

CAIRNGORMS DEER ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting held at 10:30am on 24th March 2009 The Garth Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey

Present

Dick	Balharry	Access and Recreation
Simon	Blackett	East Grampian Deer Management Group
Will	Boyd-Wallis	Cairngorms National Park Authority
John	Bruce	British Deer Society
Ewan	Cameron	Association of Cairngorms Community Councils
Alasdair	Colquhoun	Association of Cairngorms Community Councils
Richard	Cooke	Association of Deer Management Groups
Michael	Hone	Lynaberack Cottage
Iain	Hope	Deer Commission for Scotland
Willie	Lamont	Forestry Commission Scotland
Phil	Ratcliffe	Independent Chair
Patrick	Thompson	Midwest Association of Deer Management Group
Paul	Timms	Scottish Natural Heritage
Hamish	Trench	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Susan	Walker	CNPA DCS

Apologies

Bruce	Anderson	Scottish Environment LINK
George	MacDonald	Scottish Gamekeepers Association
Jamie	Williamson	Monadhliath Deer Management Group
Richard	Wallace	Forestry Commission Scotland

I. Welcome and apologies.

PR welcomed all to the meeting and welcomed newcomer Susan Walker and WBW in his new role with responsibility for overseeing the National Park Plan priority for supporting Sustainable deer management in the CNP.

WBW spoke of the need to take stock of where CDAG has got to so far and to ensure CDAG plays a lead role in supporting all aspects of sustainable deer management. He emphasised the uniqueness of CDAG and the need to meet local, national, public and private aspirations; CDAG plays a key role in developing open dialogue and breaking down unnecessary perceived barriers to communication between the many interests in deer and their habitat.

The excellent contribution of Colin McClean to CDAG and deer management across the CNP was gratefully acknowledged by all and it was agreed that the chairman send a letter of thanks to Colin.

Action 1: PR Write to Colin McClean

2. Action points and Matters arising from meeting of 25/11/08

25/11/08 Action 1: SNH/DCS merger

PR has written to Robert Balfour expressing willingness of CDAG to engage in the merger discussions but has received no response. JB gave an update on the Merger Stakeholder Reference Group involvement. The merger is expected around Sept 2010.

Action 2: PR Copy Robert Balfour letter to Richard Cooke and John Bruce

25/11/08 Action 2: DCS board minutes.

No longer an issue.

25/11/08 Action 3: National Park Plan Delivery Team

Papers have not been sent out.

Action 3: WBW Copy delivery team papers to CDAG

25/11/08 Action 4: Peat research

PR will write to SNH.

Action 4: PR Send copy of letter to SNH to CDAG

25/11/08 Action 5: CNPA Communications/interpretations specialists

Not yet progressed. There was some discussion on the merits of a "deer leaflet". It was agreed that the Loch Lomond and Trossachs NP (LLTNP) model is a good one and should be adapted for CNP. Other methods of interpreting deer in the CNP should be considered.

Action 5: WBW Review options for interpreting deer management, including adapting the LL&TNP leaflet, in the CNP with colleagues.

The developing "Heading for the Scottish Hills" web resource would be an asset in the CNP.

Action 6: WBW Contact Mark Wrightam and Caroline Fyfe re the Access Forum and supporting the website development.

Action 7: SW Raise with DCS the issue of "dormant" DMGs and deer forum in the LLTNP.

3. Joint Working update.

Iain Hope provided CDAG with a spreadsheet prior to the meeting summarising the latest information on Joint Working sites in the Cairngorms National Park.

There has been constructive engagement between agencies and land owners. Several baseline habitat surveys were conducted in 2008. The perceived complexity of the SRDP process is thought to have been a barrier to funding deer management through

SRDP. SNH have agreed an interim arrangement for funding the preparation of 'herbivore management plans'.

CDAG members noted and were particularly pleased with progress at Caenlochan and Glen Feshie Section 7 sites.

It was suggested that the National Park Plan annual progress review would be a good means of publicising the good progress being made, however some concerns were expressed about a possible negative reaction to this and more of a drip-drip approach to getting the positive publicity out was suggested. The need for openness and honesty rather than 'spin' was strongly endorsed.

Action 8: IH & WBW Liaise over raising public awareness of the successes of the JW process.

Joint Working is hosted on the DCS website, but it was reported that some were unable to access the map pages.

Action 9: WBW Send link to JW web-pages to CDAG members.

4. Update on proposed legislative change.

The advice prepared by DCS was sent to the previous Minister for Environment who met with DCS in January.

<http://www.dcs.gov.uk/downloads/DCS%20advice%20to%20Minister%20on%20review%20of%20legislation%20Jan%202009%20-%20final.pdf>

A steering group is currently being set up to advise the preparation of a consultation package to be made public this Spring.

5. Park Plan - Sustainable Deer Management progress

WBW reviewed the 'Sustainable Deer Management' desired outcomes for 2012 listed in the National Park Plan:

Overall the progress is very good. 'Inclusive deer management planning', involving a broad range of community, private and public perspectives is gaining momentum, assisted by the fact that CDAG itself is trying to be as inclusive as possible. Recent survey and monitoring results in designated sites demonstrate significant enhancement of previously heavily over-grazed habitats. CDAG is also contributing to improved communications, but it was agreed that a lot more could be done on this and particularly on the promotion of the socio-economic value of deer. There was some debate about 'perceived barriers' to deer stalking. Some argued that it is readily accessible, others that there is still, rightly or wrongly, a perception that this is not the case.

A number of actions emerged from the discussions:

Action 10: WBW Obtain copies of the DVD produced by the Venison Working Group and make available for distribution.

Action 11: WBW Engage with Cairngorms DMGs and encourage the NPP sustainable deer management actions to be on the agenda of future meetings if possible.

Action 12: WBW Draft a summary of current work contributing to the NPP sustainable deer management Outcomes and distribute for comment.

6. Deer Management Framework

There was an open discussion on the most practical and effective way of moving this forward. It was agreed that directing cull figures or setting specific densities of deer across the CNP is a role of the Deer Management Groups and *not* the role of the framework. It was agreed that the Deer framework provides a strategic approach linking “Scotland’s Wild Deer - A National Approach” and Deer Management Plans developed by DMGs. It was agreed that the framework should set out strategic principles for deer management across the CNP that DMGs could be encouraged to adopt. The direct involvement of deer managers and DMGs in developing the framework will be vital to its success. It was agreed that the Framework should address not just deer management, but all of the National Park Plan outcomes related to Deer.

Previous strategic deer plans developed by FCS and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority could serve as useful models.

Action 13: WL Send WBW FCS strategic deer plan

Action 14: PR Send WBW LLTNPA strategic deer plan

Action 15: WBW Work with WL and MH to consider the FCS and LL&TNP Strategic Plans and prepare an outline of the scope of the Deer Management Framework

Due to limited time, agenda items 7 & 8 were put off until the next meeting

- 7. Project update**
- 8. CDAG format/arrangements**

9. AOCB

Norway 2009 An exchange visit to Norway is to be repeated in May.

[Thomas MacDonnell and Colin Gibson joined the meeting]

Glen Feshie Congratulations were expressed to Thomas MacDonnell and Glen Feshie Estate staff for the “very impressive” woodland regeneration progress on the Estate. The CDAG field visit to Glen Feshie has been changed from 4th May to 12th May 2009.

Action 16: WBW Arrange Glen Feshie Visit with Thomas MacDonnell

10. Date of next meeting.

It was suggested that CDAG meet in the afternoon of **8th June 2009** in Deeside before hopefully joining up with the DCS board.

Action 17: SW Inquire with DCS the possibility of an informal CDAG/DCS meeting

Deer Population Assessment

After Lunch, **Douglas Campbell** of Strathcauldih Ltd will gave a presentation on the results of a deer population assessment carried out over much of the Cairngorms Speyside DMG area between 2001 and 2008. In addition to CDAG members, this was also attended by **Frank Law, Thomas MacDonnell** and **Colin Gibson**.

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Summary of Action Points

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Action 2:	PR	Copy Robert Balfour letter to John Milne and Roger Burton	
Action 3:	WBW	Copy delivery team papers to CDAG	
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Action 13:	WL	Send WBW FCS strategic deer plan	
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Action 15:	WBW	Work with WL and MH to develop the bones of a the Deer Management Framework	
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