**The Finding the Common Ground Project**

‘Finding the Common Ground’ was a two-year process initiated by the Finding the Common Ground Steering Group, which brought together the Association of Deer Management Groups and Scottish Environment LINK, together with relevant public and representative bodies, under an independent Chair. Its objective was to develop better relationships across the deer sector in upland Scotland and to find shared solutions supporting the implementation of the Scottish Government’s action in the light of their response to the Deer Working Group recommendations.

Over time relationships between some involved in upland deer management have been challenged by low trust and conflict. To navigate the changing priorities for upland deer management, the initiative set out to understand, and then address, these barriers to workable relationships.

The process was facilitated by Centre for Good Relations, an independent not-for-profit company whose core work is “civic mediation”, involving facilitation and dialogue to work through issues of contention and dispute, and addressing social conflicts and tensions.

Some of the main issues that were blocking constructive dialogue between stakeholders were examined, particularly around leadership and communication, addressing impacts for people working on the ground, accountable dialogue and science and information*.* Subsequently these issues are being tackled through further work via the stakeholders themselves, bringing in others.

The work has involved almost 150 stakeholders across the deer management sector, representing different perspectives – including private landowners and managers, deer stalkers, the Scottish Government and statutory agencies, environmental NGOs, the agricultural sector, foresters and community trusts.

This project has started an enabling process to help identify and implement workable solutions on the ground, addressing the greater need for collaboration that the Scottish Government has acknowledged will be needed. As such, it has been linked to the processes that the Scottish Government is leading to implement the Deer Working Group’s recommendations.

The Finding the Common Ground project was supported by generous funding from:

* NatureScot
* Woodland Trust
* Cairngorms National Park Authority
* Association of Deer Management Groups
* Future Woodlands Scotland
* Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority
* Scottish Environment LINK

A public statement covering what the Common Ground Forum is and what it does is available here.

Finding the Common Ground Project - [Brief](https://thecommongroundforum.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FtCG-on-upland-deer-management_project-brief.pdf)  
Finding the Common Ground Project - [Report July 20](https://thecommongroundforum.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Overview-of-Finding-the-Common-Ground-Project-July-2023.pdf) (CfGR)  
[Interim Evaluation Report (Edinburgh University)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DseYThAzt_1-fwS14a5pKJtUTOSZSFdV/view)