

CAIRNGORMS DEER ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of meeting held at Knocktulcan House, Tulcan Estate, Grantown-on-Spey.

14 March 2014.

Attendees:

Michael Hone	CSDMG	Chairman
Mike Cottam	CNPA	Secretary
Dick Balharry	Access and Recreation	
Patrick Thompson	ELEDMG; MWDMG	
Ewan Cameron	Cairngorm Communities	
Jamie Williamson	MDMG	
Chris Donald	SNH	
Pete Mayhew	Deer LINK	
Colin Shedden	BASC	
Willie Lamont	FCS	
Will Boyd Wallis	CNPA	
Hamish Trench	CNPA	

1. Welcome and Apologies.

Apologies were received from: Justin Irvine, Simon Blackett, George MacDonald, John Bruce, Thomas MacDonell, Julian Clarke, Katrina Farquhar, Colin McClean.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that this would be his last meeting as Chairman. There was an urgent need to find and nominate a new Chairman.

Both Pete Mayhew and Thomas MacDonell had been considered but were not available. Nominations were sought from within CDAG.

An alternative was to ask a CNPA Board member. Gordon Riddler had been approached and indicated his willingness to stand.

It was agreed that CDAG Standing Members would be circulated regarding names for new Chairman, with a decision asked for within 2 weeks.

Action 1: CNPA to again seek volunteers/nominations for Chairman from within the group.

2. Minutes of Meeting of 13 March 2013.

The minutes were unanimously accepted as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising from minutes of 13 March 2013.

Item: 2.2. SNH would provide information on the condition status of Joint Working sites within the DMG areas on request.

Item: 4. Thomas MacDonell had been invited to attend CDAG meetings to represent CSDMG and had agreed, but had not been available for the current meeting.

4. Cairngorms Deer Framework.

A paper updating progress with the Deer Framework had been circulated prior to the meeting, further comment would be dealt with under item 5.

5. CDAG Future Direction.

A paper was presented proposing that CNPA allocate resources to support DMGs across the CNP in meeting the requirements set out by the Parliamentary RACCE Committee by end 2016.

There followed a lengthy discussion regarding whether DMGs would consider CDAG as contributing to progress and the role CDAG might play in deer management.

MDMG: A small number of members had delivered large reduction culls and other members had reduced their cull levels. Some 30% of members were considering moving away from deer management towards grouse production and renewables, since deer were becoming a liability due to too much bureaucracy and regulation. With only 20% of MDMG range within CNP, CDAG advice might be seen as irrelevant.

Should future funding for deer management be expected from land owners, they are likely to move away from deer as a natural asset. CDAG needs to consider a bigger picture on land use, beyond just deer.

ELEDMG and MWDMG: Both were well managed with effective officers and 10 year, second term, plans that were reviewed each 3-5 years. These 2 DMG's are fortunate to have a more united interest in good deer management than some which makes co-operation and planning unified and more relevant to members. However most of the group members are outside the CNP boundary and therefore do not feel involved in park activities geographically

CSDMG: Had achieved low deer densities due to members' focus on grouse production and habitat/tree regeneration. Planning was based on aspirational deer densities that reflected the land use policies of members. The process of planning was more important since it was the process that generated debate.

Capacity was becoming an issue where Government was expecting DMGs to deliver more from what is a voluntary activity.

CSDMG range was wholly within CNP. CNPA help might be required within next 2.5 years.

There was a risk of CDAG becoming a "talking shop".

If CDAG could become a facilitator for change for DMGs, that would be useful.

EGDMG were reviewing their planning in light of the RACCE Committee recommendations. There was a move to form two small sub-groups on the eastern periphery of CNP to address the increasing number of deer on the Buchan Plain, and likely hood of increased DVCs.

CDAG might consider moving towards a habitat brief, which would include wider land use topics, including deer.

Assistance that CNPA might provide to DMGs would depend on the issues relevant to each individual DMG. Government were expecting DMGs to become more effective by end 2016, but effectiveness would depend on local issues.

CDAG endorsed the spirit of the paper proposing that CNPA provide support to DMGs through 2016, but emphasised that DMGs needed to be asked what issues require addressing for them to become more effective.

Action 2: CNPA to follow up with DMGs

6. SNH Update.

SNH were working with ADMG to develop a way forward for all DMGs to become more effective and address the requirements of the RACCE Committee by end of 2016. CNPA was offering additional resource to assist DMGs within CNP. Nothing substantial had been forthcoming from SNH by the time of this meeting.

Action 3: SNH/CNPA to update on progress at the next meeting.

7. Woodland Expansion.

Woodland expansion is an important topic for CNPA and Scottish Government.

Maps identifying landscape scale proposals would be presented at the next meeting to support a debate for CDAG to provide feedback to CNPA.

Action 4: CNPA to facilitate a discussion at the next CDAG meeting on opportunities for woodland expansion.

8. Deer and A9 Dualling.

Alvie area would be the first for dualling. Alvie advised that deer fencing in their view is required on both sides of the road, with reduced green verges between the fence and road. Transport Scotland was advising only stock fencing.

CNPA position is for deer fencing on strategic sections of road, with deer/wildlife crossing points also to be strategically located.

CDAG advised CNPA to review proposals and encourage an improved communication between Transport Scotland, CNPA, SNH and landowners.

CNPA, SNH and Transport Scotland were meeting to discuss deer and the A9 dualling on 25 March.

Action 5: CNPA to raise concerns with transport Scotland on 25th March.

9. AOCB

The name of next CDAG Chairman should be determined and circulated by May 2014.

Action 6: CNPA to follow up on creating a new CDAG chair.

Thanks were expressed to Michael Hone for his dedication to CDAG. He has chaired CDAG since November 2009; this was his final meeting as Chairman.

10. Next Meeting

A Doodle Poll would be circulated for date after 20 October, with venue being Alvie.

Action 7: CNPA to publicise to the group the date and venue for next meeting.