

# Minute of Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group

**Date:** 25 April 2006

**Time:** 10.30am

**Venue:** The Inn at Loch Ericht, Dalwhinnie

## Present

Kate Adamson	ACCC
Dick Balharry	CLOAF
Simon Blackett	East Grampian DMG
John Bruce	British Deer Society
Alasdair Colquhoun	ACCC
Richard Cooke	ADMGs temporary chair
Michael Hone	Cairngorms Speyside DMG
George McDonald	SGA
Fiona Newcombe	CNPA
Duncan Orr-Ewing	Scottish Environment LINK, Chair Deer Task Force
Nick Reiter	DCS
John Thomson	SNH
Hamish Trench	CNPA
Richard Wallace	FCS

## Apologies

Calum Kippen	SGA
Drennan Watson	Scottish Environment LINK

## Welcome and introduction

Richard Cooke welcomed everybody to the first meeting of the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group. He was standing in for Phil Ratcliffe who was still unwell.

## Paper 1 Role and Remit of the CDAG

Fiona Newcombe introduced Paper 1 which describes the proposed role and remit of the CDAG. In discussion, the following points were made:

- The impetus for the group had come from the Cairngorms Joint Committee of Deer Management Groups
- The representation from Community Councils was very welcome
- The Group would exist under Chatham House Rules
- Care was needed to ensure overlap with the CNPA's Integrated land Management Advisory Forum, while avoiding duplication. The CDAG should be a standing item on the ILMAF agenda. It was recognised that there were difficulties in circulating the minutes from CDAG before they had been approved. It was agreed that a draft summary note would be prepared for ILMAF, in advance of the formal agreement of the minutes. This note would be circulated for comment to all members of CDAG.

- The CDAG was similar to the Deer Management Round Table, but working at a more localised level.
- There was much to be learned in running the CDAG from other Cairngorms Groups, such as housing
- Scottish Environment LINK was land owners as well as interest groups.
- It was important that the biodiversity impacts of deer were considered as part of the CDAG.
- There was a need to ensure that access interests were adequately represented on the CDAG
- The CDAG needed to be a pro-active as well as a re-active group
- The other Deer Management Groups should be encouraged to attend
- A code of conduct may be developed to ensure a shared understanding of representation and use of the CDAG by all.
- The CDAG's remit should include the impacts on water and forestry as well as agriculture.
- The map of DMGs in the CNPA would be circulated
- The maps could be placed on the CNPA website.

It was agreed that the role and remit of the group would be revised once the Group had met a few times.

#### **Mini presentation from all those present introducing key issues**

Each member of CDAG present gave a short presentation on the key issues for deer management in the CNPA. The following points were made:

- SNH are drafting a new deer policy paper
- There were opportunities to engage his group with the Priority sites policy and process
- The sustainable deer management project could have a pilot in the Cairngorms
- The DCS was revisiting its vision for deer management in Scotland
- There is a need to connect deer and people in the Park. The Land Reform Act confers responsibilities, and management is becoming more integrated than ever before.
- There is a need for more public involvement in the work of DMGs
- The Scottish Executive biodiversity and SSSI targets were particularly important
- Deer fencing was still an issue for black grouse and capercaillie
- Deer management plans are important
- The Water Framework Directive, river basin management planning and Natura 2000 will all have an impact on deer management.
- The use of helicopters is increasingly an issue
- Grouse shooting is increasingly having an impact on deer
- Venison marketing is a real opportunity for the CNP.
- The role of sheep to control tick is a real issue
- Deer interests in Donside should be encouraged to participate in CDAG
- Deer should not be regarded as vermin
- Deer should not be abused, but managed very carefully

- Access to deer is important to local people and to visitors. It helps to know when helicopter activity is happening. Transparency in deer management is important – being aware of what is happening and why it is happening.
- Deer is an emotive subject and there is often a split in views in communities.
- There is a need for public education about stalking and culling. Media interest should be avoided.
- Stalking is an important industry and needs to be better supported through venison marketing
- DMGs have an important role to play, especially to enable deer management between neighbours.
- Building relationships is an essential role of DMGs. Venison marketing provides opportunities. The co-operative marketing scheme in the Cairngorms has been successful, and could form the basis for a branding scheme in the Cairngorms. Field sports should be regarded as a tourism activity.
- There should be best practice and deer stalking certificate
- It is important that there is a fair deal for deer and all those involved in management

### **Deer and the Cairngorms National Park Plan**

Hamish Trench introduced Paper 2. It was agreed that more time would be spent considering the draft park plan at the next meeting of CDAG. Feedback from individual and groups on the Park Plan was encouraged. The following points were made:

- There is a need to be aware of the timescales that deer operate under. Nevertheless, it is sometimes necessary for there to be action.
- The Park Plan appeared to have a negative view of deer. Deer should be seen as both an opportunity and a threat in some areas.
- It is important to have continuation in deer management. The need for a change was questioned.
- It was important to avoid over consultation.
- The Plan needed to avoid being motherhood and apple pie, and needed to clearly relate to public policy objectives such as SSSI and GAEC.

### **Date of next meetings**

The following meeting dates were provisionally agreed:

- 8 June or 5 June in the Tomintoul area
- 5 September in the morning in Strathspey

### **Any Other Business**

It was agreed that contact details would be circulated.

### **Summary of Action Points**

- The role and remit would be revised after the first few meetings.
- A map of the DMGs in the CNP would be circulated
- The Draft Park Plan would be the main agenda item at the next meeting
- Contact details would be circulated
- The CDAG would become an item on the ILMAF agenda