

Representing Deer Management Groups Through a Period of Major Change

1. A Message from ADMG

Dear Members,

The implementation of the Natural Environment Act remains ADMG's highest priority. While the legislation has now received Royal Assent, significant work lies ahead as the new provisions are developed and implemented. ADMG continues to engage closely with Scottish Government, NatureScot and other stakeholders to ensure members' interests are represented throughout this process.

Alongside this work, we continue to advocate on sporting rates, seek practical solutions to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy through Land Management Plans, support the growth of the Scottish venison sector and represent members through a period of substantial legislative and regulatory change.

Key Priorities This Autumn

- ✓ Continuing representation on implementation of the Natural Environment Act.
- ✓ Challenging practical concerns around new NatureScot intervention powers.
- ✓ Ensuring ongoing dialogue around changes to occupier rights to ensure our members concerns are reflected.
- ✓ Ongoing engagement with Scottish Government on sporting rates.
- ✓ Working to avoid duplication between Deer Management Plans and Land Management Plans.
- ✓ Supporting the growth and profile of Scottish venison.
- ✓ Continued collaboration through the Common Ground Forum.

We would like to thank all DMGs, members and supporters for their continued engagement and support. As the legislative landscape continues to evolve, your support enables ADMG to ensure that practical deer management experience remains at the centre of policy development and decision-making. Together, we will continue to represent and support Scotland's Deer Management Groups through the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Tom Turnbull, Chair of ADMG

2. Legislative Update: Natural Environment Act

The Natural Environment Act received Royal Assent on 12 March 2026 and introduces the most significant changes to deer legislation in many years. These changes will shape deer management across Scotland for the foreseeable future.

What is Changing? Key provisions include:

- A new Code of Practice on Deer Management setting out how and when NatureScot might intervene in deer management.
- New NatureScot intervention powers under Section 6ZB for the purposes of preserving, protecting, enhancing or otherwise improving the natural heritage.
- A new Right to Request Action under Section 7A where a person may request NatureScot to exercise its functions if they believe damage is occurring.
- A register of authorised persons for those shooting deer unaccompanied. There will be further consultation on this going forward.
- Changes to occupiers' rights to prevent damage caused by deer. These rights are likely to be expanded beyond improved grassland.
- A requirement for Scottish Ministers to produce a National Deer Management and Venison Plan within 5 years of the section coming into force.

3. ADMG's Work on Your Behalf

Over the last two years ADMG involvement has included:

- Ongoing engagement with the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands, Jim Fairlie.
- Facilitating opportunities for ministers and officials to observe practical deer management on the ground.
- Attending Rural Affairs and Islands Committee meetings.
- Submitting detailed consultation responses.
- Participating in extensive discussions with NatureScot and other stakeholders.
- Worked with ministers, MSPs and officials to propose amendments during the Bill's parliamentary stages.

We are pleased that Scottish Government has listened to our concerns, which have often been reflected in Government decision making. However, substantial implementation work remains, particularly around the Code of Practice and NatureScot's new intervention powers. ADMG will continue to ensure that members' practical experience and concerns are reflected as these changes are developed.

4. Policy & Advocacy: Sporting Rates

Following the removal of Small Business Bonus Scheme relief for sporting rates, ADMG raised members' concerns directly with Jim Fairlie and Scottish Government officials. Current guidance includes an exemption where deer are managed for environmental purposes and venison enters the food chain. Although interpretation varies between local authorities, it is understood that many sporting estates should continue to qualify for relief. If you have experienced difficulties or inconsistent interpretation of the guidance, please contact ADMG. Scottish Government has requested evidence of how local authorities are applying the policy, and member feedback is essential in supporting our ongoing discussions.

5. Land Management Plans

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 introduces mandatory Land Management Plans (LMPs) for large landholdings. Key Features:

- Applicable to holdings exceeding 1,000 hectares.
- Plans will be publicly available.
- Reviews will be required at least every five years.
- Community and tenant engagement may be required during preparation and major revisions.

ADMG is actively engaging with NatureScot and Scottish Government to ensure that existing Deer Management Plans can be recognised wherever possible, avoiding duplication and unnecessary administrative burdens on land managers.

6. Sector Development: Scottish Venison

ADMG remains a strong supporter of Scottish Venison and its efforts to strengthen both the profile and market opportunities for Scottish venison. Recent achievements include:

- Bringing together the sector's representative body and quality mark.
- Launching a new brand and consumer website.
- Expanding communications through social media and newsletters.
- Supporting growth in public procurement, wholesale markets, education and processing initiatives.

While these successes have yet to be reflected in venison prices, we are encouraged by the growing prominence of venison within policy discussions and government thinking.

7. Member Engagement: Meetings & Events

- **AGM 2027:** The AGM will be held on Wednesday 24th March 2027 at the Kingsmills Hotel, Inverness,
- **DMG Chairs:** we will continue to meet as often as we can with DMG Chairs to keep them updated on our work and to provide an opportunity for feedback from Groups.
- **Scone Game Fair 2026 :** This year's Scone Game Fair was another successful opportunity to engage with members, government representatives and partner organisations. ADMG hosted a reception attended by representatives of ADMG, BDS, Scottish Government and Jim Fairlie MSP.

8. Collaboration: Common Ground Forum

Thanks to the generosity of ADMG members and other supporters following the Fishmongers' Hall event in London, the [Common Ground Forum](#) continues to play an important role in bringing together deer managers with a wide range of land management objectives. The Forum creates opportunities for constructive dialogue, encourages collaboration where interests align and provides space for meaningful discussion where perspectives differ. ADMG continues to sit on the Forum's steering group and provide financial support for its work.

Current work includes collaboration between SGA, Environment LINK, Scottish Venison and ADMG to examine the challenges arising from legislative and regulatory change and how deer managers can best be supported in the future.

Upcoming Stalkers' Event. A further stalkers' event is planned later this year. Previous events have been particularly successful in bringing deer managers together and creating opportunities for direct discussions with politicians and civil servants.

9. Supporting the Next Generation: Deer People

Richard Cooke's latest Deer People book is now on sale, with an exhibition opening at House of Bruar on 13 September. Proceeds will continue to support opportunities for young deer managers to gain international experience in wildlife conservation and hunting. Previous beneficiaries have travelled to New Zealand, North America, Africa and Europe, gaining valuable experience and broadening their understanding of deer management worldwide.

10. ADMG Membership & Subscriptions: Investing in Effective Representation

The volume of legislative and regulatory change facing the sector has significantly increased ADMG's workload and costs. Major areas of work include:

- Implementation of the Natural Environment Act.
- Development of the new Code of Practice.
- Work surrounding the future National Deer Management and Venison Plan.
- Ongoing consultations, stakeholder engagement and policy development.

Following consultation with DMG Chairs on 17 June, ADMG is proposing a 20% subscription increase for the coming year. Future annual increases would be linked to RPI/CPI and based on the revised subscription level rather than deer culls returned. This represents the minimum increase required to maintain ADMG's ability to provide effective representation and advocacy for members. Importantly, had subscriptions increased in line with inflation since the previous rise, they would have increased by approximately 47%. We have been encouraged by the positive and constructive response received from members to date, reflecting the value placed on ADMG's work across Scotland.

11. Rising Costs of Deer Management

ADMG is concerned that rapidly escalating costs particularly in relation to the cost of diesel, could have a detrimental effect in achieving ambitious deer management targets. With diesel hitting record prices at the pumps this is not just going to directly impact on our member's fuel use for vehicles, and for carcase extraction, but for other parts of the supply chain too. ADMG will be carefully monitoring the situation, and are asking members to keep us advised when regarding their increasing costs and concerns.

12. Scottish Parliament Committee calls for views on access

ADMG has welcomed the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs Committee's decision to hold a short inquiry to assess whether Scotland's outdoor access system, introduced with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, remains fit for purpose, how it is working, and whether changes are required. ADMG will be submitting a response to the Committee and will shortly be setting out ways that that members can respond to us to formulate an overall ADMG view. Members are also encouraged to respond directly to the Committee. Further information is available on the Scottish Parliament Committee webpages and the call for views closes on 23 November 2026.

13. Social Media

ADMG continue to raise our profile through social media covering all aspects and activities through our channels on LinkedIn and Instagram. We now have almost 900 followers, and we always welcome new stories and content.