

## Finding the Common Ground on Sustainable Upland Deer Management Civic Mediation Process

**A summary of the process (May 2021 – July 2023)**

### Project Overview

In early 2021, Centre for Good Relations (CfGR) started conversations with the Finding the Common Ground (FtCG) Steering group - a set of key interested stakeholders who wanted to explore how to improve relations between different stakeholders, and build collaboration, in the deer management sector.

At that time, the Steering Group consisted of the Association of Deer Management Groups, Plantlife, Scottish Land and Estates, Trees for Life, Woodland Trust, with Cairngorms National Park Authority and NatureScot playing an advisory role.

In May 2021 the FtCG Steering Group commissioned CfGR to carry out an initial assessment, which involved talking to 46 people involved in the upland deer management sector to understand the issues and assess whether civic mediation would be beneficial to help build up relationships and support collaboration.

### Process

The approach involved a process of [accountable dialogue](#), taking place over the course of a year. It focused on building better relationships by bringing people together who see an issue from different angles, using their skills and expertise to work out how they can find solutions to that issue together.

The intention of mediation is to effect positive change in situations of conflict, contention or division. The work supports sustainable positive change and lays the basis for better

The findings of the assessment gave the Steering Group the confidence to go ahead with a full-year project, putting together a project brief, which was put forward by ADMG and Scottish Environment LINK as a joint project. Funding was gratefully received from ADMG, CNPA, Future Woodlands Scotland, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, NatureScot, Scottish Environment LINK and Woodland Trust.

For further background and detail, the FtCG Project Brief can be found [here](#) and a Summary of CfGR's Assessment can be found [here](#).

The project is being independently evaluated by Callum Leavey-Wilson (University of Edinburgh) to assess the value and impact of the process and contribute as a case study to his PhD.

collaborative working to agree on and develop long-term solutions.

The format of the delivery phase of the process involved an initial residential workshop, followed up by 3 additional one-day workshops, and a further final 2-day residential workshop. There was extensive outreach to stakeholders in between these: at events, workplaces and online.

Following the workshop, In October 2022, Forestry and land Scotland (FLS) joined the FtCG Steering Group to support the ongoing process.

## Workshop 1: August 2022

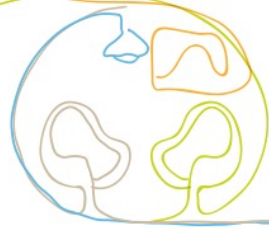
The initial residential workshop took place in Stirling on 29th - 31st August 2022 and was attended by 42 individuals from deer and land management, government (officials, agencies, regulators), environmental non-Government organisations, community forestry, science and research.

The workshop programme was varied and flexible, and included opportunities to explore:

- opinions about upland deer management - identifying elements or truths that all members of the group agree on
- the consideration of group/sector perspectives - highlighting positive and negative perceptions about their own group, and how they view others
- honest questions people wanted to ask each other about their perspectives
- the personal costs of working within the upland deer sector
- how different people involved in the upland deer sector felt about the losses they have experienced or may experience in the face of change
- what a 'Just Transition' looks like for people involved in management of the uplands, and identifying examples of good practice
- how current structures and functions within the upland deer sector are operating and ensuring inclusivity
- who holds positions of leadership in their sector/group and how they can influence others in a positive way
- commitments about working together that everyone can agree on going forward

The workshop provided participants with opportunities to socialise informally with each other and connect with each other personally.

The overall feeling of the process was positive; with participants showing a general curiosity, open-mindedness, and willingness to participate, whilst recognising that there was a degree of initial scepticism and concern on the part of some people.

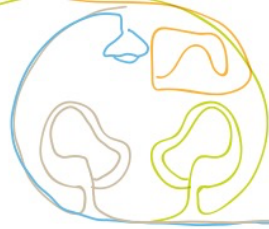


## Key observations and messages from the workshop

- There is unanimous agreement that ongoing change in upland deer management needs to continue to help tackle the climate and nature crises
- Participants feel that those affected by change in their sector need support and leadership, and there are leadership roles for people in all aspects of the deer sector
- There is no clear understanding of what the ultimate vision is for sustainable upland deer management, or how to implement the DWG recommendations
- Participants in all aspects of the deer sector fear loss of something if the issues aren't effectively explored and worked through, from losing cultures and traditions to missing opportunities to achieve biologically diverse landscapes
- Some of the key conflicts come from differences in land management objectives between neighbouring properties; there is an appetite to learn from past differences and find ways to accept the legitimacy of different objectives
- Participants feel that change for the upland deer sector should enable a 'Just

Transition 'for everyone, but that this depends on factors such as:

- better communication and transparency (helping people to understand why change is necessary)
  - having a long-term vision or roadmap to help people understand how they fit
  - agreeing on what it looks like to manage land in the 'public interest' alongside 'private and business interests'
  - understanding how people will be impacted and managing expectations
- Some parts of the deer sector need to be engaged more as part of this process (some of whom for a number of reasons were unable to attend this workshop), including, landowners, stalkers and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association
  - Participants care about their role in the deer sector and recognise in each other the passion and commitment to work collaboratively



## Areas for further dialogue

Participants were asked to consider the areas they felt there is a need for further dialogue as the process progresses. A summary of the key areas is captured below:

### Leadership and communication

- Understanding the 'vision' for deer
- Understanding 'change', what it is, priorities, scale, pace
- Greater clarity on expected roles and tasks
- Gain clarity on Scottish Biodiversity Strategy objectives and how they will be developed
- Meaningful incentives (both financial and regulation)
- Eliminating/addressing unhelpful negative media rhetoric
- Integrated policy
- How do we do more to link farming and deer management?

### Just Transition

- Engaging stalkers on the ground
- Gauging community interest in stalking/deer management
- Engaging those not in the room/bigger audience

- Exemplars of work/relatable case studies
- Finding opportunities for collaboration
- Maximising the potential of venison for Scottish society
- Meaningful incentives (both financial and regulation)
- Are we doing enough to democratise deer management?

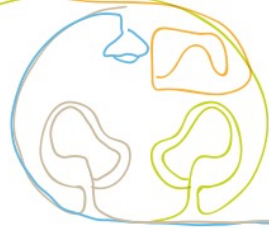
### Accountable dialogue

- Accountability
- Respect
- Statement of accord: something to remind us of what we have achieved together

### Science and information

- Agreeing on impact and density targets
- Woodland capacity and woodland design
- How do we do more to link farming and deer management?

**Note:** For any duplication above, there was a recognition that some of these areas are relevant to more than one context.

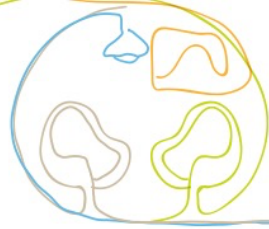


## Commitments

The conversations culminated in the development of a set of commitments that the group are prepared to keep and communicate within their respective groups and organisations:

- We will recognise the person as well as the role that they play
- We will respect the fact that other people will have other objectives (and demonstrate respect in the way that we speak and interact)
- We need to carefully consider how we talk about deer in the public arena/in the press (think about how other people may interpret/take what we are saying)
- We will remember that we are talking about people's livelihood, their way of life, their culture
- We will recognise the factors that affect the pace of change
- We recognise issues around patience/impatience – and the need to take people with us
- We will inform our members and colleagues that this process has happened/is happening so that they are aware of the possibility that things can be moved on
- We will aim to be prepared so as to manage issues that come up that need to be acknowledged and dealt with
- We acknowledge the work that's been done by the pioneers who have been looking for ways to work positively on deer management (they have taken a lot of the flak and criticism for us over the past years)
- We will make efforts to understand the language/phrases which upset people and change the narrative in a way that is constructive
- We will engage with the existing Deer Management Groups and other associations/forums (and will do so respectfully)
- We will all proactively confirm and demonstrate that respect is important in Deer Management Group meetings (and we will do this in ways which acknowledge the past and learn from previous mistakes)
- We will encourage members of Deer Management Groups and other associations and networks to give timely, honest feedback as appropriate where there are issues of conflict/things which are difficult & uncomfortable – and where things are going well

These commitments were re-visited and refined as the process developed and more participants were engaged.



## Participant feedback

Following the workshop, CfGR contacted participants to gather feedback on their thoughts and reflections on the workshop.

Participants acknowledged that the conversations that took place helped them to understand each other better and see the issues from others' perspectives.

Many were also encouraged by the openness and the positivity of the conversations, while recognising there is still a lot to do to address the challenges within the upland deer sector.

Some people felt more empowered within their role and acknowledged a realisation of the position of leadership they have in this sector.

## The process ahead

Next steps in the process included further workshops and interventions, which were shaped by the outcomes and feedback of the Stirling workshop. CfGR engaged with other stakeholders who were not present at the Stirling workshop. Callum Leavey-Wilson continued to conduct his evaluation in parallel.

## Workshop 2, November 2022

A further workshop was held online on 3rd November 2022

Invitees included all who attended the Stirling workshop in August and all those who were unable to attend at the time.

## Focus of the workshop

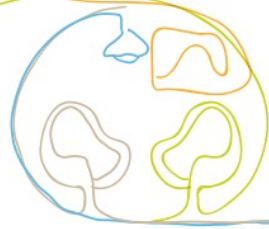
- a discussion to explore viewpoints on the vision, strategy and plans for deer management,
- share updates with the group on further plans for the FtCG process, including other conversations we are having with people or groups who weren't at the Stirling gathering, and
- offer the opportunity for input to be shared within this group on how our commitments to each other are being progressed.

A presentation was given by a senior official to set the context for the first discussion point on the Scottish Government's strategy and vision for deer management in Scotland. Participants were then invited to discuss what they had heard in breakout groups and plenary. The key

points from this discussion are summarised as follows:

- It was questioned whether the vision is shared [by all]
- Communication about the vision is not clear or engaging enough or relatable to the people 'on the ground' (land owners and managers)
- The vision needs to account for the impact of other herbivores, as well as deer
- The vision needs to show people what we are trying to get to through better management of deer
- There is still a lot of thinking to do around the details of the vision and the intention is for it to be done with stakeholders and in a joined up way with other drivers of change





- There are a lot of challenges affecting managers' ability to deliver deer culls, including bottlenecks in the venison market
- Good practice in deer management should be acknowledged and promoted more
- There needs to be acknowledgement of biases and complexity
- Those who are not directly involved in [FtCG] process need to be engaged and brought along with it

The last session of the workshop gave an opportunity to share what actions, conversations and collaborations participants had been working on or developing since the Stirling workshop in August. Many of the participants described how they had begun developing positive dialogue and partnerships.

## Workshop 3, February 2023

At the online workshop in November, a task group of people who have engaged in the process was formed to co-design a workshop focused on knowledge exchange in the upland deer sector, and communication of information.

The task group members were representative of most of the sectors involved in upland deer management and work on data and information, including stalking and land management, forestry, consultancy, ecology and environmental NGOs.

It was proposed that the workshop would provide space to discuss:

- How we process and understand information and knowledge within the sector (this includes lived experience, wisdom, science, data, professional perspectives, etc)
- How our various views have to do with our different positions and roles within the sector and the 'optics' and 'filters' that we have as a result
- How we use, express and explore differences of opinion, interpretation and judgement in respect of knowledge and information
- How all this shapes practical delivery, the effects and knock-on results of peoples' actions for others, and the resulting ways that people relate to each other in the sector
- How we can communicate better to build trust and strengthen our exchange of knowledge and information, to improve understanding

The task group met twice between November and February to discuss the key focuses of the workshop. It was acknowledged that during this time a specific conflict situation escalated in Assynt about deer management between neighbouring stakeholders. CfGR facilitators liaised about it with the

FtCG Steering Group and with some of the parties involved, to determine the most appropriate way to consider this development in the ongoing process.

The knowledge and information exchange workshop was held in Birnam in late February and was well attended by around 50 individuals, which included a number of participants new to the process. Participants were initially asked to review the working agreement, which was developed during the first workshop in August 2022. The working agreement is designed to frame how we interact with act others as part of this process, and beyond, and it is endorsed by all participants.

## Perceptions, optics and filters

Participants were then led through a series of exercises exploring their perceptions and filters. Some of these were simple optical illusions and some were more directed to demonstrate how filters can be introduced.

The key points of these exercises in relation to how we interpret and communicate knowledge, information and data are:

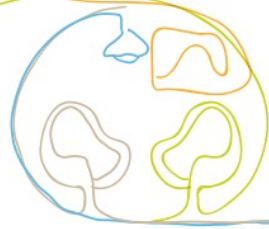
- We have filters in our mind as coping mechanisms that are developed over time through our experience
- We interpret new information according to prior experiences or cultural norms. This means we often only look for information that supports our existing view, so we might miss information that may be useful
- We are mostly not aware that we are using a filtering process on a continual basis.

## Values

Participants then considered their values, what these are for each person and how these values and beliefs drive and shape the way they do things. Some of the key observations included:

- There are commonalities in many people's goals for sustainable deer management, but differences in views around how this is achieved
- These differences are influenced by often deeply rooted values and beliefs that are shaped by experience and heritage
- Conflict often arises over single issue points, particularly where there might be a wide overlap of values





## Information and live issues

Participants were asked to consider how they react to receiving challenging information. What kind of things trigger a negative reaction, and why? Examples were shared from their experiences in the upland deer sector and beyond. What emerged was that it is often not about the actual thing being done, but rather how it is done and communicated, which they felt sometimes devalued people and their views. Some issues create strong differences in opinion; and participants felt it was important to recognise commonalities and differences and handle them in a way that moves things forward positively.

Finally, the group discussed how they feel about some of the 'live' issues going on in the deer sector at the moment. There was concern about how conflict situations are communicated openly in the media, and how it affects relationships and reputations in the wider sector. There was a recognition of the need to build trust to help the sector cope with the uncertainties of change ahead, particularly for those who fear losing their job and parts of

their culture. The workshop concluded with an opportunity for participants to air things that they consider to be 'elephants in the room' that needed to be the ongoing focus of relationship building.

Feedback from the workshop in the main was positive and conversations during the breaks and lunch were lively and dynamic. There was a keenness by some for the process to begin looking at practical ways forward to addressing some of the key issues being raised, which would be the main focus in the final workshop planned for June.

There were also reflections shared more broadly on positive changes within the sector in people's interactions as well as more measured online communications.

The FtCG Steering Group and knowledge exchange task group met with CfGR facilitators after this workshop to help consolidate the learnings from the workshop and inform next steps.

## Workshop 4: June 2023

### Stalkers, Landowners & Land Managers Workshop, Invergarry

There were 35 participants in the workshop, 30 of whom were from a stalking and land management background. For many of the participants, this was their first workshop in the Finding the Common Ground (FtCG) Process.

The workshop involved a 'walk and talk' around Culachy Estate followed by facilitated discussions in large and small groups at Glengarry Community Hall. Following this, the group articulated what they would like to share as their narrative to the wider sector.

#### Our narrative:

- We recognise the climate and biodiversity emergency, and directly see the effects.
- We are the leaders in this sector, both in terms of our skills, which are essential to help meet the challenges of the climate and nature crises, and the opportunities we have to exemplify and share good practice;
- Our culture, traditions and communities are important and have a place in the future of Scotland, we have been living and working on this ground for generations.
- We are the ones that know how to deliver what the government want.
- We want to be involved in shaping our future.
- We recognise the need for diversification to adapt to change;
- We believe that the Land needs managing as a whole and there in a one-size-fits-all approach;
- Collaboration is important but it needs to be meaningful and work both ways (e.g. with Government);
- Public awareness on deer management needs to be improved, both locally and nationally, to ensure better influence on policy development and future generations of deer managers;
- Land ecology and management, and rural environments should be brought more into mainstream education programmes to help young people learn about opportunities in the sector;
- Stalkers need to be brought along with change and supported to understand why it is needed, so they can make informed choices;
- Deer management skills need to be safeguarded for the future through training and education.

Throughout the FtCG process CfGR practitioners heard from stalkers and land managers that they felt under-represented in decision-making forums and discussions, and that their voice is not well heard by Scottish Government and other stakeholders. They would particularly like to be heard by:

- Scottish Government ministers and officials,
- education providers,
- the wider deer sector (especially their neighbours, as there can be conflict between adjacent estates) and
- the wider public.

In thinking about the way forward, the group would like to see/ask for:

- Stalkers and land managers having more of a 'voice at the table', and in particular for younger voices in the sector
- Greater funding to be able to support change within the sector, as well as for education and training opportunities
- Reassurance and transparency from landowners about job security and change
- Sharing of positive stories and perspectives from the sector.

## Workshop 5, June 2023

The final workshop in the Finding the Common Ground (FtCG) project (May 2021 to July 2023) took place at the Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling University on 20 and 21 June 2023.

There were over 50 participants, representing a good cross section of people working in the deer management sector in upland Scotland. Over half of the participants had been involved in the project from the beginning; others had joined as FtCG progressed: several participants, including a number of young stalkers, were attending a FtCG event for the first time.

Although the turnout was substantial, and almost in line with the expectations of the organisers, a

number of people who had been involved in or who were interested in the FtCG process could not attend for a variety of reasons. Those who could not attend sent their apologies and affirmed their commitment to future involvement. In all cases, peoples' connections to the FtCG project remain friendly, and all of those who were invited to the Stirling workshop will receive this summary report and are invited to engage with the ongoing work of the FtCG process.



## Day One – Tuesday 20th June 2023

### Description of the workshop

Colleagues from Centre for Good Relations (CfGR) facilitated the workshop in line using their 'civic mediation' and 'accountable dialogue' approaches. The first day began with an opportunity for people to introduce themselves to others in the room, followed by consideration of the 'working agreement' which has been developed through the FtCG process. This consideration needed little time, as it was clear that everyone present was agreeable to sticking to the working agreement. There was then feedback from the two task groups which carried out work as part of the FtCG project.

### Feedback from the knowledge exchange task group

CfGR facilitators described the workings of the task group, which met online both before and after the February 2023 Birnam workshop. It explored such questions as:

- How we process and understand information and knowledge within the sector (this includes lived experience, wisdom, science, data, professional perspectives, etc.)
- How our various views have to do with our different positions and roles within the sector, and the 'optics' and 'filters' that we have as a result
- How we use, express and explore differences of opinion, interpretation and judgement in respect of knowledge and information
- How all this shapes practical delivery, the effects and knock-on results of peoples' actions for others, and the resulting ways that people relate to each other in the sector

Two members of the group fed back on the discussions from the Birnam workshop, where

there had been heated debates on a range of issues including:

- Deer fencing
- Consultation on DWG report
- The Glen Feshie deer cull (2004)
- Leaving carcasses on the hill

These debates highlighted strong cultural beliefs, a perceived threat to some peoples' livelihoods and sense of identity from lower deer densities. There were questions about the relationship between debates on immediate, practical matters and 'the big issues'.

People talked about whether there was any point in collecting data if we're not going to agree on it and urged that people should be transparent about their motivations for management of land and deer.

The way forward was felt to involve: honesty about motivations; looking for ways to achieve all parties' objectives; identifying incompatible objectives; focussing on positive examples; developing a common vision; capacity building for DMG chairs; joint project working (e.g. to

explore the venison chain); mediated discussion on contentious sites; joint development of

methods for research and monitoring using shared knowledge e.g. Deermap.

It was felt there was a need to get people together to work on subjects or issues they really disagree with each other on. It was agreed that it is useful get people out into the field and get them seeing things from a different perspective. The workshop in Invergarry was good for this. Other reflections from the discussion included:

- Looking for ways to achieve all parties' objectives: some people said that this is what government policy has been looking at for 50 years. Is it still about this or are we looking to make starker choices?
- Important to meet differences head on. Brings back the power of data – can take some of the emotion and anecdotal evidence out?
- DMG chairs. The sector need chairs that are more involved and prepared to get out there, meet members and address some of the issues simmering beneath the surface.
- Sense that we are getting away from deer densities – need to look at occupancy, manage habitats better. Challenge of use of deer densities in policy.
- Scotland is a small country but a big space and does not need a homogenous approach. There is a polarised view of what is right or wrong. Optimistic about this FtCG process for helping to encourage better communication.
- What is the intention of a land manager and how do they intend to use the data? Is it just a tick box to collect data or do they use it to inform deer management and show how they have made decisions? Need consistency across the board and better understanding of what the data tells us.
- Need to involve government more in this [FtCG] process (i.e., elected members). Understanding is better than it used to be but needs better integration.
- Information collected at site level for operational planning – need good methods and assistance for interpretation. But also need it at a national level – need a national land use monitoring plan (like in other countries).

## Feedback from the stalkers and land managers group

The feedback from this group began with an overview of the process, and then the showing of a short 15-minute film 'Voices from the Glen', which highlighted the perspectives and feelings of some stalkers.<sup>1</sup>

Members of the task group then shared reflections on their group's workshop, which had been held in Invergarry on 7 June. This comprised conversations on the hill, followed by conversations in small groups. There was then a substantial discussion on issues arising. These included:

- Narrative does not need to be conservation or stalking. Some good examples of where the middle ground has been found and these stories need to be told.
- Stalkers do understand the climate and nature crises.
- Skills needed for someone coming into the industry – a lot to learn and a lot is changing in the industry. Need to intertwine old and new skills.
- Education in land management should be addressed more broadly. Need to fill gaps in further education, highlight opportunities and incentivise younger generation to take up land management roles
- Acknowledgement of film and thanks to those who were interviewed.
- Rural communities are dwindling with change, more holiday homes. Need to try and bring the community along with the change. Rural depopulation is not new, but opportunities need to be grasped to embrace change and bring benefits to communities.
- Stalkers feel they are 'easy to blame' and don't find it easy to speak up within policy discussions. Video is good for highlighting perspectives. There is change coming (e.g., carbon markets), but who is teaching the ones who are going to make the change?
- Game sector is all broken up – deer, grouse, etc., needs to be more coherent. Funding has to come from the top level – people need to be supported to implement the solutions.
- Shouldn't be a fear of change – opportunities should be grasped. This sector is well-placed to evolve, uniquely placed to deliver climate and nature targets. Policy can change quickly, but lived experience and knowledge is brought along through the change. Some managers are trying to manage their land for wider public interest.
- Data gathering needs to be more robust. More homogeneity of data collection and use of evidence can give people more confidence in the data they hold.
- Stalkers always have been adapting over the generations, it's not new.
- Desire for momentum and confidence in this [FtCG] process to endure and needs to filter through to the ones less keen to speak up or engage.

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<sup>1</sup> This film was produced with financial support from the Cairngorms National Park Authority.



## Input from Scottish Government

The workshop proceeded with an input of reflections from a senior Scottish Government official, who addressed the question of what the vision on deer management actually means for the next decade and beyond.

A range of themes were covered including the pace of climate change; a recognition that participants in the workshop had a real understanding of the behaviour change needed to respond to climate change (better than most people); the way that biodiversity loss is intertwined with effects of climate change; the clear position of government that deer numbers are currently too high across Scotland, whilst acknowledging differences between areas; upcoming consultation later in the year on new legislation linked to DWG report.

The government's position was described as being driven by climate change impacts and biodiversity loss. The voluntary ask is for 10 deer per km<sup>2</sup>. '10 deer per km<sup>2</sup> is about right to maintain a heathland environment; 4-5km<sup>2</sup> to support already regenerating woodland; 2 or less for establishing new native woodland. Sporting models are less possible the lower the deer density'.

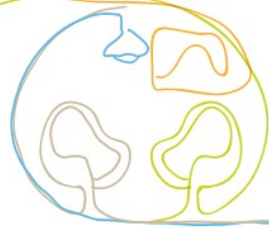
### Further points included:

- More woodland creation needed, not in every land holding and not all at the

same time. People coming into land ownership are changing, there is a trend towards carbon markets and different models. Government shouldn't have a role of telling landowners what to do, unless in the public interest. Government want to see continuation of nature regeneration and if stress on climate and biodiversity gets worse there will be more compunction for intervention.

- Challenges around rural housing – these lie alongside deer management. Looking at an uplift of 20-30% deer culling overall, which should create jobs, but these jobs may look different. Little change at some estates where they are already at deer density targets, more change where more culling needed.
- Opportunities for health and vibrancy of rural economies, Ministers are committed to Just Transition, but no change is not one of the options across upland Scotland.

The input was well-received and generated a range of questions and reflections from participants, and the morning session closed with some consideration of how government and people in the deer management sector can work better together.



## Focusing on key issues

During the afternoon, there were group discussions on a range of issues, with people having a couple of opportunities to focus on particular issues, and more generally able to 'move between' discussions.

### Topics explored:

- Exploring the vision
- Mechanisms for enabling change on the ground
- Technical and practical considerations
- Communicating better, building trust & confidence
- Just Transition – future jobs – the focus on the people
- Fostering creativity & Innovation in the sector
- Developing a concordat for the sector
- Future Jobs: What's the old job? What's the new job?
- Where do deer fit into our new imagined habitat?
- Recognising every place, every piece of land is different, how do we develop policies and practices that accommodate change?

The brief to participants was to look at topics in detail to explore the dilemmas around the topic and to try to come to some agreements on things that need to be done/considered in order to move forward; and to think about roles and responsibilities for delivery, but also, to encourage ownership of the issue.

In closing reflections at the end of the formal part of day one, there were a range of positive views, including:

- 'There is a commitment to understanding range of things in the mix'
- 'Very good day'
- 'More clarity than I expected'
- 'We have an awful lot to think about and fit in'
- 'The key issues are not as contentious as it sometimes seems'
- 'We need to have in mind the voices that are not in this room'

## Day Two – Wednesday 21st June 2023

Day two began with people being invited to share reflections that they had overnight, and ‘brainwaves from the bar’.

There were a range of views on the government’s position as set out on day one; the need to bring others into the discussion (‘we need to bring other people on board that aren’t here. This needs exposure and time – estates and glens can be sheltered places, need to get the influencers to filter through the DMGs to encourage changes in thinking’); the positive challenge of younger stalkers bringing new ideas into the sector; considering sensible ways of delivering the three objectives around climate, nature and livelihoods, and balancing that in a better way.

Several participants were looking forward to the process after this workshop: ‘the process needs to be continued, continue building relationships to move things forward. There are examples out there of people and groups who have found compromises, we need to learn from that, as well as examples of where land managers are

already delivering in line with government policy/vision’.

There was specific discussion on the development of the proposed ‘Common Ground Accord’.<sup>2</sup> A draft of this was discussed, and signed by many participants in the workshop, with others agreeing to take it back to their organisations for consideration (as they did not feel that it would be appropriate for them to sign as individuals).

After this some time was given to exploring the possibility of developing a common vision and assessing the current structures and mechanisms in the sector and their effectiveness. It was recognised that improvements to the current structures (e.g. DMGs) would take time and would be an evolutionary process rather than expecting revolutionary change.

### Discussion on the vision ranged over key principles.

- The vision is not / cannot be ‘top down’: it is multi-directional.
- People noted that what tends to shape what actually happens are not visions so much as events (e.g. Covid, Brexit).
- Key elements of the vision: Addressing the twin crises (climate change,

ecosystem restoration – restoring nature); Developing our communities (livelihoods, change, traditions); aiming for a mosaic of land uses; The vision is about how the uplands will work in all dimensions; guided by a double recognition - What’s been done (and in

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<sup>2</sup> The Common Ground Accord: 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.

particular what has been done which is positive on which we can build)? A recognition that lots of issues remain: What are the priorities within the vision? (Themes are relatively easy to agree,

priorities less so); How can changes be made? What are the costs and who will carry these? What commitments will people make to realise the positive changes we are looking for?

There was then further discussion about issues involved in implementing the vision, of potential mechanisms for enabling change on the ground, of possible incentives for change, and a discussion of what people would like to see happen next. Key points included:

- Crucial for ADMG or DMGs to distribute the enthusiasm and progress that has been made, irrespective of everyone's individual opinions to give opportunity for others/encourage others to get involved.
- A lot being asked of people in this room, all invested time which comes at a cost. Needs to be a degree of leadership and direction from here on so this process continues in the right direction.
- Suggested model - back in early 90s formed the native woodland policy forum, which became the next sort of stage along to progress. There was a paid element there too, and forum brought together 4 times in 18 months. Resulted in a lot of the action for native woodlands.
- Call for leadership maybe fronted by ADMG, but we're all willing to help.
- Measuring success and pace of change are big questions that are challenge in themselves.
- Continuation of the FtCG process and levels of communication:
  - Maintain short-term momentum
  - Communication needs to be focused and regular.
- One thing people can do even in their busy lives is spread the word about this process
- we need to enable people outside this room to be able to sign up to the same ideology [of this process], we need to make it easy for people to do that. Not just deer sector, but others (e.g., crofters).
- Big list of actions but comfort that there is willingness to try and help one step at a time
- Mission statement to take back to DMGs about what we all agree.
- Inspired by what I've heard through this workshop and last 12 months. A good first action would be a press release on what has been happening and what progress has been made.
- The vision could a headline for the government and the sub-bullets be what the sector comes up with. Group members to communicate this to government official(s)
- If we did the power spectrum exercise (see note from first workshop) would want to see everyone considered as important as each other in this sector



# Centre for Good Relations

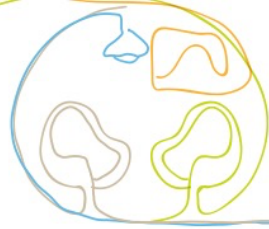
- Appreciation for including younger voices. But feel pressure on them to go back to work and try and influence

change - need some support to help share this with employers and peers

There was a panel discussion involving FtCG steering group members, which focused on positive next steps that could be taken, including how to involve wider circles of people, and how to communicate the outcomes of the workshop. Key points included:

- Positive process, a lot to build on. Don't yet know how we take it forward or what resource is required, but will begin exploring this
- Participants acknowledged work of steering group, fellow participants and CfGR in making this workshop in particular enjoyable and productive
- Perception of improved relationships and communication was highlighted
- Significant challenges ahead which the steering group realises, but are committed to taking things forward and will draw on the wider group. Amazingly impressed by how far we have come in the last 2 years in terms of building relationships.

The closing comments by participants in the workshop were positive, including expressions of thanks to the steering group and facilitators.



## Next steps: taking the process forward

As a result of the enthusiasm and commitment of participants at the final workshop, the Steering Group agreed to continue to drive forward a new phase of work, to build on the momentum created from Finding the Common Ground. The immediate next steps were described by the chair of the Steering Group to workshop participants via an email shortly after the workshop:

- A suggestion to call the group of people who have been involved in the Finding the Common Ground process “The Common Ground Forum”
- The action list from the workshop presented in a spreadsheet format – which the Steering Group will use start drafting objectives and a plan of action going forward.
- An invitation for organisations to publicly sign up to Our Common Ground Accord.
- A draft of a public statement for participants to use for their own purposes for comment.
- A draft shared vision is being discussed by a sub-group of people who will further refine it so it can be presented back to the group.
- The plan to build a website, resourced by CNPA and with comms support from ADMG, as a neutral place to house information about the Common Ground Forum and its activities
- A meeting has been arranged with a senior official from the Scottish Government in late August to discuss developments.