

**ASSOCIATION OF DEER MANAGEMENT GROUPS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie

Thursday, 21 February 2013 at 10.30am

Present:

Richard Cooke (Chairman)	Executive Committee
Andrew Gordon (Vice Chairman)	Executive Committee
Finlay Clark (Secretary)	Executive Committee
Dick Playfair	Executive Committee
Stephen Gibbs	Executive Committee
Jamie Williamson	Executive Committee
George MacDonald	Executive Committee
Col HFO Bewsher	Executive Committee
Alastair Riddell	Executive Committee
David Allison	Executive Committee
James Duncan-Millar	Executive Committee
Maitland Rankin	Executive Committee
John Bruce	Executive Committee
John Morison	Executive Committee
Willie Fraser	Executive Committee
Douglas MacAdam	Executive Committee
Linzi Seivwright	Executive Committee
Robbie Kernahan	Executive Committee
Simon Hodge	FES
David Lowes	Glen Falloch Estate
Susan Steven	A&KDMG/GlenMDMG/StrathcDMG
Susanna Thomson	Black Mount DMG
Falcon Forst	Balquhiddar DMG/Glenfalloch Est
Tim Frost	Breadalbane DMG/Boreland
Morven Frost	Breadalbane DMG/Boreland Est
Victor Clements	Breadalbane DMG
Richard Barclay	Breadalbane DMG/Innerhadden
Michael Hone	Cairngorms/Speyside DMG
Mike Cottam	Cairngorms/Speyside DMG
Rory Galloway	EGDMG/MDMG/BMDMG
James Adamson	East Loch Ericht DMG
Kevin Grant	East Loch Ericht DMG/Craiganour
Tom Dodd	East Loch Ericht DMG/Craiganour
Andrew Mackay	East Sutherland DMG/Dalnessie Estate
Robbie Rowantree	East Sutherland DMG/Gordon Bush
Michael Aldridge	Glenartney/South Perthshire DMGs
Ewen Ballantyne	Glenelg DMG
Martin Girvan	Glenmoriston DMG/Ceannacroc Estate
Frank Spencer Nairn	Glen Strathfarrar DMG
Tom Turnbull	Inveraray and Tyndrum DMG
Sir Patrick Grant	Knoydart DMG/Glendessary Estate
Lynda Campbell	Knoydart DMG/Glendessary Estate
Lyndsay Sharp	MWAHE DMG/Bidwells
Lord Pearson	MWAHE DMG/Rannoch Estate

George Eveleigh
Rob Whitson
Dougie Langlands
Christopher Stewart
Kyle Stewart
Peter Allison
Jamie Piplock
Donald Rowantree
Jamie Hendry
Jane Cheape
Rod Andean
Scott Bremner
Bruce Hendry
Jim Corbett
Patience Corbett
Anson McAuslan
Brian Lyall
Heather Gow
Mark Pattinson
Murdoch MacLean
Mark Lee
Daniel Mackie
William Jackson
Ronnie Hepburn
Benjamin Rhodes
Stephen Chapman
Julian Clark
David Lloyd
Ken Bowlt
Randal Wilson

MWAHE DMG/Rannoch Estate
MWAHE DMG /Ardverikie
MWAHE DMG/Ardverikie
MWAHE DMG/Ardverikie
MWAHE DMG/Ardverikie
MWAHE DMG/Corroul Estate
MWAHE DMG/Corroul Estate
MWAHE DMG/Corroul Estate
MWAHE DMG/Killiechonate Estate
Moidart DMG/Glenalladale
Monadhiath DMG
Monadhiath DMG/Culachy Estate
Monadhiath DMG/Glenshero
Mull DMG/Lochbuie Estate
Mull DMG/Lochbuie Estate
Northern DMG/Executive Committee
Northern DMG/Badanloch
North West Sutherland DMG
South West Ross DMG
Strathconon DMG/Estate
Strathconon DMG/Estate
Strathconon DMG/Estate
Strathtay DMG
West Grampian DMG/Atholl Estates
West Grampian DMG/Atholl Estates
West Grampian DMG/Atholl Estates
West Grampian DMG/Atholl Estates
West Grampian DMG/Atholl Estates
West Ross DMG
West Ross DMG/Lochrosque and
Kinlochewe

Alec MacDonald
John Morrison
Chris Mackenzie
Joanna Macpherson
Alix Whitaker
Emma Paterson
Ian Dingwall
Arthur Duffus
Jean Sneddon
Ian Stewart
Chris Shankland
Richard Smith
Angus MacPherson
David Fotheringham
Andrew Drummond
John Forbes-Leith
Allan Common
Steve Morris
Ruari Matheson
Dean Baillie
Norman Stoddart
Richard Greenlaw

Achnacarry Estate
Achnacarry Estate
Achnashellach Estate
Attadale Estate
Auchnafree Estate
Auchlyne Estate
Auchlyne Estate
Balavil Estate
Bidwells
Braeroy Estate
Braulen Estate
Braulen Estate
Craig Dhu & Biallid Farm
Coul/DRF Farmers Ltd
Dunachton Estate
Dunachton Estate
Dundreggan Estate
Dundreggan Estate
Fannich Estate
Fannich Estate
Garrogie Estate
Glenavon Estate

David Campbell
Jim Grant
Mark White
Jonathan Carslaw
James Vernon
Jimmy Irvine
Andrew McDonnell
Iain MacAskill
Lea MacNally
Jane Maclay
Bill Whyte
Megan Henderson
Lord Dalhousie
Garry MacLennan
Arran Matheson
Frank Fletcher
Barbara MacDonald
Roddy Legge
Andrew B Hibbert
Marc Willis
Glyn Robson
Jamie Stewart
Kenny Ross
Ronnie Ross
Gordon Shankland
Simon Fairclough
Roddy Watt
Mary Reid
David Walker Smith
John Hay
Graham Mabon
Douglas MacDonald
Frank Law
Archie MacLellan
Richard Curzon
Thomas MacDonell

Peter Keyser
Richard Seaman
Iain Thornber
Ron Smith

Tom Chetwynd
Will Boyd-Wallis
Bruce McConachie
Will Boyd-Wallis
Bruce McConachie
Jamie Farquhar
Bradley Bourner
Colin Lavin
Roddy MacAskill
Derick MacAskill
Russell Cooper
William Lamont

Glenavon Estate
Glenbanchor
Glen Cassley Estate
Glendoe Estate
Glendoe Estate
Glenmazeran Estate
Glenmazeran Estate
Glenmoidart Estate
Glen Quoich Estate
Gruinard Estate
Gruinard Estate
Gruinard Estate
Invermark Estate
Invermark Estate
Keanchulish and Ledmore Estate
Kinrara
Letterewe Estate
Letterewe Estate
Loch Assynt Lodge
Lochluichart Estate
Lochluichart Estate
Lochluichart Estate
Lochrosque & Kinlochewe
Lochrosque & Kinlochewe
Loch Shiel Estate
Mar Lodge
Merkland Estate
Middle Inver, Lochinver
Middle Inver, Lochinver
Mullardoch
Pitmain Estate
Shielbridge Estate
Strathspey Estate
The Applecross Trust
Tullich
Wildland Limited

Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member

Bowlts
CNPA
CNPA
CNPA
CNPA
Confor
FCS (Ranger)
FCS
FCS
FCS
FCS
FCS

Megan Robertson
Katy Dickson
Gordon Kerr
Andrew Hamilton
Peter Fraser
Andrew Taylor
Eileen Stuart
Iain Hope
Donald Fraser
Pete Mayhew
Neil McKay
Nikki Small

FCS
Savills
Smiths Gore
Strutt & Parker
SGA
Scottish Government
SNH
SNH
SNH
SNH/RSPB/Cairngorms/Speyside DMG
SSE
SSE

Apologies

Sarah Holman
Willy Inglis
Colin McClean
Ewen Macpherson
Glen Heggs
David Gillies

Executive Committee
Executive Committee
Executive Committee
Executive Committee
Executive Committee
Executive Committee

Mark Nicolson

East Grampian DMG

Seamus MacNally
Julian Richmond-Watson
Clive Meikle
Hamish McCorquodale
Stephen Smith
Alistair Bruce
David Elliot
Mrs C Holcroft
Gillian Pattinson
Mark Adams
Alistair Gibson
Frits van Dedem
George Vestey

Gairloch Conservation Unit
Glenelg DMG
Glen Strathfarrar DMG
Mid West Association
Monadhliath DMG/Glen Spean Estate
Monadhliath DMG/ Glen Spean Estate
N W Sutherland DMG
South Perthshire DMG/Glenbeich
South West Ross DMG
S W Ross DMG/Kinlochdamp Estate
West Lochaber DMG
West Ross DMG/Fannich Estate
West Sutherland DMG

Peter Ord
George Wade
Derek Stead
Kenny MacLeod
Col R Nicholas
Hugh Rose
Hugh O'Neill

Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member
Associate Member

W M Barnett
Pieter Bakker
Allan McPherson-Fletcher
Christian Siva-Jothy
Duncan Mackenzie
Hamish Macrae
David Gillies
Richard Vernon
James Baillie

Aberchalder Estate
Altnaharra Estate
Balavil Estate
Cluanie and East Glenquoich
Clune Estate
Druidaig
Dunlossit Estate
Glendoe Estate
Glenshiel Estate

Donald Angus Cameron
Andrew McKelvey
David Frew

Kinlochhourn Estate
Knockie Estate
Mar Lodge

Colin Shedden
Derek Warner

BASC
SNH

Iain Wotherspoon
Duncan Gordon
Sarah Troughton
Mrs Lee Lander

Glenlyon Estate
Glenelg DMG
Atholl Estates

1. Minutes of the AGM on 23 February 2012 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the AGM on 23 February 2012 were accepted as a true record of the meeting. These were signed by the Chairman, proposed by Lynda Campbell and seconded by James Duncan Miller. There were no matters arising that would not be covered later in the meeting.

2. Chairman's Statement

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM and noted the excellent turnout.

He said that it had been a relatively quiet year on the legislative and media front, although there had been a flurry of recent media activity.

The planned meeting with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Environment Minister, had been postponed until April.

Among many other deer management-related meetings the Chairman and Victor Clements had met with the SRDP review team to explore how SRDP funding might be applied to group projects and initiatives such as those undertaken by DMGs.

There had been good progress on the venison front.

DSC Level 1 or equivalent qualification had been set as the Competence benchmark. The sector must now prove that it can meet its own standards and encourage others to do so in advance of a 2014 review.

ADMG continues to be closely involved in the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group, Moorland Forum and National Access Forum of which the Chairman has recently stepped down from the post of Convenor after four years.

The new online version of Heading for the Scottish Hills will help the access situation considerably. ADMG will continue to be represented on the Access Forum by Robert Balfour.

The Lowland Deer Network has now been in existence for a year, and has made good progress. LDNS is largely funded by SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland and Transport Scotland and their support is much appreciated.

The Chairman's view also is that the deer sector as a whole is making steady progress, with a good number of Groups adopting, replacing, or creating deer management plans. However, there is concern that some are still not counting effectively on an annual basis. A new advice note on 'ground counts' is included in the latest SCOPE and is available on www.deer-management.co.uk.

There were some issues within individual DMGs as a result of conflicting deer management priorities, usually polarised between those managing deer for sporting purposes or for environmental change. It is incumbent on DMGs now to solve these issues at DMG level and ADMG will assist if required to do so. The Code of Practice for Deer Management indicates how to address such situations and the Chairman has drawn up six bullet points of 'common ground for DMGs'. See the latest SCOPE for these. It had also been proposed to the environmental NGOs through LINK that a "Common Ground Agreement" might prove a useful basis for working with ADMG but no response had been received as yet. He said there was a need to move away from an 'us and them' mindset.

A seminar for DMG Chairman and Secretaries is being held at Birnam with SNH to further explore leadership, conflict resolution and other areas of importance to DMGs.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Committee, with mention of Ron Rose who had now left SNH to join FCS. His role had now been assumed by Linzi Seivwright.

A copy of the Chairman's Report is attached to these Minutes and is on the website.

3. Executive Committee and Area Representative Elections

Election of Chairman

Andrew Gordon, Vice Chairman, took the chair for the process of the election of a Chairman. There being no other nominations, Richard Cooke was re-elected on the proposal of David Lowes, seconded by Stephen Gibbs.

Richard Cooke then resumed the chair for the process of the Area Representative Elections.

Area Representative Elections

ADMG in Scotland is split into eight areas, each with a main representative and a deputy representative.

The following changes for areas 1, 3, 5 and 7 were proposed by Richard Cooke, seconded by Col Bill Bewsher and elected en bloc.

Area 1 – Caithness and Sutherland

Anson McAuslan and David Allison who have served just one year as representative and deputy respectively to continue.

Area 3 – Monadhliaths

Jamie Williamson re-elected as representative; James Adamson elected as deputy.

Area 5 – West Inverness

Lynda Campbell continues as representative, with Keith Falconer re-elected as deputy.

Area 7 – South Scotland

Glen Heggs and Maitland Rankin re-elected as representative and deputy respectively.

The following changes for Areas 2,4,6 and 8 were proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Emma Patterson and elected en bloc:

Area 2 – Ross-shire

Randal Wilson becomes representative replacing Peter Voy, with Willie Fraser remaining as deputy

Area 4 – Cairngorm and Grampians

Colin McClean remains as representative, with Julian Clarke elected as deputy.

Area 6 – South Perthshire

James Duncan-Miller remains as representative, with Victor Clements elected as deputy, with Alastair Riddell stepping down.

Area 8 – The Islands

Willy Inglis and David Gillies remain as representative and deputy respectively.

The Chairman thanked those who were standing down.

4. Financial Report

ADMG Secretary Finlay Clark gave his financial report, firstly thanking the Chairs and Secretaries, acknowledging their help and support and prompt payment of subscriptions.

Audited accounts for year ending 30 June 2012

He said that a break-even budget had been drawn up, and had in the event delivered a small surplus of £742.

The £3000 income from SNH had been to support the costs of the launch of LDNS.

Expenses had run largely in line with the budget. There had been some subscription reimbursements to Groups to reflect the new subscription arrangements with FES which makes a single central payment to ADMG rather than payment at DMG level.

Management Accounts to 31 January 2013

These showed that virtually all subscriptions had been invoiced and paid for the year to 30.6.2013, totalling some £89,000.

Expenditure again was in line with budget and a number of cost savings had been made, with a small surplus of some £1370 forecast for the end of the financial year.

The current balance of £28,000 cash at RBS reflected a normal balance for this time of the year.

The Chairman added that there was no intention to increase subscriptions this year.

5. Political and PR Report

Dick Playfair gave his report (copy appended).

He said that the foremost issue facing Scotland's rural sector at present was that of Land Reform. The ADMG response to the Land Reform Review Group (LRRG) had centred solely on implications of land reform for deer management, advising that SL&E had submitted a very comprehensive response tackling wider property rights issues.

ADMG was seeking a meeting with Dr Alison Elliot, Chair of the LRRG.

The LRRG will produce an interim report in May, prior to a second consultation phase. Its draft final report will be produced in December, publishing the final report in April 2014.

He highlighted a number of the responses to the first phase consultation that had been made public including those of NFUS, NTS Scotland, Ramblers Scotland, MC of S, and the Forest Policy Group that had proposed an entirely new deer management system in its submission.

On the communications front he said it would be helpful, not least for cost, to establish whether SCOPE, the ADMG printed newsletter, would be better made available online for member Groups.

He gave an update on the 2012 Stag Season Report, sponsored by Knight Frank, to be published in April, and also on changes to the website to include a page for each DMG. This initially would contain standard information supplemented by what each DMG might wish to supply. A proforma for this would be circulated to DMG Chairs for completion and return in due course.

There was also a proposal to stage a Working Highland Pony event at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair at Scone Palace, with details to follow once they have been worked up.

6. Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP)

John Morison is the ADMG representative on SVP and made his report.

He said that reports showed that the UK venison market was still growing by some 25 per cent per annum, and that there had been a spectacular spike in sales coincidental with the London Olympics and Jubilee of a reported 400 per cent.

He said that the shortfall in Scottish and UK production continued to be imported from New Zealand, Poland and also Spain and this was impacting on the price in supermarkets.

The strength of Scotland's wild venison lies in its name, and its provenance, and this will continue to underpin its popularity in the foodservice, catering and restaurant sectors.

Promotion to independent retail butchers would continue with a first outing to the Butchers Fair in Perth in May, plus follow-up events for butchers in west, central and south west Scotland, budget permitting.

Scottish Venison Day, 4 September, would be the focus for an industry event in Fife, and an event with the Scottish Gamekeepers Association was proposed for July.

A major initiative was to increase the supply of home-produced venison from parks and farms as demand was now all the year round and not just seasonal.

The new Venison Advisory Service www.venisonadvisory.co.uk was helping to promote opportunities in the farmed and parks sector and was advising a number of new farm and park enterprises through the early stages.

There was also the development of a new Fife-based slaughter facility for deer and an intention to set up one or more demonstration units for the farm/park sector, as well as the development of a new quality standard for Scottish park deer; also resumption of an initiative to seek PGI status for Scottish venison.

The target was to be producing 1000 additional tonnes of venison by 2020 from Scotland.

The horse-meat scandal had shown the vital importance of quality assurance, and more estates and game dealers should consider joining the SQWV scheme, as a number had done during 2012.

The Scottish Venison Partnership, while receiving vital funding from FCS and SNH, is increasingly reliant on the 1p/kilo venison levy and deer managers and estates should be insisting that their game dealers collect this and pass it on, as well as joining the SQWV scheme. Not many would consider buying beef that was outside a QA scheme, so why should venison be different?

A **catchment collection scheme** in Rannoch was outlined from the floor by Patrick Thompson who explained that this could equally work well in other areas.

Neighbours had got together across parts of two deer groups in the Rannoch Glen area. The process required neighbours prepared to cooperate, and willing to switch from their existing game dealer.

As a group they then went to four dealers for purchasing tenders. Such an arrangement needs to offer the dealer a saving, as well as a better price for the producers. Previously three dealers would send vans several times per week. Under the new arrangement one dealer sends one lorry.

There has been a financial benefit for all eight estates which have entered the scheme, and the price has improved through the season. The benefits to stalkers and owners speak for themselves. The first renewal meeting with the dealer to renegotiate for 2013 is imminent.

7. **Competence**

In the absence of Colin McClean, ADMG's representative on the Competence Steering Group, his report was read to the meeting by the Chairman.

Background

The issue of Competence arises from the WANE Act. The Act challenges the deer sector to significantly increase uptake of deer stalking qualifications through our current voluntary system. The aim is to ensure everyone who shoots deer unsupervised in Scotland is competent in terms of deer welfare, firearms safety and food safety. Government will review the current system in 2014. If uptake of the voluntary system of deer qualifications is viewed as unsatisfactory then Government is likely to impose a statutory system.

The Deer Sector Competence Working Group was set up in 2011 consisting of organisations including ADMG, BASC, BDS, SGA and others. In 2012 the Working Group decided that DSC1 or any equivalent qualifications would be a sufficient test of competence. This decision was endorsed by the Minister of the Environment although he was keen that as many people as possible should also sit DSC2.

Progress in 2012

The main task in 2012 was to communicate the following message

- If you wish to shoot deer unsupervised in Scotland for whatever reason, sport, marauding deer on a croft, forestry lease, then this affects you.
- We have until 2014 to significantly increase uptake of stalking qualifications or risk a compulsory test being imposed.
- Demonstrating competence is straightforward so contact training organisations, BASC or BDS and they will tell you what you need to know.

To do this, over 3000 leaflets were handed out at game fairs and agricultural shows. Articles were published in the Deer Journal, ADMG newsletter, LDNS newsletter, and in Land Business magazine. There has also been a general press release and numerous presentations at meetings.

The feeling is that the professional and recreational deer stalking sectors are now reasonably well informed and engaged. However, the farming and crofting sectors are less so.

Priorities for 2013

- To persuade all in the professional or recreational stalking sectors who have yet to sit DSC1 that they should do so.
- To target communications at the farming and crofting sector. The steering group believes that Government is unlikely to differentiate between different groups of people within the deer management sector and that any compulsory system imposed because of insufficient uptake will affect everyone.
- We need to be able to demonstrate to Government that most stalkers are well qualified, so we need to collect data. A number of sources of data will be examined. ADMG proposes to investigate 3 DMGs in detail and will ask members to identify how many people shoot deer within their DMG and how many have DSC1 or an equivalent qualification. The DMGs suggested are East Grampian, West Ross and East Loch Erich. No individual names are required.

8. Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group

The Chairman reminded the meeting that SCSTG was an initiative that had been started by ADMG, and that it was now ably run by Victoria Brooks, assisted by Louise Rattrie who could not be present because they were attending a Hunting Fair in Salzburg promoting sport in Scotland.

Considerable effort had been spent in developing an effective website and recruiting members. A new website is to be launched in March – currently it attracts in the region of 7000 hits per month.

The SCSTG subscription is due to increase but members have access to the free advertising facility. He suggested that those with sporting lets of all types should support SCSTG, in their own interest, as the organisation represents very good value.

There was a proposal for a new study to research the value and potential of country sports in Scotland as a whole.

9. SNH Report

Robbie Kernahan gave the SNH report.

He asked whether there was a feeling in the room that progress had been made in the last 12 months and whether the Code was making a difference.

He said that SNH was there to help deliver individual and collective responsibilities for managing deer sustainably, both in the red deer range and on low ground where LDNS has brought together land managers and other organisations including local authorities, Transport Scotland, and Forest Enterprise.

He said it was important to demonstrate that deer were being managed sustainably, and with regard to the economic, social impacts as well as deer welfare.

He said that SNH was encouraged by the uptake of Best Practice – with over 2500 subscribers to its 90 guides, with more in preparation. Other countries were also adopting the Scottish model, and the guides were subject to continued promotion and refinement.

He said that there were some challenges in relation to case-work – the sector had been predominantly quiet although there had been media interest in issues arising at Assynt and Caenlochan. He said that the behaviour of some was frustrating, and that at certain times there was still a lack of common understanding, pragmatism and basic principles.

The SNH view was that a lot of good progress had been made, but that debating sensitive deer management issues through the media, was not helpful. Where there were areas of shared responsibility it was important that everyone 'did their bit'.

There was still a lot of misunderstanding over designated sites and SNH's focus to bring them back to favourable condition – the majority however are 'in good shape' which is down to effective deer management, with a little intervention from SNH.

SNH has been heavily involved in counts, habitat assessments, and research on deer vehicle collisions. He said that there was considerable pressure on SNH staff time and resources, and that these must be prioritised to focus on areas where there are real concerns about populations and impacts.

He said that the opportunity to feed back on the new General Authorisation should not be missed.

2013 is the Year of Natural Scotland (YONS), and red deer are part of that celebration – all need to encourage a greater appreciation of Scotland's Nature – especially for wildlife watchers, walkers and stalkers. SNH was working with RHET on educational aspects and with GWCT on YONS at the Scottish Game Fair.

Questions

- Q1: (?) What are the YONS Big 5?
Red deer, golden eagle, otter, red squirrel, seal
- Q2: (Andrew Gordon) What is the extent of the SNH budget to undertake helicopter counting and could more advance notice be given when they are going to do it?

In many cases there is a small window for decisions, and SNH has to go when conditions are suitable.

Q3: (?) What is SNH's opinion on the way the venison sector is moving?

SNH is hugely supportive of the work of Scottish Venison Partnership, and funds parts of it.

The current red cull at 52,000 is the lowest it has been for ten years, and Scotland will struggle to meet demand for venison from wild deer alone.

Q4: (David Lowes) What next for Heading for the Scottish Hills?

There is the demand and the desire within SNH. Clearly the current system is not good enough to meet expectations. The method for estates to put in information is a bit 'clunky'. Recreationalists want complete coverage everywhere. What is the view from deer managers on whether it is delivering?

SNH site being restructured, and technology for the new site might be better suited to delivery of HFTSH.

(Richard Cooke comment): It is taking rather a long time, and in danger of losing impetus. It needs to be more sophisticated.

Q5: (George Macdonald) Is it wrong for the media to pick up on and run with stories such as that in relation to Caenlochan? Often the story comes from the media in the first place?

Regarding the Section 7, the hind cull was set in October, a helicopter count done in November, and there was universal agreement re action to be taken.

However, come 15 February, some estates had shot less than 20 hinds. Out of season control is there to provide flexibility. There are welfare issues – large numbers of animals in limited space because of the snow.

Such reporting brings significant intervention (often misunderstood) from animal welfare sector, and the media is not the place to have that discussion.

The initiative was almost a major success, but now soured. Could have been a very good example of partnership working.

10. Presentation by David Lowes, Glenfalloch Estate

David Lowes gave a highly informative presentation on the working of the Glenfalloch Estate titled 'Managers, Regulators and NGOs working ... together?'

He highlighted the mix of land use including farming, forestry, deer management and renewable energy and the changing dynamics that management of each of these created, and how it impacted on the others

He outlined the primary management objectives (within a limited budget) as:

- maintaining current activities and preserving the traditional character of the estate
 - maintaining and improving the natural habitat and bio-diversity
 - supporting development of other sustainable activities
- Glenfalloch

He gave a recent history of the estate covering the West Highland Way and National Park, land reform, Glenfalloch farm coming back in hand in 1997 and removal of the sheep from the hill in 2007, a programme of property refurbishment, producing a land use management plan, and developing hydro resources.

The estate's income and expenditure from 2008 – 2013 were shown and the precarious swings between surplus and deficit illustrating clearly the challenges of running the estate as a commercial enterprise.

The estate operates within a number of designations including 5 SSSIs, an NSA, SAC, and SPA (for golden eagles).

The estate's farming and deer management enterprises were shown. Deer management policy is to aim to improve the quality of the herd by:

- Selective culling
- Control of numbers consistent with long term carrying capacity of the land/habitat

Also compliance with the Deer Code (with regard to deer welfare, those participating in stalking, and neighbouring interests)

The estate is a member of the Scottish Quality Wild Venison scheme and of two DMGs.

David talked about the estate opening up new commercial opportunities with hydro, a process started in 2005 but with the first scheme commissioned in 2012.

He also talked about the estate's habitat management plan in relation to SRDP, changing agricultural policies, forest planning etc.

He also emphasised the positive efforts that the estate had made to engage at all levels with politicians, officials, agencies, local authorities, the National Park, recreational organisations and the public – and how the success of this considerable effort might be measured.

11. Strategic directions for deer management on the National Forest Estate

Presentation by Simon Hodge, Chief Executive Officer, Forest Enterprise Scotland

FES has moved forward considerably since 3 years ago when there had been a significant amount of tension through the deer sector regarding FE deer management policy. Simon Hodge said that this had been exacerbated by a number of factors including the political climate and changes to legislative, severe winters and deer displacement, pressures on resources (fencing, reducing head count, use of contractors), and differing deer management culture and objectives.

FES had responded by making a number of positive moves including:

- The Emergency Protocol agreed with ADMG
- Fencing investment prioritised (there is around 2250km of fencing on the National Forest Estate, and FES has invested around £4m in last 4 years)
- Greater engagement

Also FES had concluded that whilst they were strong on practical deer management and technical standards, they were probably not so strong on 'articulating objectives and communicating/collaborating with stakeholders'.

He said that FES had broadened its objectives and whilst its remit was that of growing commercial woodland it had moved from simply protecting trees to the protection of all ecosystems and integrated land management.

Now FES deer policy was driven by a number of converging objectives (and there was lots of evidence that this was succeeding) ranging across forestry, crop protection, environmental and sporting priorities, towards integrated land management in the context of the Code of Practice for Deer Management. There was a move towards a more holistic approach, particularly since around 1/3 of the National Forest Estate is open land.

The challenges faced by FES continued, among these:

- High levels of damage to vulnerable young trees (running at some 20 per cent leader loss with a total of some 85 million trees to protect).
- Achieving favourable condition on designated sites
- Finding solutions where there are differing management objectives
- The challenge of urban/peri-urban deer issues
- Doing more to harness the benefits of deer as a vegetation manager
- Pressure on resources, as income was dependent on the timber market.

With regard to moving forward he said that:

- Communications were improving
- FES would be undertaking a consultation on its new deer management strategy for the National Forest Estate within the next 2 months.

- Moving from forest design plans to land management planning and collaborative deer management planning
- Working with the Moorland Forum on open ground planning
- FES in the vanguard of deer management best practice
- Supporting other deer initiatives such as LDNS, Scottish Venison Partnership and Best Practice
- Looking at ways to broaden opportunities for recreational stalking vs in-house management.

The Chairman remarked that there was now a much improved working relationship with FES, and that communications had improved considerably. He then invited questions.

Q1: (James Duncan Millar) How does FES cope with human pressure in relation to deer control?

FES has in the region of 9 million visits annually to the National Forest Estate – there is a lot of dialogue in relation to visitors and forestry but not a great deal with regard to visitors and deer management.

Colin Lavin adds: There are distinct differences between control and sporting deer management. Night shooting control presents far less risk of disturbance by the public.

Q2: (Andrew Gordon) Has a cost analysis been done between control as now and fencing?

It's a difficult cost benefit analysis to undertake – one is to do with population management rather than fencing which is more an all-or-nothing approach. However, it is important in the decision process for different parts of the estate.

Q3: (?) How was decision reached to take an increased hind cull in Balquhidder?

Group had relatively finite information about numbers of deer. Agreed to increase the cull at DMG meeting. Relied on FCS figures for accuracy.

(SH) The Loch Katrine estate extends to 25,000ha, of which only 15 per cent is fenced and replanted. Deer numbers were increasing and estates agreed to an increases cull by FES.

Colin Lavin was able to use the Emergency Protocol as the basis for making decisions.

Q4: (?) Is there an ongoing programme for training young rangers?

(SH) There is an apprentice programme with 30 places focussed on understanding aspects of land management. Also looking at wildlife management training opportunities in connection with the Colleges.

FES has 50 rangers and a total deer management staff of around 70. There is no plan to reduce this number. FES also employs around 30 – 35 contractors, but around 70- per cent of the cull is undertaken by own staff, and intended that this balance is maintained.

(DL) Youth opportunities are important, as is taking youngsters out of college and they can gain considerable experience from such work.

There being no further questions, the Chairman brought the meeting to a close at 1.00pm.

DRAFT