

**Minutes of the 287th Meeting of the Deer Commission
for Scotland held in Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness
on Wednesday, 5th December 2007**

OPEN SESSION

Present: Prof J Milne (Chairman)
Dr A Barbour
Dr C Shedden
Dr P Mayhew
Mr A Hamilton
Dr S Walker
Mr N Rowantree
Sir Michael Strang Steel
Prof J Pemberton

Mr N Halfhide (Chief Executive)
Mr R Edwards (Head of Admin)
Mr R Kernahan (Director of Deer Management)
Mr A MacGugan (Director of Stakeholder Relations)

Ms S Davies, SNH
Mr C McLean, CNPA

1 OPENING REMARKS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting. There was 1 member of the public in attendance.
- 1.2 There were apologies from Mr S Pepper and the Earl of Dalhousie.

2 DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25TH SEPTEMBER 2007

Paper: 287/1

- 2.1 Members **agreed** the following amendment:

Paragraph 1.1 to read 'The Chairman welcomed all present. There were no members of the public present'.

- 2.2 Subject to the inclusion of this amendment, Members **approved** the minutes.

Action: Head of Admin

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON

25TH SEPTEMBER 2007

Paper: 287/2

- 3.1 Members **noted** the contents of Paper: 287/2.

4 BIODIVERSITY ON DESIGNATED SITES – GOVERNANCE AND PROGRESS

Paper: 287/3

- 4.1 The Director of Deer Management introduced the paper, setting out proposed changes to the governance of the Nature Conservation targets, and updating Members on DCS' contribution to date.

- 4.2 He clarified that SNH planned to draft terms of reference for the Project Board by Christmas; Peter Russell, the Rural Director within the Scottish Government, would be the chair; and decisions on budget allocations would remain with agency Boards.
- 4.3 During the discussion, Members expressed the following concerns:
- It is not clear whether there will be sufficient resources available to address the impacts of deer and other grazers on all designated sites over the next 2 years;
 - There is a lead-in time of several months to have new staff in post;
 - DCS needed to have a better understanding of the costs of maintaining sites in favourable condition in the longer term; and
 - DCS need to have urgent discussions with SNH and the Scottish Government to consider resources to achieve the 2010 targets.
- 4.4 Members **agreed** in principle that the Deer Inter-agency Liaison Group (DILG) be replaced by a core stakeholder group with shared responsibility for achieving the Scottish and UK Governments' Nature Conservation Targets; and **noted** progress with DCS' contribution to the Scottish and UK Governments' Nature Conservation Targets.

5 THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF BEST PRACTICE

Paper: 287/4

- 5.1 The Director of Stakeholder Relations introduced this paper, presenting proposals for the development of Best Practice Guidance beyond March 2008. He explained that these proposals were the result of informal discussion with Steering Group members, and that once agreed by the Board, they would be discussed more formally.
- 5.2 Members discussed the value of the copyright, and stressed that it was important for the material within the Guides to be used widely and not restricted. Members **agreed** that the Deer Management Committee should discuss the detail of the copyright.
- 5.3 Members noted that the Demonstration Events had been well received within the deer industry and **agreed** that DCS should seek sponsorship to hold a second event each year.
- 5.4 Following discussion, the Board **agreed** in principle to constituting a Best Practice Agreement; that DCS should retain copyright for the Best Practice Guides on behalf of the Partnership; to hold at least one Best Practice Demonstration Event, and that staff should report progress to DCS' Deer Management Committee.

Action: Director of Stakeholder Relations
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6 RED DEER REFUGIA: PROPOSED EXTENSIONS

Paper: 287/5

- 6.1 Prof. Pemberton declared an interest.
- 6.2 The Director of Deer Management introduced the paper seeking the Board's approval to add Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs as red deer refugia

islands under the 1999 Sika Order of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, subject to the outcome of a genetic analysis.

- 6.3 During discussion, Members noted that:
- the sample size for analysis from Scarba was small;
 - further work was required to define the criteria for assessing the results;
 - DCS needed to clarify the frequency of future genetic testing; and
 - Prof. Pemberton had approached Scottish Natural Heritage to obtain funding to employ a PhD student to assist with future genetic testing.
- 6.4 Members **agreed** that staff develop a proposal for a rolling programme for testing refugia once the Scarba analysis was complete.
- 6.5 Following discussion, it was **agreed** that Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs be added to the islands already named as refugia under the 1999 Sika Order of the Wildlife and Countryside Act subject to the successful outcome of the genetic testing.

Action: Director of Deer Management

7 REVISED ANNUAL PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2007-08

Paper: 287/6

- 7.1 The Chief Executive introduced the paper, explaining the proposed changes to Annual Plan targets and a revised budget for 2007-08.

Annual Plan

- 7.2 Following some discussion, Members **agreed** to recommend the following changes to DCS' Annual Plan for 2007-08 to the Scottish Government (numbers refer to Annual Plan actions):
- 1.1 Amend the timetable for consultation and completion of the Strategy to that agreed by the Board in September 07. Publication of the finalised Strategy is now scheduled for June 08.
- 1.4 Move the progress report on overview of Seasons progress from Board Meeting in December 07 to March 08, following consideration by the Strategy Committee in February 08.
- 1.7 Add a further milestone – "Promote understanding among land managers and businesses about deer-related funding opportunities under the SRDP".
- 1.9 Remove the target date for the grading pilot as part of the venison marketing as achievement of this target is largely outwith DCS' control.
- 1.20 Add a further milestone – "Ensure that the information for 05-06 and 06-07 cull returns is completed and available on the DCS website by Dec 07".
- 2.1 Put on hold a specific customer service review on authorisations and instead seek the necessary analysis as part of a larger SEARs research project.

- 2.3 Add a further milestone – “Complete removal of all remaining equipment at Knowsley to Great Glen House or Longman by end of March 2008”.
- 2.7 Revise to read “Draft description of sustainable deer management by April 2007; select study areas by May 2007; recruit project officer by January 2008; have two case studies running by end of March 2008”.
- 4.3 Change deadline for publishing the Annual Report for 06-07 to the end of October 07.
- 4.11 Change target for considering co-location options for the Stirling office to the end of December 07.
- 7.3 Members noted that delays in recruiting a suitable project officer for the Case Studies Project had been exacerbated by the Interim Head of Strategy returning to the Cairngorms National Park Authority at the end of November to take up a promotion, and a request from the Scottish Government to postpone recruiting to this post until Ministers announce the outcome of their review of the public sector delivery landscape.
- 7.4 As well as agreeing a change to the 07-08 target for this project, Members noted that targets for agreeing the 4 other case studies would be included in the Annual Plan for 2008-2009. Members **agreed** that the project needed to avoid duplication with 2 existing projects, RELU (www.relu.ac.uk) and Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century (www.cms.uhi.ac.uk/estates.htm), bearing in mind the different timescales of each.

Revised Budget

- 7.5 Following discussion of factors contributing to the increase in helicopter and accommodation costs, Members **agreed** to recommend the revised budget to the Scottish Government.

Action: Chief Executive

8 REVIEW OF CO-LOCATION TO GREAT GLEN HOUSE

Paper: 287/7

- 8.1 The Chief Executive introduced the paper presenting the findings of a review of DCS' co-location to Great Glen House (GGH). He proposed that the additional costs to DCS of occupying Great Glen House were more than offset by the efficiency savings, particularly through the use of video conferencing and reduced office management. Further, he suggested that the intangible benefits to DCS on co-location were also valuable. Co-location continues to raise DCS' profile with those who visit Great Glen House but at the same time this does not appear to have restricted DCS' ability to work with partners on the ground. Co-location has made DCS more efficient and more effective for less money overall.
- 8.2 During discussion, Members and staff made the following points:
- DCS' contribution to the rates for GGH is much higher than at Knowsley;
 - DCS contributes to the cost of the public spaces and joint facilities (such as meeting rooms and the canteen), and this partly explains why energy costs are higher than at Knowsley;
 - The open plan office environment suits some staff and some activities, but not others;

- The imminent sale of Knowsley is a net gain to the public purse;
- Storage facilities for DCS at GGH are improving and should finally be in place by the end of March 08; and
- Some of efficiency savings identified in the paper, particularly on stationery, seem high.

8.3 Bearing these additional points in mind, Members **agreed** that the co-location had produced efficiency savings for DCS and had resulted in a net gain to the Scottish Government.

9 RECENT DISEASE OUTBREAKS – LESSONS LEARNT

Paper: 287/8

9.1 The Director of Stakeholder Relations introduced the paper, presenting lessons learnt from the recent outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Blue Tongue Disease.

9.2 During the discussion, Members **noted** the following points:

- Many land managers had questioned the value of restrictions on practitioners in Scotland during the recent FMD outbreak;
- It was very important that DCS contribute to the current review of disease outbreak arrangements, and this needed to include the export of trophies and skulls.

9.3 Members thanked the Director of Stakeholder Relations for his efficient and effective management of deer-related issues during the FMD outbreak during the summer and autumn.

9.4 Following discussion, Members **agreed** that DCS:

- contributes to the Scottish Government review of disease outbreak arrangements;
- builds further relationships with Animal Health both at the policy and local level;
- seeks amendment to the 'FMD Order' that introduces restrictions that are understandable and workable and, if possible, include reference to the export of 'trophy skulls';
- formalise within the organisation, a cascade process to disseminate information;
- to develop a contingency plan with Animal Health in relation to 'Blue Tongue';
- maintain an up-to-date e-mailing list;
- ensure real-time editing of the web site; and
- establish and keep current a new Disease web page within the DCS site.

Action: Director of Stakeholder Relations
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10 TICKS AND TICK-BORNE DISEASE**Paper: 287/9**

- 10.1 The Chief Executive introduced the paper, updating Members on the recent initiative by the Minister for Environment on tick and tick-borne disease, and seeking discussion on what else DCS could do to support the Minister's initiative.
- 10.2 Members discussed the use of herbal blocks, noting their concerns at the lack of research into their effectiveness and safety, and the possible negative impact on the image of wild venison; and that DCS had raised these concerns at the Ministerial meeting as well as separately with the Association of Deer Management Groups and with many individual Deer Management Groups.
- 10.3 The Director of Stakeholder Relations informed the meeting that the Government vets were due to meet with those trialling the herbal blocks later in the month, and thereafter the Food Standards Agency would be issuing a notice to all estates concerning residues in meat.
- 10.4 Members also discussed anecdotal reports that some estates were conducting trials applying acaricides to deer. Members **agreed** that staff explore the legal status of any such trials and that this be included on the agenda for discussion at the next informal meeting of Members in February 2008.
- 10.5 Members discussed the proposed line to take and **agreed** to submit any comments to the Chief Executive by 14th December 2007 so that he could respond to the Minister early in the New Year.

Action: Members / Chief Executive

11 OUTCOME OF THE 2007 SPENDING REVIEW

- 11.1 The Chief Executive provided Members with an oral update on the Scottish Government's proposed budget for 2008-11, and its implications for DCS.
- 11.2 DCS' proposed budget allocation for the next 3 years is as follows:

Financial Year	Budget Allocation
2008/09	£1,800,000
2009/10	£1,800,000
2010/11	£1,900,000

- 11.3 Members **noted** that DCS' Corporate Plan for 2008-11 would be considered by the Strategy Committee at the start of February 2008 prior to consideration by the full Board on 3rd March 2008.
- 11.4 The Chief Executive **agreed** to circulate a copy of the Scottish Budget Spending Review 2007 to Members.

Action: Chief Executive

12 EXTERNAL MEETINGS ATTENDED BY CHAIRMAN AND DIRECTOR**Paper: 287/10**

- 12.1 Members **noted** the contents of the paper detailing external meetings attended, and to be attended, by the Chairman and Chief Executive.

13 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Deer Management Committee

Draft Minutes of meeting held 30th October 2007

Paper: 287/11

- 13.1 Members noted the draft Minutes of the Deer Management Committee meeting held on the 30th October 2007.

Strategy Committee

Draft Minutes of meeting held 29th October 2007

Paper: 287/12

- 13.2 Members noted the draft Minutes of the Strategy Committee meeting held on the 29th October 2007.

Resources & Audit Committee

Draft Minutes of meeting held 29th October 2007

Paper: 287/13

- 13.3 Members noted the draft Minutes of the Resources & Audit Committee meeting held on the 29th October 2007.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Deer on Barra

- 14.1 The Director of Deer Management reported that DCS staff had recently culled 11 Red deer on Barra that had escaped from a deer farm. The carcasses had been sold to contribute to the costs of the operation. The local Agricultural Officer had agreed to inform DCS if there was evidence of any further deer.

- 14.2 Members expressed their thanks to the staff who participated in the operation.

Outgoing Members

- 14.3 The Chairman advised Members that this was the final meeting for Dr S Walker and Sir Michael Strang Steel as Commissioners. He thanked both for their hard work and contributions towards the work of DCS during their 6 years in office, and presented them with a plaque.

- 14.4 There was no other business.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 15.1 The next meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, 3rd March 2008 in Inverness.

JA [Signature]
10/11/08