidence provided to the ECCLR Committee was presented as a Briefing Note about LDNS; it was factual with much of its content drawn from the LDNS Constitution.
- > LDNS does not provide access to land or stalking. However, many members support the concept of more use being made of local deer managers to manage deer on public land.

What more can LDNS do in future?

- > The recent Parliamentary Review has been critical of some aspects of lowland deer management. In many respects, its conclusions do not reflect reality but clearly there will be more attention to the lowlands in future and the Committee sees LDNS as part of the way forward.
- > SNH will be required by Government to try new approaches to lowland deer management and LDNS will be involved in this and can ensure that it takes proper regard of the interests of the deer managers on the ground.

- > LDNS needs to get closer to the Local Authorities and is working with SNH to do this.
- > LDNS needs to be open to more deer managers, not just those working in deer groups. Individual stalkers also need to feel that LDNS can offer something for them.
- > Best Practice is due to be revived and LDNS will be involved in this.
- > There is an ongoing need for public education and LDNS has much more to do in this area.
- > Local initiatives have been more effective in some areas than others and LDNS must provide support to expand training and events across all the lowland areas.
- > LDNS will continue to support and promote high standards.



Photo: Laurie Campbell

Scottish Venison Partnership Update



Dick Playfair

Whilst LDNS is not a partner of SVP or puts any funding into it per se it does have a presence through a number of the members that make up the Scottish Venison Partnership. SVP activity should therefore be of interest and relevance to low ground stalkers and deer managers. The following is extracted from the SVP annual report 2016/17.

SVP continues to be the go-to source of information about the Scottish venison sector, and part of the drive around Scottish Venison Day last year was to generate more media exposure. This was achieved with the venison story being extensively told across a range of media outlets: Scottish media, BBC TV (nationally), BBC Radio 4 (nationally), Times, Daily Telegraph, and a number of other specialist food, sporting and meat sector publications and online. SVP is hoping to repeat that same level of interest this year.

There has been considerable time spent on the ongoing post-*E Coli O157* incident measures that were discussed by the sector with Food Standards Scotland. SVP has been closely engaged with Scottish Quality Wild Venison in its changes to producer and processor standards to tighten procedures for getting carcasses from the hill or the woods into the food chain, and to minimise the risk of contamination. The revised SQWV standards are now published, and SVP will be producing, with co-funding from SQWV and Scottish Natural Heritage, three short films to be made widely available on YouTube. These will incorporate the changes to the standards and cover the topics of field dressing a roe deer, the gralloch on the hill, and basic larder work, all reinforcing the Best Practice approach. Production is planned for early July.

SVP has also been involved in trying to find solutions for supply chain issues particularly in low ground areas to enable more venison from roe deer to find routes to market. One area flagged up has been the lack of available larder/chill facilities across Scotland's central belt and, on the premise that having better available - albeit shared - facilities might encourage a higher cull, a project was undertaken last year to try and understand what uplift in numbers might be achieved and whether a commercial case exists for support for developing such a larder/chill network. SVP worked with SAC and SAOS in setting up this project. All the lowland deer groups and a number of individual

stalkers were approached for information, most of whom chose not to make numbers available. There are however a couple of areas where such a proposal might be legitimately supported if there was a strong business case. In all likelihood however there should be a range of options that allow either contracts with game dealers to be set up with bulk collections of carcasses at one end of the spectrum to the ability to service the requirement of the local butcher at the other, provided that all legal and license requirements are met. This work is ongoing.

SVP has also been involved in bringing forward a contract for a research study into establishing the prevalence of *E Coli O157* in wild deer. The bid process for this work has now commenced although it is not known at this time where the contract for the work will be awarded.

A further bid for funding has also just been made by the Moredun Research Institute in conjunction with SVP to Interface for a project to develop TB testing in farmed deer.

For some time SVP has been pursuing the PGI status (Protected geographical Indicator) application for Scottish Wild Venison. This covers both upland and lowland situations and all species, and has now been substantially revised from the original draft and re-presented with a view to the final text for the application going forward this year. Despite Brexit, SVP is advised that PGI will still have relevance and SVP has been working for some time on a designation for 'Scottish Wild' to make the distinction between that and farmed venison, or venison from other sources.

On the deer farming front, interest in setting up new deer farms continues at a slow but steady pace, and a further bid for a one year or two year demonstration project will be submitted to the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund for support. This would also incorporate an element to enhance current collection of, or access to, market data. SVP recognises the paucity of the market information on venison that is available, gleaning information where it can from other sources to build a picture of what is happening and how the market is moving. It would be good if SVP had better access to such information or resources that enabled easier compilation and analysis of market information.

Finally, Scottish Venison Day falls on Monday 4 September. Roe venison is expected to feature strongly this year. For more information keep an eye on the website www.scottish-venison.info



Photo: Group of three roe deer on banking immediately adjoining Edinburgh City Bypass

LDNS review of activity and events 2016 – 2017



Dick Playfair

LDNS has been engaged in a wide range of events through the previous 12 months. The table below lists the majority of them and a number are reviewed in more detail below.

Date	Event	Area
30.04 – 02.05.16	Bennachie Centre, Aberdeen (Deer on your Doorstep display)	NE Scotland
June 2016	Walk and Talk event, Caddonfoot (with Scottish Land & Estates)	Borders
June 2016	RSPB Bird Fair, Musselburgh (Deer on your Doorstep display)	East Lothian
01.07 – 03.07.16	Scottish Game Fair (Deer on your Doorstep display)	Perthshire
31.07 – 01.08.16	Turriff Show (Deer on your Doorstep display)	NE Scotland
09.08 -10.08.16	Wild about A'den (Deer on your Doorstep display)	NE Scotland
30.09.16	Scent hounds event - Dalkeith	Midlothian
02.10.16	Shot site and scent hounds event, Strathdon	NE Scotland
21.10 – 30.10.16	Tweed Valley Forest Festival (Deer on your Doorstep display)	Borders
05.11.16	First aid course, Straiton, Ayrshire	SW Scotland

Date	Planned Activity	Area
22.04.17	An introduction to peri-urban deer management	East Kilbride
April 2017	DVC body shop survey	East Lothian, Midlothian
19.05.17	Deer management, traffic and RTA event (with Scottish Land & Estates)	Gullane, East Lothian
15.06.17	Central Scotland Green Network Forum	Edinburgh
15.06.17	Ballistics and non-lead ammunition evening meeting	Airth, Falkirk
30.06 – 02.07.17	GWCT Scottish Game Fair	Scone Palace, Perthshire



Photo: A good audience for the May 2017 DVC event at Gullane



Photo: The LDNS stand at the CSGN Forum 2017

Public Bodies and Lowland Deer Management – Battleby, 27 April 2017

The Deer Review highlighted the importance of different approaches required for the management of lowland deer. This event, which was aimed at Local Authorities and other public bodies who own or manage land where deer are present, enabled discussion of management approaches and provided a range of information in relation to lowland deer and their management, compliance with the Deer Code, development and adoption of Best Practice, practical delivery, and delivery of public interests. There were a series of morning presentations, among them excellent and informative talks from Ian Talboys, Aberdeen City Council; Malcolm Muir, South Lanarkshire Council; and Angus Corby, Transport Scotland and afternoon workshop sessions covering the themes (1) how will you deal with the public and undertake risk management, (2) management planning – why is this important and where do you start, and (3) what are the practical management options.

All the papers from the event are available on the SNH website here: www.snh.gov.uk/policy-and-guidance/sharing-good-practice

LDNS training day – an introduction to peri-urban deer management

This one day event was held at the Ally McCoist Centre, East Kilbride on Saturday 22 April and was designed to explore the specialist approach required for deer management on the urban fringe. Building on the considerable work done by David Quarrell for his 2012 publication *Controlling Urban Deer*, Andrew Treadaway, LDNS Committee member and Barony College lecturer, talked through the nuanced approach to peri-urban deer management. Much of the information is about common sense, assessing the risks, how to interact with the public, and being prepared for all eventualities that can occur when controlling deer in and around towns. This was a pilot course with a view to developing the course material further before staging it a second time.

Where the buck stops – deer management on and next to lowland roads

This morning event run in conjunction with Scottish Land & Estates and the newly-formed Edinburgh and East Lothian Deer Group was held in the village hall, Gullane, East Lothian on Friday 19 May. Ably chaired by John Bruce, Scottish Chair, the British Deer Society, the series of talks included Jamie Hammond, SNH on the Deer Code and who has responsibility; Nick Morrall of EELDG on the work of the local deer group and the local perspective; Angus Corby, Transport Scotland, and Tracy Smith of operating company Amey on their work to mitigate against deer vehicle collisions, and Prof Jochen Langbein on the national picture, regional hotspots, monitoring trends and considerations for the future. The event was well attended by local farmers and landowners, police, local authority, golf course management and others with an interest in the sector including Road Safety Scotland.

Central Scotland Green Network Forum 2017

LDNS had a stand for the Central Scotland Green Network Forum 2017 conference that took place at the John McIntyre Conference Centre, Edinburgh on 15 June. The stand was manned throughout the day by LDNS Secretary Dick Playfair and LDNS Committee Member Jim Govan. With the conference theme of *How green infrastructure is transforming the way we live* it was an interesting and relevant platform for deer management considerations to be visible. Dick Playfair said: "This event was all about creating green space, making use of derelict land, and bringing more green space into urban areas and communities – in effect creating more habitat for deer. It was good to be there, and an ideal opportunity to put the low ground deer management message across."

Non lead, lead and ballistics

LDNS held an evening meeting at the Airth Welfare Hall, Airth on 15 June on the topic of ammunition, the arguments for and against lead, and the interwoven topic of ballistics. There were three excellent speakers: Dr Colin Shedden, Director BASC Scotland, spoke of the legislation and the European and global context of moves towards non-lead; Professor James Simpson, University of Edinburgh, gave a fascinating talk on what happens when a bullet enters a deer, and the consequences of being off target; Willie Lamont, Forestry Commission Scotland, spoke about the FCS experience of trialing and switching to non-lead bullets. The presentations were followed by an engaging Q & A session ranging from the risks of lead and non lead, experiences of both types of bullets from those stalkers present at the meeting, and implications for the food chain. The presentations will be available on the LDNS website.



Photo: Panel of experts at the LDNS Airth meeting on bullets and ballistics, left to right, Willie Lamont, FCS; Prof James Simpson, University of Edinburgh; Dr Colin Shedden, BASC Scotland; and Richard Cooke, LDNS Chairman



Photo: Attendance at the peri-urban deer management day at East Kilbride in April

Non-lead bullets – what's the point?



Edward Bewsher

The non-lead vs lead ammunition debate continues across all deer management and sporting disciplines around the world and, wherever you look, there are divided opinions. I attended the event on lead/non-lead at Airth on 15 June. Here are my thoughts on the issue.

There are many pressure points to move stalkers away from lead bullets - working or stalking on the National Forest Estate being just one of them. However, from a UK stalking point of view there is one overriding benefit in using a non-lead monolithic (solid, single component) bullet - weight retention

Traditional lead, cup and core bullets will shed as much as 70 per cent of their original weight as they pass through the carcass. Much of this weight is shed as minute particles that are easily ingested, difficult to remove and, from a biological standpoint, persistent. Lead could build up to toxic levels in the bodies of animals or humans ingesting it; however, whether it poses a significant enough risk to human or environmental health is a different question. It also can result in meat waste at a processing level. That waste can't even be used in pet food.



Photo: Laurie Campbell

Most non-lead monolithics are designed to expand to 1.5 to 2x their calibre diameter without loss of material. Being constructed from a harder material than lead, either solid copper or a similar alloy to a traditional bullet jacket means that the bullet design has to incorporate features to aid expansion but stay together. Single mass bullet material is less readily absorbed, ingested or broken down into toxic compounds.

With a vast proportion of deer shot entering the food chain, and a large volume of gralloch consumed by wildlife it may seem a small issue by volume or weight of lead left on the hill. But if using non-lead bullets solves even one small instance of one of those issues, why not use them?

The reverse of the argument is that several negative aspects have come to light over the years as non-lead monolithics have evolved.

- > **Barrel fouling:** *solid copper is relatively soft compared to bullet jacket material. Many shooters in evidence have noticed severe copper barrel fouling that ultimately effects accuracy and makes cleaning very difficult. Use of copper/zinc alloys that are already used in bullet jackets have however overcome this.*
- > **Pressure signs:** *solid bullets don't compress into the bore of the rifle as easily as lead jacketed ones. Some original designs tried to solve this with solid lubricant coatings. Now the industry produces monolithic bullets with a banded shank to reduce pressure signs.*
- > **Terminal performance:** *nothing upsets the stalker more than a wounded deer running strong to the skyline or into the trees. Some monolithics have a reputation for this - it happens with lead bullets too but we rarely question lead bullet performance. Calibre and bullet choice, terminal velocity, target species, and above all shot placement all impact on the terminal effect, although dropping down a bullet weight to maintain impact velocity is one solution.*
- > **Cost:** *non-lead is almost double the equivalent price for lead, and we are also seeing increased factory ammunition prices. Some of this is due to the comparatively low volumes used so far, and also supply shortages driving up prices. However, this will change dramatically as a wider branded product offering from Europe rather than US enters the UK market. However, as a function of the overall cost of deer management the uplift in price for non-lead is still minimal.*
- > **Supply:** *it is frustrating to find ammunition that your rifle likes and works well with and not to be able to buy it consistently – however this will become less of an issue as, as stated above, more EU products arrive in the UK.*

Increasingly the reasons against using non-lead are diminishing and, as they do so, then the arguments to move to non-lead become ever stronger - so why not make the switch?

Edward Bewsher
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