

Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

At: The Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth
On: Friday 26 October 2018

Present: Colin Shedden, Vice Chairman, BASC (CS)
Dick Playfair, Secretary (DP)
Alastair MacGugan, SNH (AMacG)
Colin Edwards, FCS (CE)
Angus Corby, Transport Scotland (AC)
John Bruce, BDS (JB)
David Bruce, UPM Tilhill (DB)
Ian Talboys, City of Aberdeen (IT)
John Campbell-Smith, Borders DG (JCS)
John Walker, WLDG (JW)
Jim Forrest, WLDG (JF)
Maitland Rankin, GDDG (MR)
Robert Sharp (RS)
Ron Smith (RSm)
Peter Semple (PS)
Glen Heggs, SADG (GH)
William Brooks, NLDG (WB)

Apologies or not present:

Richard Cooke, Chairman
Jamie Hammond, SNH
Donald Fraser, SNH
Kevin McCulloch, SNH
Ian Fergusson, FES
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland
Charlie Everitt, Police Scotland
Jamie Farquhar, Confor
Alex Hogg, SGA
Alex Stoddart, SACS
Lisa Roberts, NFUS
Iain Robertson, MOD
Mike Flynn, SSPCA
David Fyffe, SL&E
Jamie Stewart, SCA (JS)
Andrew Treadaway, Barony College
George Ritchie, BBDG
Mark Telfer, EELDG
James Simpson
Jim Govan
David Quarrell

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| 1. | Apologies, previous minutes and matters arising
1.1 Colin Shedden, vice chairman, chaired the meeting as RC was unable to attend. Apologies were noted as above. |
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	<p>The minutes of the meeting on 23 August were approved.</p> <p><u>1.2 Matters arising</u></p> <p>1.2.1 Previous minute, ref 1.2: DP advised that the Procurement Scotland details had been circulated.</p> <p>1.2.2 CE advised that the 10 previous Forest Districts would be redrawn to become 5 regions and would result in some staff changes.</p> <p>1.2.3 Previous minute, ref 5: There was discussion about ongoing engagement of FSS with the venison sector. JB said that he had supplied a lot of material to FSS (training manual, Best Practice, DSC 2 course work etc) and reported that FSS were impressed with thoroughness of deer management/meat hygiene training.</p> <p>1.2.4 RS said that he had had discussion with his local authority, as was PS who had set up his own larder and was supplying venison to trade, and JCS who had applied for a VDL. RS said that paperwork and record keeping was hugely important in satisfying EHO enquiries.</p> <p>1.2.5 JB said that a step-by-step guide would be helpful for anyone taking this route to becoming a venison dealer/food business. AM said that Best Practice covers much of this but it would be helpful to have some basic guidance from those with experience and to which EHOs could refer. It was suggested that the LDNS venison sub- group could take this forward. JCS said that he would forward his correspondence for information.</p> <p><u>1.3 Facebook</u></p> <p>The issue of whether to have an LDNS Facebook presence or not remains unresolved.</p>
2.	<p>Financial report</p> <p>2.1 Income received to date totaled £20,443 with an account balance as at 12 October 2018 of £27,086.</p> <p>2.2 CE advised that FCS would be able to grant £5,000 towards LDNS for events in 2018/19.</p> <p>2.3 DP said that the budget for the year had been reworked and was appended to the 23 August meeting minutes.</p> <p>2.4 JW asked if contact details for Andrew Treadaway and James Scott could be forwarded to WLDG so that they might look towards organising future training.</p>
3.	<p>LDNS Review</p> <p>3.1 CS spoke briefly to the internal review that he had undertaken and which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. He had approached 18 for their opinions and had received 10 responses. The main conclusion was that LDNS was performing reasonably well, although possibly more as a <i>Forum</i></p>

than a *Network*. It was felt there were areas where it had low penetration and could be improved – namely farming/landowning and local authorities.

3.2 A wide range of opinion had been expressed in the responses, both supportive and critical, but most questions had scored above the 50 per cent mark.

3.3 CS then asked where people thought LDNS should be going as there was value in looking ahead. GH said that he felt the point should be made that LDNS achievements had been largely undertaken by volunteers with their time and effort at no cost, and that this was not recognised in certain circles. The situation and expectation remained very different from the Upland deer range.

3.4 It was agreed that LDNS should continue to focus on working as a network to disseminate information, skills, training and knowledge, and not just a platform for discussion and airing of views.

3.5 AMacG said that the Lowland Deer Panel was due to report before Christmas and LDNS should consider how it would act to meet the conclusions of the Panel, and low ground deer management more generally. He said it would be helpful for LDNS to consider the questions that the Panel had been asked to consider and draft its own responses.

3.6 He said that it was easier for politicians to understand upland deer management groups but they had difficulty grasping the concept of the need for an effective 'network' of deer managers in the lowlands.

3.7 LDNS members also should start thinking about how they can collaborate more, whether on meeting cull targets, or Scottish biodiversity targets for example.

3.8 It was agreed that LDNS had the capability and the reach to lead once the Panel conclusions were known.

3.9 RS said that he doubted the local authorities would be proactive. However, WB said that some local authorities were starting to recognise the sensitivities surrounding deer management and that local deer management plans were an obvious route to address these.

3.10 AMacG said that local authorities were one small part of the whole and stressed that LDNS should consider drawing up an *Inventory* of what it could offer and its capability – access to Groups, syndicates, individuals, local networks etc.

3.11 CS said that data remained the main missing element and that there was still no real indication of the size of the problem or the challenge. RS said that everyone with a rifle with a calibre for culling roe deer should have to submit a return so that numbers being culled could be estimated.

	<p>3.12 WB said that people were cautious about declaring how many deer they shoot.</p> <p>3.13 The discussion concluded that it would be beneficial to have a clearer idea of low ground deer numbers, cull figures, and the size of the management resource.</p> <p>3.14 MR said that compulsory carcass tagging could also provide a useful insight.</p>
4.	<p>Deer Working Group and Lowland Deer Panel</p> <p>4.1 There was little to report from the working group. Andrew Barbour had taken over as chair and there was no intention to replace Simon Pepper who had died unexpectedly.</p> <p>4.2 The Lowland Panel had been due to report in the second week in November but suspected that it would need a slight extension to agree its final report. It was hoped that the report would be delivered and that SNH would respond before Christmas.</p> <p>4.3 RS said he thought that more dialogue with stalkers on the ground would have been helpful in the Panel's evidence gathering. There had already been discussion of the Panel's work under item 3. above.</p>
5.	<p>Venison strategy</p> <p>5.1 DP gave a short update on the new venison strategy highlighting its main points. The document is available online here.</p> <p>5.2 JB said removal of the venison dealer license would be one way to open up the sector and ease supply to local butchers. However, there were issues with butchers buying carcasses in skin. RS said that he skinned his carcasses before presentation to his butcher.</p> <p>5.3 A MacG said that carcasses could be skinned and cut into primals by the stalker, but at some point in the chain the carcass had to pass through a licensed venison dealer. There remained some confusion between the requirement for a venison dealer license and meat hygiene regulations.</p> <p>5.4 It was suggested that a short laminated flow chart would be helpful for the small producer to understand the correct/legal process and that this should be taken forward by the venison sub-group.</p> <p>5.5 GH said that his understanding was if you were registered as a food business then there was no need for a VDL. It was also noted that the cost of license varied by local authority.</p> <p>5.6 JCS said that in his experience record keeping was vitally important</p>

6.	<p>Events and activity</p> <p><u>6.1 Meat hygiene refresher</u> Timing to be discussed with JS regarding a running pilot meat hygiene event. It is understanding that the course material is now complete and the plan is to deliver this first to the LDNS Venison Group for initial comment and feedback before rolling out further. It could be adapted for upland situations also. The 6 October event planned for East Kilbride had been postponed.</p> <p><u>6.2 Woodland habitat impact assessment awareness events</u> 6.2.1 The additional funds from FCS would be used to stage a series of these in different regions for LDGs and deer managers from spring 2019. DP to ask Broomhills Ecology for a quote to do this similar to the Flanders Moss day. 6.2.2 JB said that BDS was planning similar events but with a biannual visit so that the bushy growth before winter grazing would be evident.</p> <p><u>6.3 Training</u> DP advised that a further DSC 1 course was being run at Harburn on 17/18 November supported by LDNS. Funding was available to other groups wishing to run similar training (note that costs of registration and certificates cannot be supported by LDNS).</p>
7.	<p>Low ground pilot project</p> <p>7.1 AMcG reported that stage 1 had been completed. This centred on defining the public interest, delivery of WDNA, how deer management is being delivered and by whom, defining a route map and SNH engagement.</p> <p>7.2 Stage 2 would look in more detail at who was undertaking the cull on the pilot area, how those from outside the pilot area might be engaged, what different models were delivering different elements of public interest etc.</p>
8.	<p>Deer health survey</p> <p>DP advised that the Deer health survey was due to report shortly on part 1 of the project (prevalence of E. Coli O157 in wild deer – all species) and that letters would be going out to all who had submitted samples before Christmas. A leaflet and press release were also to be produced.</p>
9.	<p>Reports from attending stalkers, LDGs and organisations</p> <p><u>9.1 North Ayrshire and Inverclyde</u> PS said that the Inverclyde Group had ultimately not been sustainable; however a North Ayrshire syndicate had emerged that was working well over some 12,000 acres with access to two venison dealers.</p> <p><u>9.2 Borders</u> JCS said the group was considering a spring venison event linking local suppliers with local consumers and that a ‘celebrity’ chef might be engaged for it. DP said that this should be raised with Scotland’s Natural Larder for potential support.</p>

9.3 WLDG

The group has a new Chairman and fresh impetus and is keen to continue to raise standards among its membership. DP said that he would ensure that the new group had every opportunity to host planned events and advise of other opportunities.

9.4 BDS

JB said that the unpredictable weather had brought some welfare issues, that the red deer rut was late and abnormal, hinds were not in good condition and that there had been very high spring mortality in some areas.

9.5 SNH

9.5.1 AMacG said that there had been some progress with Local Authorities, that a number were developing deer management plans and others were drafting deer statements.

9.5.2 Activity was imminent on Flanders Moss and that a collaborative, coordinated approach would be taken. It was a good news story with the use of regulatory powers helping deer managers to deal with a local issue.

9.6 FCS

CE advised that the Forestry Strategy consultation was open until 29 November. There was to be a new Forestry Act from April 2019 and deer management was recognised in the consultation several places. The link to the strategy is available [here](#).

9.7 DMQ accredited witnesses (AWs) and charging for registration

9.7.1 RS raised the proposal by DMQ for AWs to be charged a fee for registration. Agreed that the LDNS Chair should write to DMQ saying that LDNS had discussed the proposal to charge for AW registration, but the conclusion was that this was not a positive development and should be reconsidered.

9.7.2 CS said that he thought that the system was working well but that there was the potential to break it although the consultation on recent changes had had a poor response.

Date of next meeting

Friday 18 January 2019 at the Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth.

Action Points

- 1.25 Step-by-step guide for small processors to be discussed by LDNS venison sub-group.
- 2.4 DP to forward Andrew Treadaway and James Scott details to WLDG.
- 3.5 To consider Lowland Deer Panel questions and draft responses.
- 3.10 To consider drafting an 'inventory' of what LDNS can offer and its capability.
- 5.4 Production of flow-chart for small processors (see 1.25 above).
- 6.1 DP to liaise with JS re running meat hygiene refresher pilot and roll-out.

	<p>6.2 DP to ask Broomhill Ecology for quote for series of Habitat Impact Assessment Awareness Days around regions.</p> <p>9.2 DP to flag up Borders venison event to Pete Moore, Scotland's Natural Larder.</p> <p>9.7 LDNS Chair to write to DMQ re proposal for charging Accredited Witnesses a registration fee.</p>
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