Written submission from Borders Deer Management Group

Land Reform Bill: sporting rates on deer shootings and deer forests

At its meeting on 4 August 2015, the Borders Deer Management Group discussed the impact of the proposed sporting rates on deer management, and agreed that a collective submission should be made on its behalf.

The Group is of the view that the proposals in the Land Reform Bill do not sufficiently address the differences in deer species, in land-holdings and in habitats which characterise Scotland. One size does not fit all. Here in the Borders, the dominant species on the Upper Tweed is sika, and there are also considerable numbers of roe; there are no red deer. Most land holdings are small, especially when compared with the Highlands, and much of the total is forestry.

In the past the Deer Commission for Scotland has placed some landowners within the Borders Deer Management Group under Section 7, requiring them to shoot more deer. The Deer Commission was motivated by two considerations: the damage done to forestry by sika, and the fact that sika are classed as a non-native species and are known to hybridise with red. The costs to land-owners of effective sika management are considerable. It is estimated that the time taken to stalk and kill a sika deer is in excess of 20 hours, and very often stalkers will return empty handed. It is unfair that, when the Deer Commission itself regarded sika stalking rightly as a costly but essential management tool, the Land Reform Bill should consider it a rateable sporting activity.