

## Meeting of Lowland Deer Network Scotland Executive Committee

**At:** The Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth  
**On:** Wednesday 21 March 2018

**Present:** Richard Cooke, Chairman (RC)  
Dick Playfair, Secretary (DP)  
Jamie Hammond, SNH (JH)  
Paul Roberts, SNH (PR)  
Colin Edwards, FCS (CE)  
Angus Corby, Transport Scotland (AC)  
Ian Fergusson, FCS (IF)  
Colin Shedden, BASC (CS)  
Jamie Farquhar, Confor (JF)  
John Bruce, BDS (JB)  
Alex Stoddart, SACS (AS)  
Iain Robertson, MOD (IR)  
David Bruce, UPM Tilhill (DB)  
Ian Talboys, City of Aberdeen (IT)  
Jim Govan (JG)  
Hugh O'Neill (HON)  
Ron Smith (RS)  
Maitland Rankin, GDDG (MR)  
Jim Paxton, WLDG (JP)  
David Ferguson, NLDG (DF)  
Matthew Gregg, NLDG (MG)

### Apologies or not present:

Donald Fraser, SNH  
Andy Mavin, Police Scotland  
Alex Hogg, SGA  
Mike Flynn, SSPCA  
David Fyffe, SL&E  
Lisa Roberts, NFUS  
Rob Sharp  
James Simpson  
George Ritchie, BBDG  
Glen Heggs, SWSDG  
Mark Telfer, EELD  
David Quarrell, SLDG  
John Campbell-Smith, BDG  
Andrew Treadaway, Barony College

1.	<b>Minutes of previous meetings and matters arising</b> <u>1.1 Minutes of 31 August 2017</u> 1.1.1 DP reported that whilst names had come forward for the Comms Group it had yet to be formalised and to meet. JP volunteered to join this Group.
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	<p>1.1.2 A Training Group had yet to be set up although a meeting had taken place (with BASC and BDS) in order to develop how LDNS supports training activity going forward.</p> <p>1.1.3 CS said that he had discussed with DMQ whether a list of those with a deer management qualification might be made available. He had received a positive answer although any information would be restricted to Post Codes rather than names and addresses.</p> <p>1.1.4 DP said that a policy was being developed so that LDNS would be GDPR compliant. As a not-for-profit organisation LDNS would not have to register but would still have to have data protection policies in place and abide by the guidelines.</p>
2.	<p><b>Financial report</b></p> <p>2.1 The Chairman circulated the financial report to 28.02.18. This showed that LDNS had received income of £35,900 and incurred expenditure of £30,315 during the financial year to date. The account balance showed £21,408.</p>
3.	<p><b>Chairman's report</b></p> <p><u>3.1 Deer Working Group and Lowland Deer Panel</u></p> <p>3.1.1 RC said that the Deer Working Group was to propose improvements for the whole of Scotland and would report in Spring 2019. It was set up last Autumn and is independent. RC is an external adviser although was unsure about progress made to date. Its recommendations will coincide with the 2019 review of the Deer Code.</p> <p>3.1.2 JH reported on the Lowland Deer Panel which had been set up by SNH with the approval of the Cabinet Secretary. It was due to report in September this year and was to meet six times. A questionnaire drawn up by the panel was being circulated, and the views of a broad range of people were being sought. Peter Watson would hopefully speak more about the Panel at the next DMRT. More about the Panel at the link here <a href="https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/managing-wildlife/managing-deer/lowland-deer-panel">https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/managing-wildlife/managing-deer/lowland-deer-panel</a>.</p> <p>3.1.3 It was felt that forestry interests were not well represented generally on the Panel. Karen Ramoo of SL&amp;E had been briefed.</p> <p>3.1.4 RC said that Linda Fabiani MSP has become the 'honest broker' for LDGs and had worked hard to ensure practitioner representation on the Panel.</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Non-domestic rates</b></p> <p>4.1 RC said that the re-introduction of shooting rates was happening in three phases with phase one undertaken so far, with valuation bands being drawn up and applied across all of Scotland.</p> <p>4.2 The assessors were undertaking a complex job in a short time frame, and it was undoubtedly a fairer approach than that previously although appearing somewhat muddled. The Small Business Bonus Scheme applied up to £15,000 for 100% relief, or £18,000 for 25% relief, with the majority of landholdings it was thought eligible for relief. To date there was no distinction drawn or dispensation introduced for deer 'control'.</p> <p>RC said that those receiving assessments should appeal, even if benefitting from the SBBS, unless they consider their assessment fair. Appeals are likely to take some years. In the meantime rates are payable on the original assessments. If appeals are successful partial refunds would be payable</p> <p>4.3 AS said that there would be a large number affected by the aggregation of business interests and this was evident from SACS membership.</p> <p>4.4 JB warned that small business relief was not automatic but had to be claimed, and that appeals and exemption were different with appeals being made to the assessors but exemptions under the SBBS to the rating authority.</p> <p>4.5 RC said that so far only 10,700 properties had been assessed out of a possible 55,000 and more assessments would be issued from 1 April. For shooting tenants they should find out whether the landowner had received an assessment and whether it had been appealed. There were six months from the date of notice of the assessment for an appeal to be made.</p> <p>4.6 There was concern that some landowners had not appealed assessments and would simply pass on the bill to the land manager; also that such a policy would act as a disincentive to deer management on a lot of ground.</p> <p>4.7 RC said that complaints or comments could be made through a number of different channels: a complaint to your MSP (even though politicians are saying they are committed to the policy); complaint or appeal to the assessor; complaint to the Lowland Deer Panel.</p> <p>4.8 DB said that there would be a lot of fine-tuning required for farmland and forestry, and that it could potentially double the amount of a lease. The rates applied to forestry are the highest of all land types.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Events, activities and meetings</b></p> <p>5.1 DP gave a recap of events and meetings that had taken place since the Committee last met.</p>

- 21.11.17 Event at East Kilbride with Scott Country International
- 29.11.17 Evening event at Scottish Parliament with SNH
- 03.12.17 Deer Dog Day, SW Scotland. JG reported that this was “absolutely first class”.
- 12.12.17 DP met with Charlie Everitt of National Wildlife Crime Unit
- 20.12.17 Training meeting at Trochry: RC, DP, CS and JB
- 31.01.18 RC and DP met new CEO of SNH, Francesca Osowska
- 22.02.18 DP attended food crime meeting at Battleby with SNH and Police Scotland
- 26.02.18 DP and RC attended Food Standards Scotland meeting at Battleby
- 05.03.18 DP attended meeting of GDDG, Gatehouse of Fleet
- 13.03.18 DP gave talk to BDS NE England meeting, Newcastle

5.2 Future events:

- 02.05.18 HIA training day, Flanders Moss, notification to be issued.
- 12.06.18 Deer and Traffic event, Raehills
- Seven Lochs Project event/visit
- Follow-up of Sharing Good Practice event with LAs at some point.

5.3 DP also suggested an event or training day on Humane Dispatch at the Roadside once protocol on this had all been agreed. DP has received a Police Guideline from Andy Mavin, to be circulated to Committee subject to his approval (see item 6 below).

5.4 JP advised WLDG was looking to run a number of training courses potentially covering: Range safety; Roadside dispatch; First aid; Quad bike training; DSC 1.

6.

**Humane Animal Dispatch (HAD) insurance**

6.1 There was discussion in relation to HAD and insurance with differing views presented. For the purpose of clarity JB has asked for the following to be included in the minute of the meeting:

*6.2 When this topic was discussed recently at the LDNS meeting there was disagreement as to the necessity for personal third party insurance. Following further research, I can now confirm that in almost all cases any HAD operative must have in place his/ her own appropriate third party liability insurance cover. The rare exception might be a police-led initiative such as the formal Hampshire/Thames Valley Constabulary HAD Scheme.*

*6.3 It is therefore almost essential, and definitely recommended. Individual policies may vary and so an operator must check carefully the terms and conditions and take advice if any aspects of cover are unclear. I apologise for any confusion which may have arisen at the meeting.*

7.	<p><b>LDNS support for training events</b></p> <p>DP explained that after a lengthy process it had been decided that LDNS could continue to support training events with funds used coming from SNH contributions, but that they could not be used to support elements of either registration or certification. Also, that the application process had been strengthened, but was now equitable and open to all LDNS members (Groups, organisations, individuals) who wished to run training events. The new application form for support for training events can be requested from the Secretary.</p>
8.	<p><b>Food safety</b></p> <p>8.1 There was a general discussion about food safety in the venison supply chain and what could be done to improve it.</p> <p>8.2 DP advised that the three films made by the Scottish Venison Partnership, SQWV and SNH could now be viewed at:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVZqTCDy62jfse5Prk18Lzg?view_as=subscriber">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVZqTCDy62jfse5Prk18Lzg?view_as=subscriber</a></p> <p>8.3 Mandatory tagging and cull returns were suggested as ways forward, but the opposite view was also expressed and that mandatory tagging would be a “devastating blow for the deer sector.”</p> <p>8.4 There was comment that there was insufficient meat hygiene training in the DSC trained hunter qualifications, and that the practical side of meat hygiene training was really important. Some suggested that meat hygiene training could be improved, revisited and reviewed.</p> <p>8.5 There was concern about proposing that the sector could go too far too quickly in implementing changes when really this was unrealistic.</p> <p>8.6 It was suggested that an LDNS Food Group might be a useful addition to look at lowland venison and food safety matters.</p>
9.	<p><b>Lowland Deer Groups and other members – reports</b></p> <p><u>9.1 North Lanarkshire DG</u>  16 members currently and looking to increase numbers. 12 went through DSC 1 last year. Working with FCS on 7 Lochs Project.</p> <p><u>9.2 Fife</u>  Range days being made available to clubs and associations at a nominal charge. Details to go on LDNS website.</p> <p><u>9.3 City of Aberdeen</u>  Continuing with cull – now invited to do this so a complete change in perception has taken place. Identifying hotspots and responding appropriately.</p>

#### 9.4 WLDG

9.4.1 Rejuvenated Group now looking for new members and also ground for members to stalk. Considering running a number of courses (see 5 above) and setting up a stalking syndicate. Candidates are going through DSC1 successfully but do not have the opportunity to progress after that.

9.4.2 RC suggested that WLDG could form the basis of a feature in the summer Newsletter.

#### 9.5 EELDG

JH advised that the Group had been politically proactive following the Scottish Parliament event and had taken out Graeme Dey for a thermal imaging survey. RC suggested that more LDGs should consider doing similar with their MSPs.

#### 9.6 Forest Enterprise

IF asked for the Public Procurement Scotland link to be circulated ahead of further areas coming up for tender. He also said that there were no plans to reduce FES wildlife ranger staff and that further posts were being advertised.

#### 9.7 IDDG

HO'N said that the Group in its current form was not sustainable and that membership had dropped significantly. What remained for North Ayrshire/Inverclyde did not constitute a Group although there was still an element of coordination and collaboration in place.

#### 9.8 GDDG

MR advised that the SW area had now been redrawn into two Groups and that a positive meeting had taken place at Gatehouse of Fleet for the Galloway and Dumfriesshire DG Committee. The Group had 43 members, an active Committee, positive outlook and its next meeting in early June as well as the planned Raehills event in its area.

#### 9.9 FCS

CE drew attention to the Forestry and Land Management Bill, and the amendment from Claudia Beamish MSP that the new strategy must have due regard to the Code of Deer Management.

#### 9.10 Private Forestry Sector

9.10.1 DB reported on the rate of new forestry being planted, with a target of 10,000ha/annum, and implications from this for deer management.

9.10.2 JG added concern about Scottish Woodlands moving to limit the number of individuals to four on their leases.

	<p><u>9.11 BDS</u>  JB said that the BDS conference was being held w/e 18 May in Edinburgh with two days on deer health and welfare preceding the AGM. Details will be circulated via LDNS. Non-members welcome but there is a fee.</p> <p><u>9.12 SNH</u>  9.12.1 Lowland pilot project – information about engaging in this project which covers area from N Glasgow to Stirling had been circulated through LDNS and by Rob McMorrnan, SRUC. The project aimed to establish what was happening in the pilot area– counts and culls, RTAs, impacts etc, and so give a better understating of lowland deer management overall, what data was available, what is missing, and what can be learned. The project over an area of 150 km sq sets out to capture all deer related issues and challenges. SRUC is contracted to do the work. It is map-based. Phase 1 is due to conclude at end June with a report to be made in September to the Lowland Deer Panel. FCS and Loch Lomond &amp; Trossachs National Park are also involved.</p> <p>9.12.2 Possible LDNS meeting on site in early July?</p>
10.	<p><b>Deer Health Project</b>  10.1 DP reported that a project steering group meeting had recently taken place. Almost 1000 faecal samples have been submitted by deer managers, gamekeepers and the FCS from across the whole of Scotland covering different regions and deer species. More samples would be welcome.</p> <p>10.2 The project runs until June 2019, with the <i>E-Coli O157</i> prevalence part of the study due to finish in June 2018.</p> <p>10.3 Added value projects include analysis of faecal samples for two types of parasite: cryptosporidium and parasitic worms. Tissue is also being archived for potential retrospective detection of Chronic Wasting Disease.</p> <p>10.4 Cross-contamination studies focusing on up to four AGHEs are also currently underway.</p> <p>10.5 AS said that there could be an issue regarding whether a stalking tenant would require permission from the landowner to collect and submit samples and for the avoidance of doubt permission should always be sought for this type of activity.</p>
11.	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b>  11.1 The LDNS AGM will take place on Tuesday 17 April, 10.00am for 10.30 start, at the Leapark Hotel, Grangemouth.</p> <p>11.2 The next Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday 4 July at the Leapark Hotel.</p>

12.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p><u>12.1 Nominations to the Committee at the AGM</u></p> <p>12.1.1 There would be regional elections to the Committee at the AGM. Details of the changes would be circulated.</p> <p>12.1.2 RC advised that he intended to propose Colin Shedden as Vice Chairman subject to ratification at the AGM.</p> <p><u>12.2 MOD</u></p> <p>IR asked for membership details to be forwarded.</p>