

Our Journey to The Common Ground Forum – bringing people together on upland deer management

Julie Stoneman

Chair of the Common Ground Forum

Saving Scotland's Rainforest
Project Manager

Plantlife Scotland
(Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest)



Image: Wikipedia

The Common Ground Forum is a network of individuals and organisations from across Scotland's upland deer management sector who have committed to look at how a more collaborative approach to deer management, based on mutual respect and consensus building, can contribute to a vision of a greener, healthier and economically vibrant future.

- How this all started
- What we did
- Where we've got to
- Lessons learned





Centre for
GoodRelations

Centre for Good Relations (CfGR) is an independent not-for-profit company whose core work is 'civic mediation': facilitation and dialogue, working through issues of contention and dispute, and addressing social conflicts and tensions.

The organisation works with people positively on matters of contention, taking them through dialogue processes, which unpack issues and tensions.

The approach aims to create space for individuals/groups/organisations to work collaboratively towards constructive outcomes.

Steering Group

Julie Stoneman – Plantlife (chair)

Richard Cooke - ADMG

Tom Turnbull – ADMG

Alan McDonnell – Trees for Life

Ben Harrower – Woodland Trust

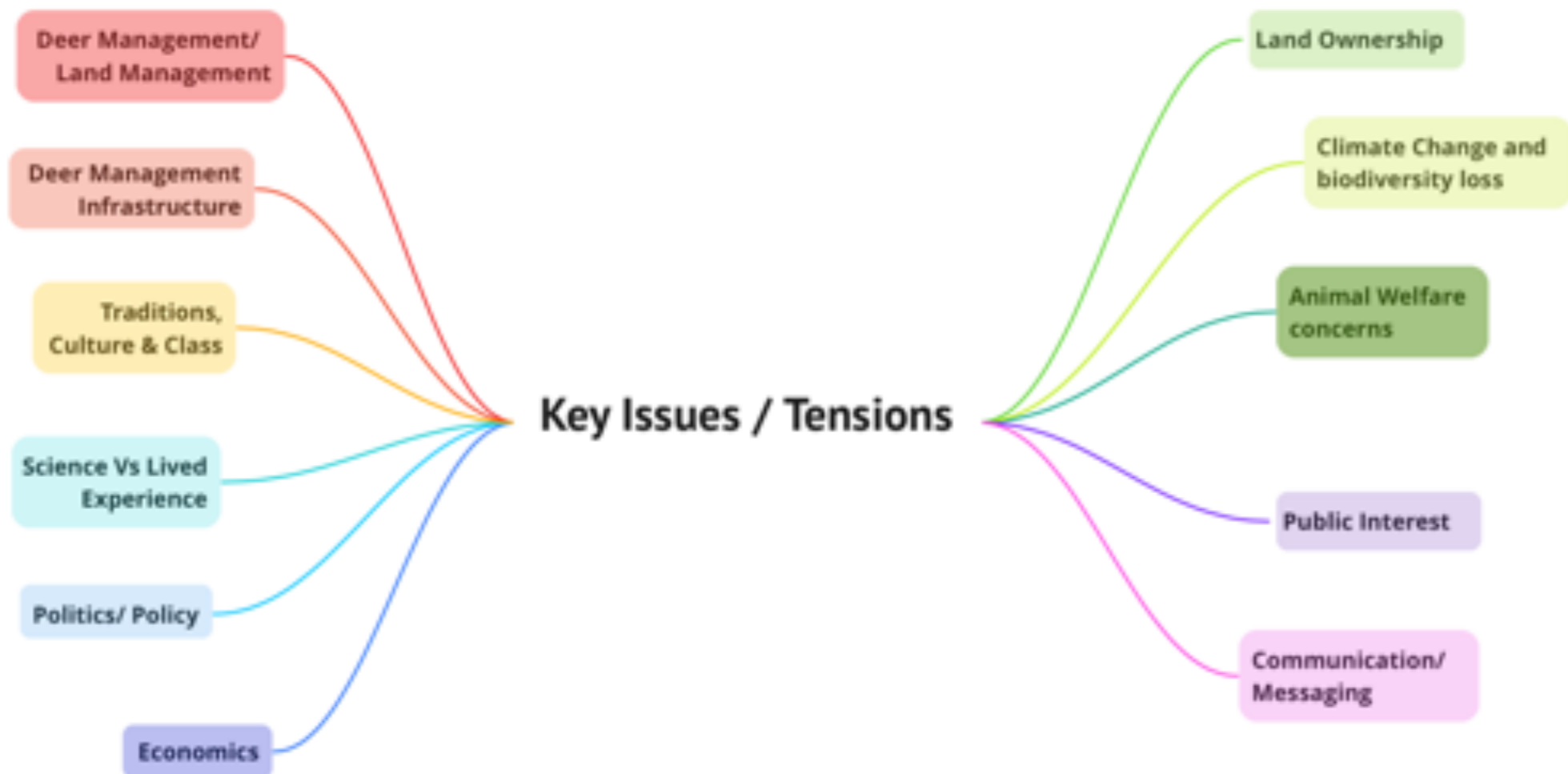
Holly Deary – NatureScot

Karen Ramoo – Scottish Land and Estates

Will Boyd Wallis - CNPA

The assessment will:

- Seek to understand the relationship dynamics between stakeholders with an interest in deer management
- Build an understanding of the perspectives of different stakeholders on the different issues relating to deer management
- Assess the effectiveness of structures and mechanisms currently in place to undertake deer management
- Identify potential interventions for building collaborative leadership to enable sustainable deer management in future.



January 2022

Finding the Common Ground on Sustainable Upland Deer Management

This proposal is being put forward by the Association of Deer Management Groups
and Scottish Environment LINK

We believe this process will help to reset relationships in a way that makes them fit to meet the challenges of the changes ahead and deliver sustainable high-quality outcomes for upland deer management in Scotland. And now, as the Scottish Government considers how to implement the Deer Working Group recommendations in the context of the biodiversity and climate crises, is exactly the right time to do this.



© Scottish Environment LINK

 **Fieldwork**

Workshop 1 – Stirling – Aug 2022

Aim: Build rapport and initiate/continue discussion around key issues in upland deer management

 **Fieldwork**

Workshop 2 – Online – Nov 2022

Aim: Update participants on work subsequent to the first workshop, continue discussion on key areas and topics that arose at Stirling

 **Fieldwork**

Workshop 3 – Birnam – Feb 2023

Aim: Discuss and understand how different types of science, evidence, knowledge and experience are and can be shared and used in the management of upland deer

 **Fieldwork**

Workshop 4 – Invergarry – Jun 2023

Aim: For deer stalkers and land managers to discuss issues such as employment, community impact and training, skills and education

 **Fieldwork**

Workshop 5 – Stirling – Jun 2023

Aim: Bring together the various strands of the process, continue conversations on key areas, determine and assign future actions and conclude this phase of work.

The Common Ground Forum



CGF Steering Group

Julie Stoneman – Plantlife (chair)

Alan McDonnell – Trees for Life

Bruce Sewell – FLS

Colin McLean – CNPA

Deirdre Stewart - Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

Lea MacNally – SGA

Paul Roberts - NatureScot

Tom Turnbull – ADMG

Richard Cooke - ADMG

VISION

Land is in good ecological condition and is being managed sustainably for the benefit of current, and future, generations.

A range of outputs are being sustainably produced from the land. These help to support both local communities and the wider population of Scotland.

Rural communities are resilient, thriving and vibrant, and land management is carried out by a skilled workforce, supported by appropriate education and training.

All land managers and owners have a forum available to engage positively and constructively about managing the wider impacts of deer, and other herbivores, on the environment. Members of the forum treat diversity of land management and deer welfare objectives with respect.

Our Common Ground Accord

in relation to upland deer management in Scotland

We commit ourselves to:

- Identify the common purpose
- Respect our diversity of objectives
- Keep an open mind
- Listen to understand
- Engage honestly
- Work for mutually beneficial solutions
- Apply these principles in public facing communications on contentious issues

The Northern Times

News | Columnist | Politics | Sport | Lifestyle | What's On | Family Notices | Highland Heroes

Highland organisations sign 'common ground' accord on 'divisive' issue of deer management

By Niall Hariss - niall.hariss@nmedia.co.uk

Published: 15:47, 03 October 2023

Updated: 15:48, 03 October 2023

[Click here to sign up to our free newsletters!](#)

Organisations and individuals across the Highlands have come together to sign an accord which aims to set aside long entrenched disagreements relating to deer management.

Initiated by the Association of Deer Management Groups and Scottish Environment LINK, The Common Ground Forum (CGF) includes deer stalkers, foresters, farmers, landowners, community representatives, nature conservationists and many others.



Organisations and individuals have come together to form an accord relating to issues in deer management.

Among a list of 26 signatories are Forestry and Land Scotland, John Muir Trust, NatureScot and Scourie Estate.

A number of joint initiatives are planned by the new group, with a particular emphasis on what the coming changes will mean for those directly involved in managing deer. It also plans to provide support and reassurance in the face of the changes associated with the climate, and biodiversity crises, for which an increasing level of deer cull has been identified as a required action by Scottish Government agency, NatureScot.

WIN A 4-BALL GOLF EXPERIENCE AT MACDONALD SPEY VALLEY GOLF COURSE!

MOST READ



Grandon McPhee joins forces with Irish star Daniel O'Donnell on new single



Ullapool named as most beautiful village in the UK



New owners 'upbeat' over derelict Helmsdale A9 filling station – but they haven't seen it yet!



New £2.3 million community housing development at Lairg ready for occupancy



A9 dualing prompts call for Wick fights to central belt

CGF OBJECTIVES

1. People in the deer management community are valued and engaged in the conversations about future government policy and legislation in upland deer management
2. People involved with upland deer management understand the practical implications of changes in government policy and legislation and how they can manage any challenges or opportunities
3. People who manage land in upland Scotland are working collaboratively to deliver sustainable deer management across associated land uses.



We are grateful to the following for their generous support of the Common Ground Forum:

Association of Deer Management Groups

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Forestry and Land Scotland

John Muir Trust

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority

NatureScot

Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Government

Scourie Estate

The Pebble Trust

Trees for Life



Helen MacIntyre
CGF Project Manager

Ongoing work of the Common Ground Forum

- Edinburgh University/ Centre for Good Relations **pilot study in North Ross Deer Management Group**
- Association of Deer Management Groups and Forestry and Land Scotland developing a **protocol for how chairs of DMGs deal with conflict**; and scoping out further ways to improve how DMGs function.
- **A new ADMG/ScotLINK Deer Task Force liaison group** has been established and the groups are already doing joint advocacy – e.g. **calling for venison price support**.
- Two weeks ago: an online meeting to discuss **the Scottish Government's consultation on deer**.
- Last Friday: **pilot event for deer managers** to discuss the future of deer management in a changing world while also testing new equipment and innovations in approach.
- Will soon launch a **trial conflict resolution service** to help people work through difficult or conflicted situations connected with upland deer management.
- Centre for Good Relations is working with Scottish Gamekeepers Association and stalkers to scope out **how to promote and support confidence-building in deer managers/stalkers** - training sessions planned
- **A parliamentary meeting** in the next couple of months to improve the awareness of politicians and civil servants of the role of land managers and rural skills in tackling the twin climate and biodiversity crises.

Lessons learned

1. Sometimes, it's worth trying something even if you think it might fail (or others think you might fail)
2. Assuming conflict can create conflict
3. It's all about relationships
4. You need to be in it for the long term