

Minute of Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group Meeting

Date: 26 June 2007

Time: 2pm

Venue: CNPA office, Grantown-on-Spey

Present: Phil Ratcliffe (Chair), Michael Hone (CSDMG), Ewan Cameron (AofCCC), Richard Cooke (EGDMG, ADMG), Patrick Thompson (MWAHA, ELEDMG), Jamie Williamson (MDMG), John MacKenzie (SNH), Richard Wallace (FCS), Iain Hope (DCS), Bruce Anderson (SE LINK), Douglas Heighton- Jackson (BDS), Colin McClean (CNPA), Bob Grant (CNPA).

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Simon Blackett, John Bruce, Andrew Thin, Dick Balharry, David Greer, Andrew Gordon, Alasdair Colquhoun, David Bale, Will Boyd- Wallis.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the meeting on 20th February were approved.

3. Matters arising

Matters arising from the meeting on 20th February were dealt with in Paper CDAG 1 260607 which is Appendix 1 to these Minutes.

The following points were discussed.

- The need to identify the questions CDAG wished to answer before requesting data from land managers.
- It was **agreed** draft minutes would be sent to CDAG members and be deemed approved after all amendments had been made and a subsequent draft had not received comment for 2 weeks.
- Where CDAG wished to make specific recommendations to the CNP Board they would do so directly and not through the Minutes.
- CSDMG are still considering the benefits and risks of publicising their deer management plan. Some within the DMG wished to be cautious about publicity and did not want to be seen as preaching to other DMGs. However there was some support for communicating clear messages about the objectives of deer management and an inclusive approach to deer management planning.
- There was a need to progress the discussion between DMGs, SE LINK and community councils on information requirements for inclusive deer management plans.

Action 1: CDAG approved minutes to be sent directly to CNP Board members.

Action Colin McClean.

Action 2: Create a link from the “deer page” on the CNPA website to the new CSDMG website. **Action Colin McClean.**

4. Andrew Thin, Chairman SNH: Question and Answer session.

Andrew sent apologies as he had been called to a meeting with the Executive. He wished to attend a future CDAG meeting if possible.

Action 3: Extend invite to Andrew Thin to attend next meeting. **Action Colin McClean.**

5. Core path plans.

CJCDMG wished to inform CDAG of their response to the Core Path Plan consultation undertaken by CNPA. They were concerned about the lack of prior engagement with land managers, the lack of resources to maintain Core Paths and issues of public liability. CJCDMG supported managed access and accepted Core Paths would have little impact on hill stalking. Core paths might increase the difficulties of roe culling around settlements.

CNPA described the consultation process already gone through and the timetable for submitting plans for Ministerial approval (Feb 2008). The current lines on maps were not a *fait accompli*. Any unresolved objections associated with planned paths would trigger a public local enquiry and therefore every effort is being made to resolve objections. Further consultation with landowners and the Cairngorms LOAF will take place. CNPA understand the concerns over funding but recognise CNPA is better placed to fund access work than other local authorities. Targeting of Rural Development Contract maintenance funding may assist in this regard. Implementation of the current draft Core Path Plan would require little capital expenditure.

CNPA stated the Land Reform Act does not alter the duty of care that all landowners have in relation to the Owners' Liability Act 1960. SNH have produced good guidance on liability and existing case law is reassuring for landowners. Landowners are encouraged to adopt a risk management process.

6. Hillphones within the CNP.

Concern was expressed that the use of the Hillphones system was declining, possibly as a result of how people perceived new access legislation. Many people felt the Hillphones system needed to be improved through the use of new technology. The Hillphone User Group, organised by SNH, was currently investigating a web based system based on the written publication "Heading for the Scottish Hills". It was agreed that hillwalkers and deer managers should be encouraged to use the Hillphone system until a better system existed.

7. Joint Working update.

Recently appointed Ministers have asked countryside agencies to deliver a single rural and environmental service within a year. This is to be done by ever closer working relationships rather than through merging organisations. Agencies have been working closely together on grazing and trampling issues since 2004.

The DCS Priority Site system has now been absorbed into interagency Joint Working. Grazing and trampling impacts are assessed on all designated sites through Site

Condition Monitoring (SCM). Where SCM reveals features are in unfavourable condition and there is a suspicion deer are contributing to that unfavourable condition, detailed monitoring will be put in place to determine deer impacts. Incentives and/ or regulation can then be used to enhance the site or prevent deterioration. Actions on all sites currently in Joint Working within, or adjacent to, the CNP were then detailed.

Site	Action
Caenlochan	2006/ 07 DCS assisted reduction cull complete. Target population largely achieved. Habitat monitoring ongoing.
Upper Deeside	Pinewood baseline monitoring complete. Blaeberry baseline monitoring data collected. Analysis ongoing.
Drumochter Hills	Baseline survey completed in 2006. Agencies and owners are determining whether current deer management plans are likely to deliver favourable condition.
Kinveachy	Annual seedling survey suggests there has been a small overall average positive response in 2007.
Glenfeshie	Annual seedling survey suggests there has been a small overall average positive response in 2007.
Monadliaths SAC	Blanket bog monitoring ongoing.
Creag Meagaidh SAC	Baseline monitoring carried out. No further action required until next SCM.
Ben Alder SAC	Preliminary discussion with owners re SCM.

More detailed information is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/Rural/JointAction/Combinedlist

Action 4: CNPA to prepare standard update on Joint Working sites which will be circulated with meeting agenda. **Action Colin McClean.**

8. Increasing the value of the deer resource.

The CNP Plan has an objective to increase the value of the deer resource. Deer create economic activity through stalking, venison and eco-tourism. Currently, the eco-tourism potential of deer is under-exploited. CNPA, Lynaberack Estate and Highland Council ranger service jointly organised a public deer viewing event in June, based around the chance of seeing very young deer calves. The event demonstrated there was demand for public deer viewing and that people were prepared to pay for a well interpreted event. Feedback from participants was extremely positive.

Discussion followed on how the eco-tourism potential of deer could be further exploited. Points raised included:

- The need for a code of practice or accreditation scheme.
- The need to involve Wild Scotland.
- How deer managers could retain control of public deer viewing.
- Incorporating educational objectives.
- Partnership projects involving eg BDS.
- Exploring funding availability from SNH, LECs etc.

There was support for CNPA developing further pilot deer viewing events with other partners. There would be value in including deer managers within the public audience so they can assess public interest.

Action 5: Invite Caroline Wallburton, Wild Scotland, to CDAG meeting . **Action Colin McClean.**

Action 6: Develop further pilot deer viewing events in different habitats and a range of deer densities. **Action Colin McClean.**

CNPA are working on a partnership project with the Country Sports Tourism Group to encourage new entrants into stalking and to make stalking more available to tourists. The structure of an introductory deer stalking session is currently being discussed with a number of estates with a view to developing commercial products.

CNPA will organise a Tourism Conference in November which will bring together accommodation providers and retailers within the Park. CNPA wish to highlight the economic value of deer at this conference and will be approaching CDAG for ideas and contributions.

There was some interest in the idea of organising a deer industry seminar based on the theme of “Adding Value”. Such a seminar could be a useful way of disseminating advice about eco-tourism etc.

9. Results of A of CCC questionnaire surveying community attitudes to deer issues.

The Association of Cairngorm Community Councils had produced a questionnaire which surveyed attitudes to deer amongst residents and tourists. Kincaig, Glenmore and Rothiemurchus and Dulnain Bridge Community Councils had responded. Responses were generally critical of perceived agency attitudes to deer. The following points were discussed:

- Some members argued that these results were a sign of wider public unease with agency attitudes to deer. Agencies argued this survey was too limited to allow that conclusion to be reached.
- Agencies agreed that deer had iconic status and many agency policies reflect this iconic status eg. DCS Long Term Strategy for Deer, DCS Next Steps Project, CNP Plan objective for a patchwork of deer densities achieving different objectives in different parts of the Park.
- The link between these community council concerns and inclusive deer management planning.
- People are clearly in favour of deer being managed properly.
- The need for better communication between agencies and the wider public.

Action 7: CDAG to consider conducting a wider attitude survey. **Action All.**

Action 8: ACCC responses to be communicated to DMGs. **Action DMG representatives.**

Action 9: CDAG discussion to be communicated to Community Councils and CCs to be asked how they want their responses to be used. **Action Ewan Cameron.**

Action 10: ACCC to be offered a Joint Working presentation. **Action Iain Hope/Colin McClean.**

10. Proposed study on determining the socio-economic impacts of deer reductions within the CNP.

This item was not discussed at the meeting due to insufficient time. This minute updates members on progress to date.

Currently there are many deer reductions being carried out within the Cairngorms. Some are driven by private interest eg on grouse moors, while some are driven by public policy on designated sites. Deer reductions often cause conflict and generate anecdotal information on socio-economic impacts. Discussion on the scale of socio-economic impacts is handicapped by lack of objective information and complicated by differing levels of private wealth between estates. CDAG previously agreed there would be value in identifying the socio-economic impacts of a current Section 7 agreement within the Park. CNPA has a socio-economic remit and undertook to lead on this proposal.

There are 3 Section 7s within the CNP. These centre on Tulchan, Kinveachy and Glenfeshie. Deer have not been reduced to low densities on Caenlochan (Tulchan) so both Kinveachy and Glenfeshie were approached to test their interest in the project. Glenfeshie are willing to be involved in the proposal and are willing to supply data on the value of deer shot and associated accommodation before, during and after the deer reduction. Estates neighbouring Glenfeshie will also be invited to supply data. Initial data will be presented to CDAG for discussion at the next meeting.

11. AOB.

None.

12. Date of next meeting.

2pm 6th November CNPA Grantown.

Appendix 1: Matters Arising from CDAG meeting on 20th February 2007

The following action points were raised:

Action 1: Collate data from CJCDMG for 26th June 2007. **Michael Hone (helped by Colin McClean if required).**

Progress: CJCDMG has not met for sometime. No data has been collated.

Action 2: CNPA to draft possible wording of CDAG webpage for circulation and approval. **Action CMClean.**

Progress: Complete. CDAG agendas and approved minutes are now on the CNPA deer webpage.

Action 3: CNPA official written communications about deer to be sent first to CDAG for comment.. **Action C McClean/ CNPA.**

Progress: On going. No communications since last meeting.

Action 4: CDAG minutes should be made available to CNP Board. **Action C McClean.**

Progress: Approved minutes will be available.

Action 5: CSDMG to consider wider publicity of their deer management plan. **Action M Hone/ CSDMG.**

Progress: CSDMG considering options re publicity.

Action 6: Issues arising from roe deer management to be the subject of a paper to CDAG prepared by CNPA and FCS. **Action C McClean/ R Wallace.**

Progress: Currently scoping roe issue. Paper will be produced for next meeting.

Action 7: Andrew Thin to be invited to attend CDAG. **Action J MacKenzie**

Progress: Invite accepted.

Action 8: Suggestions on how to facilitate public deer viewing to be gathered from local communities. **Action E Cameron/ C McClean**
Action 9: Consider preparation of a leaflet about deer viewing opportunities for the public. **Action C McClean**

Progress: Letter looking for suggestions sent to all Speyside Community Councils through the Association of Cairngorm Community Councils. Also agenda item.

Action 10: CNPA to discuss with community interests and NGOs the level of information they require to be satisfied that deer management planning is inclusive. **Action C McClean.**

Progress: Discussion on going with SE LINK. Some discussion held with communities.

Action 11: CNPA to define an inclusive deer management planning approach and discuss this definition with DMGs. **Action C McClean.**

Progress: Dependent of completion of Action Point 10.

Action 12: Community responses to the A of CCC questionnaire on deer issues to be an agenda item at the next meeting. **Action C McClean.**

Progress: Agenda item.

Action 13: Members to comment on Paper no CDAG2 **Action all.**

Progress: Comments received. Agenda item.

Action 14: Based on Paper CDAG 3, CNPA to develop a full consultancy brief detailing costs, data requirements etc for the next CDAG meeting. **Action C McClean.**

Progress: Agenda item.