

**Minutes of the 6th Annual General Meeting
of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland**

Held at: The Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth
On: Wednesday 28 April 2017

Present: Richard Cooke (RC), Chairman
Ron Smith (RS),
Dick Playfair (DP), Secretary
Jamie Hammond (JH), SNH
Donald Fraser (DF), SNH
Alastair MacGugan (AM), SNH
Colin Edwards (CE), FCS
Ian Fergusson (IF), FES
Angus Corby (AC), Transport Scotland
Dr Colin Shedden (CS)
Glen Heggs (GH)
Ian Talboys (IT)
David Bruce (DB)
Jim Govan (JG)
David Ferguson (DF), NLDMG
Peter Semple (PS), IDDMG
Maitland Rankin (MR), SSDG
Hugh O'Neill (HON), IDDMG
Jamie Farquhar (JF), CONfor
Lisa Roberts (LR), NFUS
Andrew Mavin (AM), Police Scotland
Robert Smith
Dr Alasdair Young

Apologies: John Bruce, BDS
Alex Hogg, SGA
David Fyffe, SL&E
Alex Stoddart, SACS
Mike Flynn, SSPCA
Malcolm Muir, S Lanarkshire Council
Daye Tucker
Alex Paul, WLDG
Andrew Treadaway, Barony College
George Ritchie, BBDG
Richard Knight, SLDG
Robert Tennant, SLDG
David Quarrell, SLDG
Peter Baxter, BDG
Mark Telfer, EELDG
Robert Sharp
Peter Keyser

1.	<p>Previous minutes of AGM on 27 April 2016 and matters arising</p> <p>1.1 The minutes of the AGM held on 27 April 2016 were approved, proposed by CS, and seconded by RS.</p> <p>1.2 RC advised that Mark Lazzeri had been appointed as Vice Chair at the 2016 AGM but he had moved from Falkland Estate to Islay and so had had to resign soon afterwards. There had consequently been no Vice Chair through the year.</p> <p>1.3 RC welcomed Hugh O'Neill (IDDMG) and Lisa Roberts (NFUS) to the meeting.</p>
2.	<p>Chairman's report</p> <p>2.1 RC gave his Chairman's report for the year. This has now been published in the Summer newsletter which also serves as the annual report, here http://www.ldns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/11724-LDNS-Newsletter-A4-8pp-2017-130617_SINGLEPAGES_LOWRES.pdf</p> <p>2.2 RC thanked those who had taken time to attend the AGM, and the public agencies for their continued funding support, and their level of involvement and commitment.</p> <p>2.3 In subsequent discussion, the ECCLR Committee's report was referred to and its proposal for a short term working group, and concern that this could in turn lead to recommendation for a far more regulated system.</p> <p>2.4 RC said that there was a risk of polarised argument continuing (too many deer vs too few) and it was important that if this recommendation was adopted then it needed to be a 'development group' that looked forward.</p> <p>2.5 It was noted that there were two LDGs in SW Scotland with core landowner membership, whereas some of the other lowland groups do not have this. DF said that SNH was conscious of different types of approach within a lowland context, and whilst the upland/lowland difference had been accepted, the nuances of different approaches to lowland management perhaps were not recognised in the Parliament yet.</p> <p>2.6 JF suggested that more of the big forestry management companies needed to be brought into the discussion, that they need to be conscious of the requirement to work with their neighbours, and that a list of LDGs would be helpful to him in promoting this.</p> <p>2.7 The 'sharing good practice' event for local authorities at Battleby the previous day was referred to. It was attended by 11 out of 32 Scottish local authorities, and described as 'excellent.' RC said he hoped this marked a breakthrough in local authority interest, and that he continued to press for them to link up with the existing broad network of locally-based vocational stalkers.</p>

	<p>2.8 DP gave a separate review of events, and those planned for the immediate future which is also available in the Newsletter at link above.</p>
3.	<p>Election of Chairman There being no other nominees, Richard Cooke was re-elected as Chairman for a further term, proposed by RS, seconded by JG.</p>
4.	<p>Regional elections</p> <p>4.1 There being no other nominations the following were re-elected en bloc to represent their respective areas: George Ritchie, NE Scotland; David Ferguson, central; Andrew Treadaway, SW Scotland.</p> <p>4.2 Hugh O'Neill was also elected to the Committee as successor to Peter Semple, IDDMG.</p> <p>4.3 These elections were proposed by JG, seconded by PS.</p> <p>4.4 RC thanked Peter Semple for the time he had given to the Committee and to representing LDNS and lowland deer interests over the previous three years.</p>
5.	<p>Approval of Accounts and Budget 2017/18</p> <p>5.1 The accounts for the financial year to 31 March 2017 were tabled. RC talked through these and invited any questions. These are also available in the Summer 2017 newsletter (see link above).</p> <p>5.2 He said that funding to LDGs, as most would be aware, was now made available through a standardised application process, and that in future annual accounts, all events and training would be accumulated together with supporting notes as necessary. Also that it was good for the accounts to show a surplus of some £8600 but that those funds were available for LDGs to use and that more applications for local initiatives were needed.</p> <p>5.3 Approval of accounts was proposed by DF, seconded by CS. The Chairman duly signed the accounts.</p> <p>5.4 Discussion followed concerning level of membership and how this could be increased. RC said that the LDG system allowed members of subscribing Groups to also be members of LDNS so membership was greater than shown.</p> <p>5.5 The question of irrecoverable VAT was raised and how this might be addressed.</p> <p>5.6 DP raised his concern about that amount of his time that was now taken up with LDNS work and a particularly busy work programme imminent including organisation of five events and a newsletter in two months, requiring well in excess of the current 1.6 days of time per month currently allocated. RC said that a separate discussion would take place regarding covering additional time.</p>

	<p><u>5.7 Budget for 2017/18</u> This was tabled and showed a projected income (plus funds brought forward from 2016/17) of £51,000, with forecast expenditure of £36.084, showing a surplus at year-end of just under £15,000.</p>
6.	<p>Proposal for review of LDNS structure</p> <p>6.1 RC said that the proposal had generated a considerable amount of correspondence and comment, some heated.</p> <p>6.2 He said that LDNS had been running for 6 years, and the Committee now extended to some 30 people. The intention was to make LDNS more accessible to more people by holding two public meeting plus an AGM each year instead of Committee meetings and making these for information and interest rather than business orientated. The business/funding elements would be coordinated by a separate committee with events, communications and training also all being dealt with by separate committees. However, the intention was to make the main meetings more inclusive (ie open to everyone) and more interesting.</p> <p>6.3 Views had been expressed that this proposal was undemocratic, and a body of objection had built up.</p> <p>6.4 RC said that in the face of this opposition the proposal had been withdrawn. Subject to the outcome of the ECCLR Committee report and the proposals of the Cabinet Secretary, these should give more direction as to how LDNS should move forward.</p> <p>6.5 RC said that there would be further discussion at an evening meeting in June for those who had been unable to attend the AGM.</p> <p>6.6 The view was expressed that the proposal should not have been withdrawn and that discussion should have taken place and a decision made at the AGM regardless. RC acknowledged this but said that he felt there was still an opportunity to find a way forward acceptable to everyone; however for now the current system would remain.</p> <p>6.7 There was comment that the objectives of different deer groups will vary, but that they do not represent everyone and there is a considerable body of lone deer managers who may be left out.</p> <p>6.8 Caution was urged over how different 'collectives' of deer managers were named and that the Group approach, which a lot of MSPs had seemed to grasp as a solution, was not the only way. The way forward should engage with syndicates, forums, and individuals as well as LDGs as there were different solutions for different situations.</p> <p>6.9 RC said that the sporting rates process potentially had the capacity to deliver a lot of valuable information if this could be accessed – a good handle on annual culls, a database of landholdings where deer management was taking place, and possibly a move towards mandatory tagging.</p>

7.	<p>SNH Report</p> <p>7.1 DF gave a short report for SNH, mentioning the Sharing Good Practice events, the coming debate on deer management in the Scottish Parliament, and the Cabinet Secretary's response to the ECCLR Committee report, and that these will give a good 'steer' as to what needs to happen next.</p> <p>7.2 He said that SNH needed to be accountable for how it spent its funds; however its role in bringing all parties together, and capacity to communicate would be more difficult without LDNS.</p> <p>7.3 JH referred to the pilot project where SNH was looking at how a Highland approach might translate to a lowland context. Given the ECCLR Review the plan was to develop a slightly larger project to the North side of Glasgow looking at evidence-based deer management and involving a substantial piece of work over the coming two years. The project would be of material interest to a lot of people, and embrace local information gathering. There was a mix of urban, rural, farmland, forestry and other interests.</p>
8.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>8.1 JF offered LDNS the opportunity of an article in Confor magazine.</p> <p>8.2 Lisa Roberts and David Ferguson volunteered to be involved with a communications sub-group.</p> <p>8.3 CE said that more should be made by LDNS about selling what it does and promoting a better understanding of deer management in a low ground context.</p> <p>8.4 LDNS needs to get closer to LINK, and the good progress made with local authorities through the Sharing Good Practice event should be followed up, plus more opportunities sought to engage at other levels.</p> <p>8.5 JH said that the Scottish Partnership against Rural Crime was another such group where LDNS should engage.</p>
9.	<p>Next event</p> <p>RC said that details about the future event, scheduled for 15 June, to cover discussion about LDNS structure as well as presentations on ballistics and non-lead ammunition, would be circulated in the near future.</p>