

Minute of Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group Meeting

Date: 20 February 2007

Time: 2pm

Venue: CNPA office, Grantown-on-Spey

Present: David Bale (CNPA) (Chair), Ronnie Hepburn (SGA), Michael Hone (CSDMG), Ewan Cameron (AofCCC), Richard Cooke (EGDMG, ADMG), Patrick Thompson (MWAHA, ELEDMG), Andrew Gordon (WGDMG), David Greer (WGDMG), Jamie Williamson (MDMG), John MacKenzie (SNH), Richard Wallace (FCS), Iain Hope (DCS), Bruce Anderson (SE LINK), John Bruce (BDS), Will Boyd Wallis (CNPA), Colin McClean (CNPA)

1. Apologies

Received from Phil Ratcliffe, Simon Blackett, George Macdonald, Dick Balharry and Alasdair Colquhoun

2. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the meeting on 5 September 2006 were approved.

3. Matters arising

a) Deer data. CJCDMG data had not yet been collated.

Action 1: Collate data from CJCDMG for 26 June 2007. Michael Hone (helped by Colin McClean if required).
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- b) Training. A number of initiatives with a deer management training element are ongoing in and around the Cairngorms National Park. These include a DCS organised Best Practice Demonstration Event, widespread availability of DSC Level 2 through the Land Based Business Training project and the CNPA organised Nature Exchange with Norway. A BDS organised course, specifically tailored for the CNP area, had not yet been developed but may be offered in the future.
- c) Training data. Training data had been sent to CDAG members as requested.
- d) An update on Joint Working was included on the agenda.
- e) A map of Natura designated sites within the CNP was available.
- f) Copies of the Speyside DMG deer management plan had been circulated.
- g) Contact details for CDAG members had been updated.
- h) Draft minutes were circulated.
- i) A "deer section" had been included on the CNPA website.
- j) As Phil Ratcliffe was unable to attend the meeting this action point was deferred.
- k) CDAG members received a link to the Joint Working website.
- l) This item was to be discussed under item 4 on the agenda.

4. CDAG members' response to questions re website and publication of Minutes.

It was agreed that approved CDAG minutes would be published on a CDAG webpage linked to the deer section of the CNPA website. Future meeting agendas would also be published. The CDAG webpage would explain that CDAG was independent of CNPA and its role was to advise CNPA on deer matters while providing a forum for communication between different deer interests.

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

5. Deputy chair.

All agreed that Richard Cooke should become Deputy Chair of CDAG and should chair meetings if Phil Ratcliffe is unable to attend.

6. Paper from Michael Hone.

The recent article in the CNPA newsletter Parklife stimulated this paper as it was perceived to be negative about deer. Discussion centred on communicating more positive messages about deer and the work of land managers in general. There was then wide ranging discussion about public deer viewing opportunities, deer as an eco-tourism resource, implications of Natura legislation, inclusive deer management planning, whether CNPA should have any role in considering proposals to reduce deer, the use of deer fencing and roe deer. It was agreed that all the interests represented on CDAG accepted deer had an important ecological and economic role to play in the Park. CNPA argued that many disputes about deer could be resolved through an inclusive deer management planning process. Such a process could also enable local communities to identify opportunities to exploit deer. It was agreed a hierarchy of plans currently existed. The Park Plan establishes a framework within which deer management should take place. CDAG provides advice to help establish that framework. DMG plans outline detailed management. An existing gap is a process which links neighbouring DMG deer management plans together.

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

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

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

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.**

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

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.**

7. Joint Working Update

The availability of information on Joint Working on the Scottish Executive website was highlighted and a link circulated. SNH are currently conducting an audit of all designated sites through Site Condition Monitoring. Those sites where there is a high likelihood that deer are causing negative impacts will be prioritised for action by SEERAD, DCS, SNH and FCS working together. High priority sites may attract incentives to encourage conservation management, or regulation to prevent deterioration. The process is driven by Scottish Executive targets to have 85 per cent of designated features moving towards favourable condition by 2008. Agencies felt that the achievement of Scottish Executive targets should be an objective written into DMG deer management plans.

It was felt that it would be useful for estates on or neighbouring Natura sites to establish baseline socio-economic data, eg employment and income, and monitor trends in these variables. However it was pointed out that under British law it was not possible to obtain compensation for losses due to changes in management on neighbouring land.

8a. Deer management planning.

CNPA were keen to promote an inclusive deer management planning process across the Park, following the model pioneered by the Speyside DMG. CNPA felt the involvement of a wide range of interests in discussing deer plans would reduce levels of conflict surrounding deer management. CNPA have written to all DMGs with land within the Park boundary to encourage the preparation of inclusive deer management plans or to encourage consultation of existing plans. Some DMGs do not wish to publicise plans.

The meeting felt that deer management plans had both a management function and a communication function. Discussion centred on what levels of information were required by different interest groups to achieve an inclusive deer plan. It was felt that a summary of a deer management plan would satisfy most community interests but that NGOs would probably desire more detailed information particularly about deer management objectives.

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.**

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

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.**

8b. Increasing the value of the deer resource.

Only brief discussion was had on this item. Members were encouraged to comment on Paper no CDAG2 by email. It was felt CNPA could encourage increased utilisation of deer by communicating positive messages about deer.

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

8c. Promoting better communication about deer management.

It was felt this topic had been adequately covered in earlier discussions.

9. Proposed study to determine the socio-economic impacts of deer reductions.

CNPA felt that there was a public interest in determining the socio-economic impacts of deer reductions within the Park as National Parks aim to both conserve and enhance natural heritage and promote sustainable economic and social development. Where these aims are perceived to conflict, the Park Authority has a role to investigate. Deer reductions often produce emotive responses both in favour and against. Arguments are rarely based on factual information. The level of debate about deer reductions would be enhanced by socio- economic data. Deer reductions are often supported by public money but there is little factual information to support whether levels of public money are appropriate in relation to a diminished deer resource.

It was agreed that there was merit in carrying out such a study and that the best approach was to examine the socio- economic impacts of one Section 7 Agreement.

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.**

10. AOB

There was no further business.

11. Date of next meeting.

2pm, Tuesday 26 June 2007, CNPA Offices, Grantown-on-Spey.