

**Deer Commission for Scotland  
297<sup>th</sup> Open Board Meeting on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010  
Great Glen House, Inverness**

**Agenda**

**OPEN SESSION – 15:30**

- |   |                                                                 |              |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Apologies                                                       |              |
| 2 | Draft Minutes of Meeting of held 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2010     | Paper: 297/1 |
| 3 | Matters Arising from Meeting held on 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2010 | Paper: 297/2 |

**FOR DISCUSSION**

- |   |                                                    |              |
|---|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 4 | Existing and proposed Section 7 Control Agreements | Paper: 297/3 |
| 5 | Overview of Progress in 2009/10                    | Paper: 297/4 |

**FOR DECISION**

- |   |                                        |              |
|---|----------------------------------------|--------------|
| 6 | Draft Abstract of Accounts for 2009/10 | Paper: 297/5 |
|---|----------------------------------------|--------------|

**FOR NOTING**

- |    |                                                            |               |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 7  | DCS/SNH Merger: Update on Progress                         | Paper: 297/6  |
| 8  | Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill                      | Paper: 297/7  |
| 9  | External Meetings Attended by Chairman and Chief Executive | Paper: 297/8  |
| 10 | Minutes of Meetings                                        |               |
|    | a) Deer Management Committee                               |               |
|    | Draft Minutes of Meeting held on 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2010 | Paper: 297/9  |
| 11 | Any Other Business                                         |               |
| 12 | Chairman's overview – past success and future challenges   | Paper: 297/10 |

**Deer Commission for Scotland  
Draft Minutes of the 296<sup>th</sup> Open Board Meeting  
held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010  
Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry**

**OPEN SESSION**

**Present:** Prof J Milne (Chairman)  
Dr A Barbour  
Dr C Shedden  
Dr P Mayhew  
Mr A Hamilton  
Mr S Pepper  
Mr N Rowantree  
Dr S Walker

Mr N Halfhide (Chief Executive)  
Mr A MacGugan (Director of Stakeholder Relations)  
Ms M Wall (Head of Administration)  
Mr R Kernahan (Director of Deer Management)  
Ms J Findlay (Policy Officer)  
Ms F Newcombe (Research and Data Manager)

Mr R Burton (Scottish Natural Heritage)  
Ms E Stuart (Scottish Natural Heritage)  
Mr M Liddle (Scottish Government)  
Mr J Risby (Forestry Commission Scotland)

**1 OPENING REMARKS**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all present, in particular Eileen Stuart from SNH who would shortly be taking up the position of Head of the Rural Resource Unit within SNH. He also welcomed one member of the public.
- 1.2 There were apologies from Sir M Strang Steel, Prof J Pemberton, the Earl of Dalhousie, Sir P Hunter Blair (SNH) and Mr W Boyd Wallis (CNPA).

**2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 2009**

**Paper: 296/1**

- 2.1 The minutes were approved.

**3 MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 2009**

**Paper: 296/2**

- 3.1 Members noted the contents of paper 296/2.

**4 ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2010-2011**

**Paper: 296/3**

- 4.1 Nick Halfhide introduced the paper which sought Members' views and agreement of the draft Annual Business Plan for 2010-2011. He commented that it was the final Annual Plan of the current Corporate Plan and therefore it was important to ensure that all planned activities were achieved.
- 4.2 He drew Members attention to the key assumptions relating to the merger with SNH on which the Annual Business Plan was based, and the allocation of resources to maintain business continuity after the merger.
- 4.3 During discussion, Members **noted** the following points:
- the estimates of carbon used for each activity included travel but the carbon produced from accommodation was reported as a single entry. Plans were in place to transfer the carbon data to SNH as part of the merger;
  - the slight reduction in resources to 'contributing to a high quality environment' reflected the reduced number of habitat impact assessments planned and the completion of work into the genetic integrity of deer on the refugia islands; and
  - activities with no cash allocation would be completed through staff time only. Management Team would allocate staff time to each activity once the plan had been approved.
- 4.4 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to submit the Plan to the Scottish Minister for approval.

<b>Action: Nick Halfhide</b>
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**5 SCOTLAND'S WILD DEER: A NATIONAL APPROACH (WDNA) ACTION PLAN UPDATE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLAN 2010-2013**

**Paper: 296/4**

- 5.1 Jessica Findlay introduced the paper, asking Members to note the progress in Quarter 3 of the WDNA Action Plan and the process for refreshing the Action Plan for the period 2010-2013. She commented that the October meeting of the WDNA action group had generated proposals for new activities, and that these had been developed into specific actions for the next annual Action Plan.
- 5.2 During discussion, Members **noted** the following points:
- options for funding grazing management plans through SRDP had been resubmitted to the European Commission;
  - the WDNA Action Group could usefully review its long-term ambitions and priorities, and how it could oversee progress in delivery once DCS had merged with SNH. Members **agreed** that this should be added to the agenda of the next WDNA group meeting;
  - consideration should be given to options to merge the WDNA Action Group with the Deer Management Round Table; and

- SNH would need to consider how the work of the WDNA Action Group could be reported to the SNH Board.

Action: Jessica Findlay

5.3 Members **noted** the progress to date.

## 6 DCS/SNH MERGER: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Paper: 296/5

- 6.1 Nick Halfhide introduced the paper, providing an update on the proposed merger of DCS and SNH. He referred to the revised structures for the two new units (contained in the Annex) and reported that DCS staff had been assigned to posts within the new structure. He confirmed that DCS staff in Inverness had been co-located to their desks within their new units.
- 6.2 The Chairman reported that the SNH Board had agreed to rename the proposed 'Deer Panel' so that it would be known as the 'Transitional Deer Panel'. He confirmed that the Terms of Reference had been agreed and that the new panel would be made up of 5 members (one of which would be an SNH Board member who would act as a co-ordinator). Members would have a minimum work commitment of 15 days per year. These proposals would be considered by the Merger Programme Board on 31 March, with recruitment for members scheduled to begin in April.
- 6.3 Members discussed the renaming of the Panel. Whilst they considered that this would reduce the standing of the Panel in the eyes of many in the deer sector, there was a majority view that it was not worth trifling over a word.
- 6.4 Members **noted** the update on progress.

## 7 DCS CARBON REDUCTION PERFORMANCE

Paper: 296/6

- 7.1 Jessica Findlay introduced this paper, presenting a progress update on the DCS target to reduce carbon output by 10% by 2011. She reported that the reduction for 2009/10 was projected to exceed that planned, and, whilst carbon production would continue to fluctuate between years, DCS was still on course to achieve a reduction in carbon output of 10% by 2011.
- 7.2 Members congratulated staff on progress and **noted** the contents of the paper.

## 8. EXTERNAL MEETINGS ATTENDED/TO BE ATTENDED BY CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Paper: 296/7

- 8.1 Members **noted** the meetings attended by the Chairman and Chief Executive since the last Board meeting.

**9 MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

**a) Deer Management Committee Paper: 296/8**  
**Draft Minutes of Meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

9.1 Members **noted** the draft Minutes of the Deer Management Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

**Mar Lodge**

9.2 The Chairman drew Members' attention to paragraph 4.8 of the minutes and reported that an agreement in principle had been reached with the National Trust for Scotland to pursue a section 7 agreement for Mar Lodge with the aim of having this in place by July 2010.

9.3 Robbie Kernahan confirmed that the Steering Group would include all of the agencies and neighbouring estates.

9.4 The Chairman thanked Robbie Kernahan and his team who had worked hard to progress this agreement.

**Winter Deer Mortality**

9.5 The Chairman reported that DCS had provided advice to the Minister on the impact of the severe winter weather on wild deer, and options open to deer managers to alleviate any potential suffering. In addition, DCS had undertaken to provide regular updates to Ministers over the spring providing intelligence received on deer mortality. As there is no accurate monitoring of winter mortality possible during the winter across the country, this would be based on intelligence gathered from estates by deer officers and provided by representative organisations.

9.6 In discussion Members made the following points:

- intelligence should also be sought from other Government agencies;
- DCS needed to be proactive in working with the deer sector to provide clear guidance for practitioners including through Best Practice Guides and the proposed Code of Sustainable Deer Management;
- the current legislation, particularly section 25a of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 needed to be revisited to consider whether it was fit for purpose in the light of recent events; and
- deer management response to the severe winter weather would vary across the country depending on local circumstances

**Action: Nick Halfhide**

**c) Resources & Audit Committee Paper: 296/9**  
**Draft Minutes of Meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

9.7 Members **noted** the draft Minutes of the Resources and Audit Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

**10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 There was no other business.

**11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11.1 The next meeting of the Board will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> June in Inverness.

**Matters Arising from Open Meeting of the Board of the  
Deer Commission for Scotland held on  
Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

Prepared by: Nick Halfhide and Jessica Findlay

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to update members on matters arising from the meeting of the Board held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

**2. Action**

To note the following actions.

**3. Matters Arising**

**4 Annual Business Plan for 2010-11**

4.4 Staff submitted the Annual Business Plan for 2010-11 to the Scottish Government on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010, and received approval on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

**5 Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach (WDNA) Action Plan Update and Development of Action Plan 2010 -2013**

5.2 The second WDNA Action Plan was published at the beginning of June. Members' comments will be taken into account in setting the agenda for the next meeting of the WDNA Action Group which is forecast to take place in August.

**9 Minutes of Meetings: Winter Deer Mortality**

9.6 DCS submitted two reports to the Minister for Environment on the impact of the severe winter weather on deer mortality. Staff have held a workshop with the Best Practice Steering Group and four veterinary experts on developing further guidance for deer managers on how to recognise and respond to the impacts of severe weather on deer; and are discussing with Scottish Government officials whether the existing legislation, and proposed amendments in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, are fit for purpose.

## Existing and proposed Section 7 Control Agreements

Prepared by: Robbie Kernahan (Director of Deer Management)

### 1. Purpose

To provide the Board with a summary of the existing and proposed Section 7 Control Agreements that SNH will take ownership of, and responsibility for, post merger.

### 2. Action

The Board is asked to note the position on existing Section 7 sites and discuss progress on those sites currently under negotiation.

### 3. Background

One of the ten targets in the DCS Corporate Plan for 2008-11 is to increase to 95% the percentage of features in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition on designated sites affected by wild deer by 2010. This contributes directly to the target in the National Performance Framework to 'increase to 95% the proportion of protected nature sites in favourable condition'.

Over the last 3 years, DCS through its annual planning process has devoted significant resources to this high-profile area of work and since 2007/08 this has included £375,000 for habitat impact assessments and £526,000 for deer census work, as well as significant staff time.

Using the information gathered from these surveys, one of the key mechanisms for DCS to contribute to the targets outlined above has been to negotiate Control Agreements under Section 7 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 with landowners to ensure concerns over impacts by deer are addressed.

DCS has sought to ensure that in recent Control Agreements success is measured not just in terms of deer numbers or culls achieved but ultimately by habitat response. Recent Control Agreements which have either expired (e.g. Inchnadamph) or are due to expire in the near future (e.g. Glenfeshie) demonstrate that this type of voluntary agreement can deliver results, when properly planned, monitored and resourced.

It is also important to ensure future management on these sites so that on the expiry of the Control Agreement, transitional arrangements are secured to allow progress which has achieved to be monitored and maintained.

### 4. Control Agreements

DCS currently has 5 signed Section 7 Control Agreements in place:

- |                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1. The Feshie Catchment | (2000 – 2010) |
| 2. Caenlochan           | (2003 – 2013) |
| 3. Kinveachy            | (2005 – 2015) |
| 4. Ardvar               | (2009 – 2014) |
| 5. Inverpolly           | (2010 – 2015) |

A brief summary of these is provided in Annex 1.

In addition to the existing control agreements, a further 5 agreements are under discussion or near completion:

6. Ben Wyvis (2010 – 2015)
7. Beinn Dearg (2010 – 2015)
8. The Fannich Hills (2010 – 2020)
9. Breadalbane (2010 – 2015)
10. Mar Lodge (2010 – 2020)

A brief update on progress on these sites is provided in Annex 2 for discussion.

## **5. Next Steps**

From 1st August 2010, responsibility for maintaining and monitoring the success of existing Control Agreements will rest with Scottish Natural Heritage, as will the conclusion of those agreements currently under negotiation.

Current DCS staff roles in the process of discussing, data gathering, monitoring and negotiating deer management measures within these Control Agreements will not change substantially, although ultimate lead responsibility and ownership of Control Agreements will rest with SNH area managers.

Some further dialogue is still required through the merger process to clarify the process of appropriate sign-off of Control Agreements within SNH.

## Existing Control Agreements

### 1. The Feshie Catchment (2000 – 2010)

The Feshie Catchment Control Agreement was signed in 2000 to prevent damage to Caledonian Forest and is due to expire in June 2010. The implementation of the Feshie Catchment Control Agreement has been overseen by a steering group consisting of representatives from Glenfeshie Estate, Killiehuntly Estate, NTS, DCS, SNH and FCS. Representatives from the local Community Council, the Cairngorms / Speyside Deer Management Group and the Cairngorms National Park Authority have also attended as observers.

Tree seedling surveys by DCS over the period from 2005 to 2009 have indicated that damage by deer has been prevented and the final Steering Group meeting is scheduled for Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

### 2. Caenlochan (2003 – 2013)

The Caenlochan Control Agreement was signed in 2003 with ten ownership units to prevent damage by deer to habitats in Caenlochan Glen. The basis of this concern referred to damage to 8 Habitats in Caenlochan glen. Since the agreement was signed concern has also been expressed about the 12 habitats over the Caenlochan SAC, Garbh Corrie and Glen Callater SSSIs

The agreement has sought to reduce deer numbers over the Section 7 area from around 43 deer/ km<sup>2</sup> in 2003 to a summer density of 19 deer /km<sup>2</sup>. The last winter count of the Caenlochan control area estimated a deer density of 19 deer/km<sup>2</sup>. Habitat monitoring over the period has shown reducing impacts within Caenlochan Glen. The agreement is due to expire in summer 2013.

### 3. Kinveachy (2005 – 2015)

The Kinveachy Control Agreement underpins the associated Kinveachy Estate Deer Management Plan, an associated Management Agreement (SNH) and an associated Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (FCS) which are designed to prevent damage to Caledonian Forest and Bog Woodland.

Annual monitoring of tree seedlings within this Control Agreements indicates that damage is being prevented.

The implementation of the Kinveachy Control Agreement is overseen by a steering group consisting of representatives from Kinveachy Estate, DCS, FCS and SNH. Representatives from the local Community Council, the Monadhliath DMG and CNPA attend as observers.

The next Steering Group meeting will be in November 2010

### 4. Ardvar (2009 – 2014)

The Ardvar Control Agreement was signed in 2009 and seeks to prevent damage to the designated features on Ardvar SAC. The agreement was signed in February 2009 by

DCS, Ardvar Estate and John Muir Trust. Ardvar Estate carries out all deer management across the two estates.

The agreement underpins the Deer Management Plan for the two properties which seeks to balance both the sporting and conservation objectives for each of the properties and the designated site. Monitoring of response in tree seedlings is carried out annually, but it is too early within the agreement to measure any significant progress.

In addition to the Control Agreement, Ardvar Estate have progressed SRDP applications for a Long-term Forest Plan, Woodland Expansion and Native Woodland Management to bring their woodlands into positive management and regenerating onto suitable surrounding habitat.

The next meeting of the Steering Group is scheduled for Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June.

#### 5. Inverpolly (2010 – 2015)

A Section 7 Control Agreement was signed in June 2010 to help address concerns over the impacts of both sheep and deer within the wider area of Inverpolly SAC. The Control Agreement underpins an agency-funded collaborative management plan, which includes additional management measure including, the erection of a barrier fence on the east of site to reduce levels of immigration, the removal of fences around established woodland, the erection of fencing around most vulnerable woodland, stock disposal, off-wintering of stock and additional monitoring of woodlands opened to deer grazing.

The success of this agreement will be informed by annual monitoring of responses in tree seedlings. The Steering Group, consisting of representatives of the Assynt Foundation, Eìsg Brachaidh Estate, Inverpolly Estate, Deer Commission for Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland, is next scheduled to meet on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

### Proposed Control Agreements

#### 6. Ben Wyvis (2010 – 2015)

Ben Wyvis SAC is situated in North Ross DMG and covers 5,456ha under three owners - Wyvis Estate, Clachliath Estate and Scottish Natural Heritage. The area owned by SNH is also an NNR. In May 2009 DCS/SNH commissioned a Collaborative Upland Habitat Management Plan to consider how best to secure the nature conservation objectives for the site, while taking in account the owners' individual and specific objectives. The plan was finalised in February 2010.

In March 2010 owners were consulted on a Section 7 Control Agreement to underpin this management plan, which all owners have agreed to sign. It is expected that a signed agreement will be secured before the end of June 2010 with the first steering group meeting scheduled for July 2010.

#### 7. Beinn Dearg (2010 – 2015)

Beinn Dearg SAC covers an area of 13,848 ha that encompasses seven different properties– Alladale Estate, Corriemulzie Estate, Inverlael Deer Forest, Braemore Estate, Loch Droma Estate, Strathvaich Estate and Inverlael Farm.

In May 2009 DCS/SNH commissioned a Collaborative Upland Habitat Management Plan to consider how best to secure the nature conservation objectives for the site, while taking in account the owners' individual and specific objectives. The plan was finalised in March 2010.

Broadly speaking the plan seeks to reduce the current summer density on Beinn Dearg SAC from 26 deer/km<sup>2</sup> to 12-16 deer/km<sup>2</sup> and then seeks to secure the prescribed grazing and trampling impacts which the agencies consider will lead to favourable condition over time.

In March 2010 owners were consulted on a Section 7 Control Agreement to underpin this management plan and all owners have agreed to sign the Section7 and DCS are expecting to have finalised a signed agreement by the end of June

#### 8. The Fannich Hills (2010 – 2020)

The Fannich Hills SAC covers 9,500 ha, comprising Fannich Estate, Strone (Foich) Estate and Kinlochluichart Estate. In March DCS have concluded and agreed a collaborative upland habitat management plan for the site, which included consultation with the neighbouring Loch Rosque Estate.

All of the owners have subsequently been consulted on a Section 7 Control Agreement to underpin the management plan, in which the control area extends to 19,500 ha. All owners have agreed to sign the Section 7 and DCS are expecting to have finalised a signed agreement by the end of June

## 9. Breadalbane

The proposed Breadalbane Hills Control Agreement covers some 75,500 ha, 16,400 ha of which are designated for upland features. The Agreement covers 25 properties represented by 26 owners and occupiers. The Control Agreement seeks to reduce red deer from a current summer density of 20 deer/km<sup>2</sup> to 13 deer/km<sup>2</sup>.

The Control area is split into three sub-groups: north, mid and south. The population in the south sub-group is considered to be appropriate with a current summer density of 10 deer/ km<sup>2</sup> and a target density of 11 deer/ km<sup>2</sup>; and owners are entering into the Section 7 agreement to provide for any future requirement for deer reduction whether this is due to displacement from within the Control area or other factors. The population in the mid sub-group is to be reduced from a current summer density of 20 deer/km<sup>2</sup> to 10 deer/km<sup>2</sup>. The population in the north sub-group will be reduced from a current summer density of 29 deer/km<sup>2</sup> to 16 deer/km<sup>2</sup>.

The current situation is that 23 properties represented by 24 owners/occupiers have indicated their willingness to enter into a Control Agreement.

Discussions are ongoing with the two remaining owners and, subject to further assurances by the Joint Agencies, positive responses are anticipated.

The Agreement will run for five years from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010, with deer counts and repeat herbivore impact assessments being conducted in both 2011 and 2014

## 10. Mar Lodge (2010 – 2020)

DCS, SNH and the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) have discussed the requirement for a Section 7 Control Agreement at Mar Lodge. The main purpose of the agreement is to underpin the estate deer management plan, protect the public investment in the site and ensure damage is prevented.

The NTS Board, at their meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, considered a draft Control Agreement and authorised the Directors of the NTS to conclude the agreement and subsequent details relating to the administrative arrangements of the agreement and wider communication issues.

It is hoped these discussions will be concluded before the start of the 2010 Stag season.

## Overview of Progress in 2009/10

Prepared by: Nick Halfhide, Chief Executive

### 1. Purpose

To provide Members with an overview of how well DCS performed in 2009/10 against the targets agreed in the Annual Business Plan and how this contributed to the targets in the Corporate Plan 08/11.

### 2. Action

To discuss DCS' achievements and performance in 2009/10.

### 3. Background

Ministers approved DCS' Annual Business Plan and Budget for 2009/10 in May 2009, and subsequent revisions in December 2009.

The Resources and Audit Committee monitored progress in delivery at quarterly meetings during the year. Quarterly progress reports on the targets within the Corporate Plan were submitted to the Scottish Government.

### 4. Delivering the Annual Business Plan

Overall, DCS made very good progress in delivering the activities in the Annual Business Plan. Of the 70 separate activities, 64 were complete or on course by the end of the year. Of the remainder, five were pieces of research which were still on-going or delayed, and one reflected that we did not achieve our response time target for Freedom of Information requests.

Key achievements for the year were as follows:

- Forty-five features on designated sites brought into favourable or unfavourable recovering condition
- Wild deer populations counted on 524,000 hectares of land
- Seven habitat impact assessments completed covering over 80,000 hectares of land
- Re-testing of the genetic make up of red deer on the refugia islands completed
- Three events held with land-based businesses to promote venison and deer-watching opportunities
- Three school events held with over 150 children from Linlithgow, Aboyne and Strathconnon Primary Schools to promote understanding of deer management
- Five events involving more than 250 deer practitioners to promote Best Practice in deer management
- Continued planning and awareness raising to reduce deer vehicle collisions including advice to road planners on the M80 Stepps-Haggs bypass

- Research completed on how to measure the size of regional deer populations, and understanding public attitudes to deer control in and around towns and cities
- Joint planning with deer organisations and other agencies to develop projects to implement the 'Scotland's Wild Deer – a National Approach'
- Financial targets met for spending the budget within 2% of income and delivering more than 4% cumulative efficiency savings
- Carbon reduction targets exceeded.

A more detailed progress report for Quarter 4 for each of the activities in the Annual Business Plan is shown in Annex 1.

## **5. Contributing to the delivery of the Corporate Plan**

During the year, DCS made progress on achieving all of the targets within the Corporate Plan. Three of the targets relate directly to the indicators within the National Performance Framework. Against these national indicators, DCS' contribution was as follows:

### Increase to 95% the proportion of protected nature sites in favourable condition

During the year, DCS brought a further 45 features into favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. This increased the percentage of features in favourable condition on designated sites affected by wild deer from 86% in March 2009 to 89% in March 2010. Staff estimate that this figure will increase to 93% by end of Q2 in 2010/11 once a number of Section 7 Agreements are finalized, and to 95% by March 2011.

### Improve public sector efficiency through the generation of 2% cash releasing efficiency savings per annum

Along with all parts of the Scottish Government, DCS was required to make cumulative efficiency savings of at least 4% during 2009/10 against a 2007/08 baseline. Efficiency savings of 4.4% were achieved through reducing office accommodation costs by £74,205.

### Reduce overall ecological footprint

Against the baseline year of 2007/08, DCS reduced its carbon output in 2009/10 by 26% from 160,245kg of CO<sub>2</sub> to 119,311 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. The amount of carbon dioxide used per member of staff decreased by 32% against the baseline year.

This performance was achieved by an increase in the use of public transport and video conferencing, and in particular due to the more efficient use of helicopters for counting deer on the open range due to the very suitable weather conditions for counting deer.

Carbon use will continue to vary between years but the trend is downwards and should lead to the DCS Corporate Plan target of a reduction of 10 % in carbon use being achieved by 2010/11.

An assessment of progress against all the Corporate Plan objectives at the end of 2009/10 is contained in Annex 2.

## 6. Measuring how well DCS delivered its services

DCS is able to assess the quality of the service that it provides through the results of customer surveys combined with a small number of internal performance targets.

### Customer Survey

In 2010 George Street Research Ltd carried out research on behalf of the SEARs organisations to assess the impact of SEARs initiatives. This followed on from previous surveys in 2008 and 2009.

In the latest survey, the researchers conducted 1,063 telephone interviews with land managers. 10% (106) of those interviewed recorded that they had had contact with DCS over the previous 12 months. Survey participants were asked to state their level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10 with the personal contact they had experienced with DCS over the last twelve months. The mean score was 7.13 in 2008, 7.15 in 2009, and 7.17 in 2010.

This score placed DCS in the middle of the table. It suggests that, in relation to other SEARs organisations, land managers are broadly content with DCS' services and that DCS has maintained a similar level of satisfaction over the last three years.

### Performance Targets

The figures in the table below indicate that DCS broadly maintained the same level of service in 09-10 compared to the previous two years.

The notable exception is the response to Freedom of Information requests (FOI). A small number of requests required historical data which was not readily to hand and therefore took longer than 20 days to source.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>07-08 Performance</b>	<b>08-09 Performance</b>	<b>09-10 Performance</b>
Process complete requests for authorisations within 10 days	95%	92%	95%	99%
Respond to FOI enquiries within 20 days	95%	100%	100%	84%
Manage public money effectively, efficiently and economically	Within 2% of allocation	0.67%	0.8%	1.5%

## 7. Next Steps

Achievements in the year will be reported to the Scottish Parliament and stakeholders through DCS' Annual Report for 2009/10. This is currently with the printers and is scheduled for publication in July.

Annual Business Plan for 2009-2010				As agreed by the Board on 02 03 09 and by Ministers, and amended in December 09								
<b>Income</b>												
Allocation from Scottish Government (£ ,000)				1,831,000								
<b>Action Headings in Wild Deer Strategy</b>												
	No.	Activities, Targets and Milestones	Revised budget for 2009-2010	Notes	MT responsible	Quarter 4 Progress Report	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Main Links to Corporate Plan Targets	
<b>Contributing to a High Quality Environment</b>												
1		Achieve the favourable condition of Scotland's most important nature conservation sites			NH	Steering Group met in March 10 and agreed to roll over the target for a further year.					A	
	1.1	Participate in Steering Group overseeing Government target for the condition of features on designated sites; Report quarterly to the Board on progress to meet targets										
	1.2	Agree Joint Working Priorities for 09/10 work programme by April 09. Review resource requirements on all sites in 09/10 work programme by June 2009. Ensure lead responsibility for sites are agreed at a local level and project plans are in place by Sept 09. Chair 4 meetings of the Joint Working Programme Management Team by March 09.	204		RK	DCS chaired the fourth meeting of DILG Programme team.					A	
	1.3	Habitat Impact Assessments - Carry out annual habitat monitoring on 5 S7 sites by August 09. Ensure baseline surveys are revisited at Monadhliaths, Strathglass and Ballochbuie by September 09	51,745		RK	Annual monitoring of habitats has taken place on the 5 signed Section 7 sites and survey work completed on the Monadhliaths and Strathglass					A	
	1.4	Deer census - Summer Census carried out on 3 Joint Working sites by August 2009 (Beinn Dearg, Beinn a Ghlo and Caenlochan). Ensure Winter count programme is carried out by March 2010.	180,000		RK	The winter census programme was successfully completed					A	
	1.5	Promote the Joint Working Process - ensure relevant site specific Joint working information on DCS website is reviewed and updated at least quarterly.	1,337		RK	The DCS website includes up to date information on the Joint Working process.					A	
	1.6	Complete research on Natura case law (RP 68c)	11,500		KM	Research now complete					A	

		1.7	Maintain field readiness - annual audit of field equipment and operational procedures, and ensure that staff undergo field training (including cull training, mountain awareness and disease recognition).	45,000		RK	Annual Staff field training has been completed. In Q4 staff undertook helicopter cull training and disease recognition training.													A		
		1.8	Purchase of capital items to support field readiness	44,900		RK	Thermal imaging camera acquired														A	
		1.9	Carry out research into the measurement of bare peat in the Monadhliath SAC	10,000		RK	Contract awarded	n/a	n/a												A	
2	Conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside	2.1	1) Assess the effectiveness of estimating the productivity of deer in urban settings and approximate densities of deer in and around urban areas by Q4: 2) Develop understanding of the need for strategic planning with 2 (Q2) then a further 3 (Q3) Local Authorities to deal with the impacts of wild deer in and around communities: 3) Produce a critical review of the impact of facilitated roe management on 2 peri urban sites and identify any additional training needs (Q4): 4) Produce guidance on planning to manage deer in and around towns. (Q3)	3,000		AM	Discussions have continued with 5 local authorities to promote the need for strategic deer management planning and the scoping of content of the guidance has started. In 2 local authorities planning has started to test the decision making framework. In 1 local authority, publicity and educational material is being prepared to promote deer and their management on Council-owned land. Continued liaison with two new 'collaborative' groups will allow for skills analysis, and 2 new fledgling DMG-like units have been initiated.														E, K	
		2.2	Non Native Species - promote changes to the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932 and agree timescale for consultation with SG by May 2009; promote extension of 1999 Sika Order under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (to cover Scarba, the Garvellachs and Lunga); Manage contract for re-testing of refugia populations.	24,000		RK	Changes to the DIA and WCA were included in the WNEB consultation and orders are due to be drafted by SG. Testing of DNA within the refugia populations has taken place.															
		2.3	Monitor and investigate any reports of muntjac in the wild on an on-going basis			RK	No reports in Q4															
		2.4	Explore changes to legislation to licence the movement of wild deer into and within Scotland			RK	DMC considered a paper in Feb 2010 and a further paper is planned for May 2010.															
		2.5	Keep under review input to local LBAP plans quarterly. Ensure DCS review and input into the upland and woodland ecosystems groups within the new structures for the delivery of biodiversity action in Scotland			RK	DCS are represented within the upland and woodland ecosystems groups within the new structures for the delivery of biodiversity action in Scotland. 2 meetings were attended in Q4.															K

		2.6 SRDP - Attend RPACs as required. Provide prompt response and advice to all consultations on SRDP applications with a deer element, particularly in relation to woodlands. Ensure review of SRDP includes relevant and appropriate prescriptions for funding of deer management activities, including funding of complex grazing plans.			RK	DCS has been consulted on over 75 SRDP applications and a new option for funding grazing management plans has been submitted to Europe					A, K
3	Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation	3.1 Understanding the role of deer management: Prepare and circulate explanatory material aimed at deer managers arising from seminar concentrating on the two themes of moorland and woodland by Oct 09	5,000		KM	While RP 78 on venison did not provide all the materials hoped for in order to fully complete the explanatory material, general material was developed and placed on DCS website by the end of Q4.					K
		3.2 Continue to contribute to national work on the links between deer and climate change with particular focus on peatland and heather moorland.	6,133		KM	RP54 on blanket bog is continuing as planned.					
		3.3 Monitor progress quarterly on DCS' carbon output; consider and implement new measures to ensure that DCS reduces its carbon output towards the Corporate Plan target			KM	Provisional figures for 2009/10 show that the DCS carbon output target has been reached this year, although the final total is still to be confirmed.					H
	<b>Contributing to Sustainable Economic Development</b>										
4	Enhance the economic benefits derived from wild deer	4.1 Increase the economic value and consumption of venison: 1) Produce recommendations on how Government policies could better work for venison by Q4. 2) Prepare a critical analysis of current supply and whether collaboration at the local level can increase return on investment using two pilots within the DCS Case Studies by Q4. 3) Implement pilot events to promote venison in schools in two areas, seeking to develop effective partnerships that enable stand alone initiatives by Q3. 4) Develop an Action plan to extend venison promotional events to all Local Authorities in Scotland by Q2. 5) Facilitate the inclusion of venison on the menus of two public bodies by Q3. 6) promote the findings of the research into the carbon life cycle assessment of wild venison by Q2.	11,721		AM	The scoping report on the venison market and supply chain was completed and will be presented to the full Venison Working Group in May and used to develop that group's work plan for the coming three years. Two further schools venison events took place. Initial discussions with one local authority has highlighted the routes to encouraging local authorities to place venison on the menu.					D

		4.2	Acquire an understanding of the challenges and opportunities relating to deer watching activities in Scotland and wider dissemination of information by Quarter 3 2009/2010; Implement events to provide guidance, advice and feedback, and to facilitate professional networks between landowners, deer managers and activity providers by Quarter 4 2009/2010	5,000		KM	Two workshops took place in March in conjunction with WildScotland and scoping work is about to start on interpretive materials. The workshops were very well received and a number of positive connections were made which it is hoped will lead to new wildlife watching opportunities.						
		4.3	Undertake research to better understand the national economic value of the deer sector	10,000		KM	A draft project specification has been prepared but was unable to be tendered. The desk study looking at existing measures and gaps in the data in order to define how to value the deer sector will be progressed in 2010/11						
5	Minimise costs to land-use objectives and rural development	5.1	Maintain the Fit & Competent Register. Ensure controller details are accurate and evidence provided is current, relevant and authentic in line with DCS authorisation procedures			RK	The Fit and Competent database is up to date.						
		5.2	Process 95% of requests for authorisations within 10 days			RK	Authorisation process and procedures have been reallocated and audited. New staff have undergone training and all authorisations continue to be processed from Inverness. The target for processing authorisations has been met.						
		5.3	Contribute to the National Access Forum to reduce the negative impact of public access on the cost of deer management. Provide advice to the Stalking subgroup.			RK	The Stalking subgroup signage template has been agreed and a partnership of DCS, SNH, ADMG, SRPBA and MCoS have developed a web-based pilot as an alternative to hillphones						
		5.4	Investigate sites where damage to crops is reported, assess the evidence, and take appropriate and proportionate action to resolve			RK	DCS issued 297 authorisations in 2009/10						
	<b>Contributing to Social Wellbeing</b>												
6	Increase opportunities and quality of experience for observing and enjoying wild deer	6.1	Develop with SNH promotion of Scotland's wild deer through 'Eco schools' and community chests, and scope further opportunities within the private sector.	2,000		AM	Initial discussions with educationalists identified the opportunities available through the Curriculum for Excellence and how the planned educational elements to be undertaken through venison, green tourism and in and around towns should be reviewed together. The need to scope the interactions and linkages with other agency and private sector initiatives was confirmed and reviewed. This work will direct the production of material during 10/11						

7	Safeguard health and safety	7.1	Implement and monitor mitigation on existing RTA priority sites	4,000	RK	Mitigation was implemented with monitoring and review on 3 Trunk Roads.						G
		7.2	Carry out strategic analysis of the 'Deer Collisions UK' database in Scotland and identify areas for further investigation. Monitor progress of the DCUK contract and liaise with partners including the Deer Initiative, Transport Scotland and local authorities as appropriate.	14,222	RK	DCS have received the annual DVC report with detailed analysis, and areas for further investigations have been highlighted .						G
		7.3	1) Implement road awareness campaign for spring dispersal followed up by reminder for the autumn clock change combined with targeted promotional material in 1 hot spot area by Q3. 2) Review effectiveness of campaign by Q4.	2,000	AM	Preparations were made in Q4 for the spring '10 campaign planned for Q1 of 10/11. Although no formal review was carried out in Q4, the campaigns have been well received by road managers and have raised the profile of Deer Vehicle Collisions among drivers for little cost.						G
		7.4	Implement DCS procedures on receiving expressions of concern in relation to public safety		RK	No expressions of concern received in Q4						G
		7.5	Keep under review approaches to RTA in other parts of UK and abroad		RK	Achieved through regular dialogue with Transport Scotland, The Deer Initiative and the Highways Agency.						G
		7.6	Contribute to national efforts to reduce the spread of disease which may affect wild deer and domestic stock and ensure information flow on disease surveillance to practitioners.		RK	Achieved through ongoing liaison with Scottish Government's Bluetongue stakeholders group						
		7.7	Undertake research to investigate lead residues in wild venison, and the effectiveness of non lead ammunition in safeguarding the welfare of wild deer	5,000	KM	Research did not proceed due to establishment of a high level strategy group by DEFRA to look at the issues.						
<b>Cross cutting</b>												
8	Develop effective frameworks for sustainable deer management	8.1	Ensure DCS representation is provided for all Deer Management Group meetings as invited and that DCS provides DMG with an update on key issues.		RK	DCS attended all DMG and ADMG meetings in Q4						A, K
		8.2	Set up a 4th case study to consider current approaches to sustainable deer management at a local level by May 2009. Provide a quantitative analysis of the economic costs/benefits of Deer Management decisions within the case studies by August 09. Supported by the Steering Group, and linked to the outcome of legislative review agree with agency partners the scope of a code of sustainable deer management by the end of Q4	25,000	RK/KM	Case studies report completed and the research contract received. The scope of the code of deer management was agreed by the DCS subcommittee						K



11	Raise awareness and understanding of wild deer and their management	11.1	Best Practice Partnership: 1) Administer partnership including review of 74 guides and update/develop 6 guides and NOS/BPG cross mapping exercise by Q4. 2) Run 1 BPDE by Q3. 3) Run 2 in depth workshops by Q4. 4) Develop 2 BPG workshops targeted at DMG/estates on habitat assessment/cull planning by Q2.	30,903		AM	Workshop at Mugdock Country Park was well attended and concentrated on managing roe deer in the low ground. Venison workshop in Skye was also well attended and well received, while the firearms workshop planned for Perthshire was rescheduled for May due to snow.							
		11.2	Facilitate industry skills uplift: 1) Through LANTRA guide keep under review the relevant NOS. 2) Provide technical guidance to new and existing training and assessment activities in particular the development of modern apprenticeship schemes.			AM	NOS review completed. Input into the Modern Apprenticeship development on-going.							
		11.3	Promote the work of DCS to practitioners in the deer sector at the RHS, Scone and Moy	15,000		AM	Planning for Scone and Moy events in 2010 is well underway.							
		11.4	Use a wide range of channels to communicate the work of DCS to key audiences; issue at least one press release per month; review contents of website weekly	17,000		AM	Most press activity centred around winter mortalities with radio, TV and newspaper pieces.							
		11.5	Develop and implement proposals to transfer DCS' web material onto SNH website as part of the merger preparations			AM	Corporate data successfully transferred across to sharepoint on time ready for roll out onto SNH system.							
		11.6	Hold regular meetings with agency and NGO stakeholders to facilitate and co-ordinate implementation, including DMRT	4,000		AM	5 liaison meetings held.							
		11.7	Hold an annual conference with open hill practitioners by July	6,840		AM	Achieved in Q1 with highest attendance for a number of years. Planning started in Q4 for 2010 event.		complete					
		11.8	Support the 9th European Roe Deer Congress (Edinburgh)	2,000		AM	Achieved; support provided in form of financial contribution plus facilitation and presentations at the site visit.			complete				
12	Implement and monitor the impact of the Strategy for Wild Deer	12.1	Lead the Implementation of the Strategy 1) hold regular meetings with partners on progress 2) develop implementation database by June. 3) integrate 2010/11 planning with agency annual planning processes by March	2,050		KM	Good progress has been made identifying actions for 10/11 and the collection of reports on the 09/10 actions is making good progress							F
		12.2	Monitor implementation of the Strategy: seek independent scrutiny of emerging indicators to test their effectiveness in showing progress towards the vision in the Strategy	1,000		KM	The indicators have now been agreed and detailed work on the measures and baseline information is underway and will be published during 2010/11.							F
13	Review the deer legislation	13.1	Take forward the review of deer legislation, responding to the feedback from the Minister for Environment			KM	Work has continued with Scottish Government, with DCS offering advice when requested.							B, C, K

14	<b>Board Functions</b>	14.1	Provide efficient and effective support to the Board and Committees; produce high quality papers and provide support for Board and Committee meetings	77,200	Board salaries	MW	Achieved					
		14.2	Make public Board meetings as accessible as possible	17,800	meeting	MW	Board meetings continue to be advertised in local newspapers and accessible venues chosen.					
				10,260	Board T&S							
15	<b>Administration</b>	15.1	Review possibilities for co-location in Stirling by May 09	134,000	accommodation	NH	SNH have submitted a proposal to Ministers to extend their office space in Stirling to allow co-location with DCS. Plans are progressing with a view to completion by end of Aug 10.					
		15.2	Manage DCS' resources effectively, efficiently and economically; report progress against budget on a quarterly basis; Spend within 2% of budget by March 2010	60,200	IT	MW	DCS Board agreed a revised budget in Dec 09. The final spend for 09/10 was within 2% of the agreed revised budget.					
		15.3	Reduce annual running costs to deliver 2% efficiency in addition to 2% efficiency in 08-09		capital for equipment	NH	DCS delivered in excess of its 2% target for further efficiencies.					J
		15.4	Respond to 95% of FOI enquiries within 20 days; review procedures by Aug			AM	14 FOI requests received of which 4 took more than 20 days to receive a full response					
		15.5	Produce Annual Report for 08-09 by Aug 09	5,000		AM	Planning for 09/10 implemented			complete	complete	
16	<b>Staff Costs</b>	16.1	Provide staff with high quality training and developmental opportunities relevant to their work and their professional aspirations; agree staff training plan by end of May 09 and review implementation by end Nov 09	855,500	salaries	MW	DCS staff training plans have been submitted to SNH training team to allow them to map and plan training requirements.					
				23,000	overtime							
				67,000	T&S							
				16,944	training							
		16.2	Ensure that DCS provides a safe working environment; report any accidents and near misses to the Board on a quarterly basis and implement within 4 weeks any resultant steps to reduce risk.			MW	Quarterly report considered by Resources and Audit Committee. All reported incidents dealt with as per procedures. No incidents have been reported for Q4.					
		16.3	Manage DCS staff to maintain a top quality team with high morale and clear understanding of DCS' business; complete staff appraisal for 08-09 by end of April 09 and in-year reviews by end Oct 09		recruitment	NH	Recruitment continued to fill vacant posts in the new structure. Morale was generally high even through the relocation of offices within GGH in Feb.					



## Report on Targets in DCS' Corporate Plan 2008-2011 (as amended in November 2009)

Target	MT owner	Main Links to Milestones in 2009-2010 Annual Plan	Comment - Q4 2009/2010	Q2 2009/2010	Q3 2009/2010	Q4 2009/2010	Q1 2010/2011	Q2 2010/2011
A	RK	1, 2, 8	By the end of March 2010, DCS and the Joint Working partners secured 89% of features which were considered to be at risk by wild deer, under appropriate management. These features are now in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. DCS estimate that this figure will increase to 93% by end of Q2 in 2010 and 95% by March 2011. The Scottish Government has agreed to roll forward the target until 2011, and on that basis progress towards the DCS target is considered 'amber'.					
B	KM	13	Following the submission of advice to SG in January 2009, DCS has continued to work closely with SG and SNH to develop legislative proposals. Work to scope the Code for Sustainable Deer Management is underway and work is complete on the 5 local case studies. The case studies project report will be published shortly.					
C	AM*	9, 13	The consultation on the recommendations on competence for all those who shoot deer concluded in September and Ministers are now considering their response. Detailed proposals relating to Responsibility of Care have now been amalgamated with the development of the code for sustainable deer management. Unified Data proposals continue to be developed. Proposals will be discussed with stakeholders depending on the outcome of the WANE Bill and after direction from SG.					
D	AM	4	In collaboration with the Venison Working Group, and with funding through SG, a report was produced defining the current venison market. This highlighted the the blockages and gaps in the venison supply chain and the high risk of demand outstripping supply. Proposal are being drawn up by the Venison Working Group to implement a 3-year project to encourage increased production. Venison continues to be promoted through the creation of an Eat Scottish Venison Day launched by Cabinet Secretary and associated website as well as at 7 receptions/fairs and cultural events. The development of venison recipe cards for children and adults complemented the tastings at these events. Schools events involving 150+ pupils from Linlithgow and Aboyne introduced venison as a healthy meat and provided hands-on cooking opportunities.					
E	AM	2	Facilitated roe management on two sites has highlighted to local authorities acceptable approaches to shooting roe in areas of high public access. Publication of the peri-urban research is now guiding the development of guidance which will be published during 2011. The draft Decision Making Framework developed through the Peri-urban Research Project is currently being tested in one local authority area and planned for another, both in the Central Belt. Engagement with local authorities continues with increased awareness of deer management requirements being promoted through partnerships such as the Central Scotland Green Valley Network.					
F	KM	12	The first meeting of the WDNA Action Group took place in October to report on progress in 2009/10 and to start the process of setting objectives for 2010/11. The report on 2009/10 Actions and the Action Plan for 2010/11 will be published by the end of May 2010. Staff continue to gather baseline data for the indicators that will enable the impact of the WDNA to be judged in 2011.					
G	RK	7	The autumn and spring awareness campaigns were successfully implemented with warning messages displayed on the trunk road network, contractors completed monitoring on 3 specific trunk roads and the annual report of the National DVC Project was produced.					
H	KM	3	Following discussion by the Carbon Sub Group and the Board, further measures were identified and implemented to reduce DCS' carbon. While the final figures are still being calculated, significant progress has been made in 2009/10 and we anticipate that the target reduction will be met.					
J	NH	15, 17	By the end of 2009-10, DCS delivered cumulative efficiency savings of 6.8% against a target of 4%.					
K	RK	2, 3, 8, 13	An improved regulatory framework for deer is currently being developed by the Scottish Government. The code to support responsible, local deer management is being developed. A full time collaborative deer management officer has been recruited and a submission has been made to the EU for the inclusion of a new option in the SRDP offering financial support for upland management planning.					

### Notes

MW = Melissa Wall, RK = Robbie Kernahan, AM = Alastair MacGugan, KM = Katy McNeil

\* KM is leading on legislative requirements

## Draft Abstract of Accounts – 2009/2010

Prepared by: **Melissa Wall, Head of Administration**

### 1. Purpose

To provide Members with a draft Abstract of the Deer Commission for Scotland's Income and Expenditure for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

### 2. Action

To approve the draft Abstract as provided in Annex 1 for inclusion in DCS' Annual Report for 2009/10.

### 3 Summary

Expenditure for the year amounted to £1,836,672 against a revised budget (see (a) below) of £1,809,000 producing an overspend of £27,672. This is within DCS' target of spending within 2% of budget.

Members of the Resources and Audit Committee have seen and approved this draft Abstract.

### 4 Detail

Members will wish to note the following points of detail:

- (a) DCS were requested by SG to surrender £22,000 of the original 2009/10 budget of £1,831,000 as a result of a rates rebate<sup>1</sup> from SNH. The remainder of the refund, £16,000 will be payable to SG from the DCS 2010/11 budget.
- (b) DCS incurred a small loss of £240 as a result of a broken immersion heater in accommodation rented for staff as part of the Strathconnon Best Practice Event. The Chief Executive approved the loss within his delegated authority and it will be reported in the Abstract of Accounts.
- (c) Following closure of the 2009/10 accounts, an unidentified transaction of £2,407 was discovered in a staff member's Government Procurement Card statement. Staff disputed this transaction with both Barclaycard and SG as a non-DCS purchase. The issue has been resolved and the amount will be credited to DCS in the next GPC statement. As a result of this, the final overspend was increased. This cost has been reported through the 'Other' section in the Abstract of Accounts.
- (d) DCS income for 2009/10 amounted to £8,656 from the sale of vehicles and Best Practice Guides.
- (e) DCS achieved efficiency savings of £74,205 against the baseline figures of 2007/08. Savings in 2009/10 were as a result of a decrease

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<sup>1</sup> SNH have charitable status. The rates rebate was awarded for 2008-9 and 2009-10 and totalled £38,000. It was refunded to DCS through a reduction in SNH accommodation charges. DCS will not pay rates for 2010/11.

in accommodation costs, due to a reduction in desk spaces and the GGH rates rebate.

## **5 Recommendation**

Members' comments are invited on the contents of this paper. It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note details of both expenditure and income for the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010,
- (ii) consider the draft 'Abstract of Accounts' and amend as necessary; and
- (iii) agree the inclusion of the 'Abstract of Accounts for 2009-2010' within DCS' Annual Report for 2009/10.

## **Abstract of Income and Expenditure for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010**

**The following notes form an integral part of this abstract:**

- (1) The Scottish Government allocated the Deer Commission for Scotland an overall budget of £1,809,000 for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.
- (2) Income received by DCS was through the disposal of vehicles and equipment surplus to requirement, and the sale of Best Practice Guides.
- (3) The salary costs for the Chairman also include the pension costs for two former Chairmen.
- (4) The reported 13% increase in staff costs since 2008/9 was as a result of additional projects related to the DCS/SNH merger, in particular the need to employ temporary staff to support IT projects.
- (5) The 2009/10 fuel costs are reported under Travel and Subsistence. In previous years the costs have been reported under Vehicles and Transport.
- (6) The loss was damage to equipment at a DCS event.

	<b>TOTALS</b>	
	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2008/09</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Provision	(1) 1,800,344	1,753,789
Other Receipts (income)	(2) 8,656	13,211
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,809,000</i>	<i>1,767,000</i>
 <b>PAYMENTS</b>		
<i>Salaries and Wages:</i>		
Chairman (including Pensions)	(3) 31,044	30,721
Members	45,720	45,854
Staff	(4) 899,974	794,430
<i>Total</i>	<i>976,738</i>	<i>871,005</i>
 <i>Travel and Subsistence:</i>		
Chairman and Members	10,083	11,918
Staff	52,813	53,627
Fuel Costs	(5) 12,537	
<i>Total</i>	<i>75,433</i>	<i>65,545</i>
 <i>Other Operating Payments:</i>		
Accommodation	74,577	117,072
Administration	175,350	156,007
Vehicle and Transport (includes vehicle maintenance and helicopters)	149,466	254,734
Other (includes field readiness training)	104,846	44,133
Write Offs/Losses	(6) 204	
Research and Development (includes research consultancy work, public relations, production of Best Practice Guides and Events)	280,058	244,783
<i>Total</i>	<i>784,501</i>	<i>816,729</i>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,836,672</b>	<b>1,753,279</b>
 <i>Excess of Income over Payments:</i>		
(Payments over Receipts)	-27,672	13,721

## DCS/SNH Merger: Update on Progress

Prepared by: Nick Halfhide, (Chief Executive)

### 1. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on the DCS/SNH merger.

### 2. Action

To note progress.

### 3. Public Sector Reform (Scotland) Act

The Act received Royal Assent on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2010 and the section merging DCS with SNH will be included in the Commencement Order scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010. On this date, DCS will cease to exist and SNH will have statutory responsibility for its functions.

### 4. Merger Programme

The merger programme continues to make good progress. Principal activities in recent months include:

- DCS and SNH staff have reviewed remaining barriers to business continuity and agreed follow-up actions to ensure that the activities agreed in DCS' Annual Business Plan for 2010/11 can proceed.
- Recruitment continues to fill vacancies in the two new SNH units of Wildlife Operations and Rural Resource Management. To date, Donald Fraser has started his new post as Operations Manager, Ronnie Rose as the Collaborative Deer Management Officer, and Kelly Matheson as Unit Administrator.
- Recruitment has begun for the transitional Deer Panel.
- Liaison has continued between SNH and the Scottish Government to clarify the transfer of contractual rights under TUPE.
- Staff have made good progress on transferring DCS' data and ensuring that SNH IT systems support the deer function at merger.
- Scottish Ministers approved the co-location of DCS and SNH staff in Stirling.
- Plans have been developed to ensure that users of DCS' services know what to expect post merger and who to contact for further information.
- The Programme Board agreed how SNH would review and report the impact of the merger to Ministers.
- Interim procedures are in place to allow DCS staff to retain their firearms capability after merger whilst plans are progressed to secure Crown Exemption.

## 5. Next Steps

All the work streams within the Programme are on course to deliver the merger on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010, with follow-up work to embed the changes continuing until the end of the year. The main activities over the coming months are as follows:

29 June	Farewell dinner in Inverness for all DCS Board and staff
2 July	The Minister for Environment will welcome the merged organisation at a reception at the Scone Game Fair
July	Publication of 'Managing Scotland's Deer: Our New Approach', a statement by SNH on how it intends to integrate the deer function with their other work
July	Appointments will be made to the SNH transitional Deer Panel
July	Training of DCS staff in SNH systems
1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	DCS ceases to exist. All DCS staff, functions and powers transfer to SNH. All permanent DCS staff will transfer to their new Units within SNH.  The content of DCS' website will migrate to SNH's site with the exception of organisation-specific material.
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug	DCS staff in Stirling move into the SNH Stirling office
Sept-Dec	Training and awareness raising plan of deer functions within SNH substantively complete.

## Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill

Prepared by: Katy McNeil (Director of Policy, Projects & Research)

### 1 Purpose

To note current position in relation to the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill.

### 2 Action

- To note that the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill has now been introduced to the Scottish Parliament;
- To note that the call for evidence for Stage One of the Bill has been issued by the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee;
- To note how DCS and SNH will work with Scottish Government to support the progress of the Bill; and
- To note the establishment of a group on competence.

### 3 Background

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 9 June and it is expected that the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee (RAEC) will be confirmed as the lead committee. All the documents relating to the Bill can now be found on the Scottish Parliament's website<sup>1</sup>. The clauses relating to changes to the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 can be found in Part Three of the Bill.

The clauses relating to deer provide for a statutory Code of Practice to support deer management, extension to the deer management functions of SNH to include urban deer management, amended powers of statutory intervention and provision of advice to third parties. The Bill also makes provision to introduce a statutory competence requirement. However Ministers do not intend to commence the clauses in relation to a statutory competence requirement immediately, giving the sector a chance to self-regulate, with a review to be conducted by SNH if the powers have not been used by April 2014.

### 4 Stage One of the Bill

Stage One of the Bill considers the principles of the Bill and is expected to run until October 2010. The RAEC has put out of call for views<sup>2</sup> on the Bill, asking for responses by 1 September. As this is after the merger, SNH will

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/52-WildNatEnv/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/rae/bills/WANE/WANECallforviews.htm>

submit a response on deer matters. The call for views is open, and DCS Board members will be able to submit views if they wish in a personal capacity.

A draft outline of the Code of Practice for Deer Management is being prepared by DCS to help inform the Scottish Parliament's consideration of the Bill; and this is likely to be included in SNH's response to the RAEC. Members of the Deer Management Round Table have been invited to join a Code Reference Group which will meet over the summer to discuss the Code outline.

Once the responses to this call for views have been considered, the RAEC will decide if it wishes to take evidence in person from those submitting a written response or from others. Such sessions are likely to take place during October. It is expected that the Bill team may give evidence to the RAEC prior to the summer recess, and that the Minister will give evidence at the end of Stage One.

## **5 Working with Scottish Government**

The Scottish Government intend to continue to engage with DCS/SNH through a Bill Liaison Group. The next meeting of the group is due to take place on 1 July.

## **6 Competence: Industry Group**

In response to the draft Bill, a group, under the auspices of the 'Upland Co-ordination Group' is being brought together to develop a response to the proposals relating to competence. This group at the moment represents the main sporting interests, and DCS has advised it to take an inclusive approach to ensure that it represents the diverse interests of the whole deer sector, including forestry, agricultural, crofting, urban and environmental interests. A meeting of this group is planned for the period around the Scone Game Fair in early July.

## External Meetings Attended/ To Be Attended by Chairman and Chief Executive

<b>External Meetings Attended</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>
16-Mar-10	Chief Executive	Liaison with Scottish Gamekeepers Association	Pitlochry
17-Mar-10	Chief Executive	SNH Board/Management Team discussion	Edinburgh
24/25-Mar-10	Chief Executive	Scottish Government Forum	Stirling
29-Mar-10	Chairman/Chief Executive	Deer Research Workshop	Birnam
30-Mar-10	Chief Executive	Organisational Merger Project Board	Inverness
14-Apr-10	Chairman/Chief Executive	Merger Programme Board	Edinburgh
19-Apr-10	Chairman	Health and Welfare Project	Aberdeen
20-Apr-10	Chairman	ADMG AGM	Kingussie
20-Apr-10	Chief Executive	SNH Board	Edinburgh
28-Apr-10	Chief Executive	CAMERAS Board	Edinburgh
30-Apr-10	Chief Executive	Key Landowners of Designated Sites	Battleby
19-May-10	Chairman/Chief Executive	Deer Management Round Table	Bridge of Allan
21-May-10	Chief Executive	SG Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill team	Edinburgh
25/26-May-10	Chief Executive	SNH Management Forum	Stirling
1-June-10	Chief Executive	Organisational Merger Project Board	Inverness
3-June-10	Chairman	Macaulay Lecture	Aberdeen
4-June-10	Chief Executive	SEARs Programme Board	Edinburgh/ Inverness (VC)
7-June-10	Chief Executive	Merger Staff User Group	Inverness/ Edinburgh(VC)
8-June-10	Chief Executive	Organisational Merger Project Board	Inverness/ Battleby (VC)
14-June-10	Chairman/Chief Executive	Northern Seminar	Inverness
15-June-10	Chairman	Peter Russell	Edinburgh
15-June-10	Chief Executive	SNH Board Meeting	Inverness
25-June-10	Chief Executive	Royal Highland Show	Edinburgh
28-June-10	Chief Executive	SG Rural and Environment family meeting	Edinburgh

<b>External Meetings To Be Attended</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>
2-July-10	Chairman/Chief Executive	Game Fair	Scone
5-July	Chairman	Glenfeshie Section 7 Steering Group	Grantown
28-July-10	Chief Executive	CAMERAs Board Meeting	Edinburgh

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## Draft Minutes of the Meeting of Deer Management Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010

**Attending:** Lord Dalhousie  
Prof J Milne  
Dr C Shedden  
Dr P Mayhew  
Dr A Barbour  
Mr N Rowantree

Mr N Halfhide (Chief Executive)  
Mr R Kernahan (Director of Deer Management)  
Ms K McNeil (Director of Policy, Projects & Research)  
Mr A MacGugan (Director of Stakeholder Relations) (from agenda item 5)  
Ms M Wall (Head of Administration)  
Mr D Fraser (Deer Officer)  
Mr J Scott (Deer Officer)  
Ms F Newcombe (Research & Data Manager)  
Dr L Seivwright (Best Practice Officer)

### **Observers**

Mr R Burton (SNH)  
Prof J Pemberton  
Mr S Pepper  
Ms E Stuart (SNH)

### **1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 There were apologies from Sir Michael Strang Steel.

### **2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE DEER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2010**

**Paper: DMC6/2010**

2.1 The draft minutes were **approved** subject to some minor revisions in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.6.

Action: Melissa Wall
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### **3. MATTERS ARISING FROM DEER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2010**

**Paper: DMC7/2010**

3.1 Members **noted** the contents of the paper.

#### 4. DILG UPDATE AND JOINT WORKING PROGRAMME

Paper: DMC8/2010

- 4.1 Robbie Kernahan introduced this paper which provided members with an overview of the progress against DCS' targets for designated sites and an update on the associated joint working programme. Committee members were asked to note the progress made by DCS staff towards achieving the favourable condition targets and to note that the date for delivering wider biodiversity targets had been extended to March 2011.
- 4.2 In response to a question on the Monadhliaths SAC, Robbie Kernahan informed members that discussions had taken place with the owners of the site concerning the damage, identified by DCS, that was occurring. He confirmed that DCS staff were in the process of agreeing a programme of work to take a management agreement forward.
- 4.3 Members made the following points during the discussion:
- Members sought clarification on the deer population targets for Caenlochan SAC. Staff confirmed that, whilst the winter density across the Section 7 and Glen Prosen area was likely to lead to the agreed density in the summer, the count had shown a high density of deer in some localised areas. The summer count would provide the information needed to decide whether the density was within that agreed in the Section 7 agreement..
  - Members noted that when awarding SRDP funding for improved access to sites for culling and extraction, the public agencies needed to ensure that the impact on the landscape and sensitive habitats was minimised.
  - Some of the target densities and cull figures in the paper were too precise, eg in section 4 of the Fannich Hills SAC paper.
  - In relation to Mar Lodge, members noted that NTS staff had agreed in principle to a Section 7 agreement for the estate and that they would seek formal approval from the NTS Board on 8<sup>th</sup> June.
  - Members congratulated DCS staff on their progress with the programme of work to date on designated sites..
- 4.4 Members **noted** the content of the paper.

#### 5 BREADALBANE HILLS SECTION 7 AGREEMENT

Paper: DMC9/2010

- 5.1 James Scott introduced this paper which provided an update on the progress towards securing a Section 7 control agreement for the Breadalbane Hills cluster of designated sites, and sought approval for a range of work to address those owners not willing to sign the

agreement,.. He updated members on further developments since the paper had been written.

- 5.2 During the discussion, staff explained that the agencies were developing management plans for domestic stock to complement the Section 7 agreement.
- 5.3 After discussion, Members **agreed** the recommendations in the paper should DCS fail to secure a Control Agreement. Members noted that it was important for DCS to explain clearly its statutory duties in relation to Section 8 to land managers during negotiations.
- 5.4 Members **agreed** that, depending upon the outcomes of discussions with those owners who had not yet agreed a Section 7 agreement, staff should in a position to bring a paper to the meeting of the Board in June to seek approve for a Section 8 Control Scheme if still required.

Action: Robbie Kernahan
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## 6 SAFEGUARDING DEER WELFARE

Paper: DMC10/2010

- 6.1 Katy McNeil introduced this paper which sought members' views on whether the current legislation and proposed measures in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill were sufficient to safeguard deer welfare. She commented that one of the drivers for this paper was Ministers' concerns at the impact of the severe weather conditions on deer populations.
- 6.2 Linzi Seivwright reported on a recent meeting where a number of leading vets had supported the need for more detailed guidance on the signs and symptoms of welfare issues.
- 6.3 In discussion members made the following points:
  - As currently drafted, there were circumstances where deer might be trapped or distressed but it was not legal to kill them;
  - The right to shoot deer under Section 25 to prevent suffering is potentially open to abuse, particularly if the circumstances are widened, as it is not tied to landowner rights;

## 7. MOVEMENT OF DEER

Paper: DMC11/2010

- 7.1 Alastair MacGugan presented this paper and sought members' comments on the reasons behind the movement of deer in Scotland and the related public interest.
- 7.2 In discussion members made the following comments:

- There is anecdotal evidence of people moving deer and releasing them into the wild because they simply like to see deer.
- There is a public interest in safeguarding the welfare of wild deer that are being moved.
- There are potential benefits to the economy of moving and releasing wild deer as they are a popular sight for tourists.
- Other wildlife species, such as game birds and fish, are regularly moved around the country and released into the wild.
- It is not clear who is liable for the cost of any damaged caused by deer escaping from deer farms, parks and private collections/zoos.

7.3 Following discussion, Members **agreed** that the next step was for staff to prepare a risk/benefit analysis of the issues to inform a future discussion on whether further legislative change was required.

Action: Alastair MacGugan
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## 8. IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEER MANAGEMENT

Paper: DMC12/2010

8.1 Robbie Kernahan introduced this paper which provided an update on the Case Studies project and outlined the proposals for how this work would be taken forward to better support local deer management. He confirmed that Ronald Rose had been appointed as the new Collaborative Deer Management Officer. His role would be to work with Deer Management Groups (DMGs) and support Deer Officers in establishing better links with communities, and also to work with SNH and other agency partners to secure funding for this work.

8.2 During the discussion, members made the following points:

- it was important to influence and improve the role DMGs have in delivering sustainable deer management; and
- with less public financial support likely to be available in the future, DMGs would need to consider other sources of support.

8.3 Members **noted** the paper.

## 9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 There was no other business. The Chairman noted that this was the last meeting of the DMC and thanked members and staff for their input.

## Chairman's Overview – Past Success and Future Challenges

Prepared by: **John Milne (Chairman)**

### 1. Purpose.

The aim of this paper is to provide the Chairman's perspective on the role that DCS has played in the past five years in furthering the conservation, control and sustainable management of deer in Scotland, as laid down in the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996, and to identify some of the future challenges that will face Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in delivering the same role in the future and that will face the deer sector more widely.

### 2. Action.

This paper is for noting by the Board.

### 3. Introduction

Deer are keystone species in many of the most important semi-natural ecosystems of Scotland and impact on many of the land management activities that generate income for the Scottish economy. Deer also provide sporting opportunities worth more than £100 million to the Scottish economy annually and provide 2,500 jobs, often in economically fragile rural areas. Deer are also important to the tourist industry and are an important element of Scotland's culture. These facets require to be kept in balance in order to deliver sustainable deer management.

In delivering sustainable deer management a number of facets relating to the conservation and control of deer need to be taken into account and these are considered first before considering the wider issue of sustainable deer management.

### 4. Conservation of deer species.

For red deer the main thrust has been to maintain its genetic integrity on the refugia islands off the West of Scotland. This has been facilitated by a resampling of tissues of culled deer, 10 years after initial samples were taken, and analysing the samples, using the facilities of the University of Edinburgh. Preliminary results suggest that genetic integrity is being maintained. A proposal from DCS to extend the number of islands to include Scarba and the Garvellachs was consulted on by the Scottish Government in 2009 and an Order to implement this is expected in 2010. It was identified that there was a loophole in the current legislation in that farmed red deer and sika deer could be imported to the refugia islands and it is planned that this loophole will also to be plugged in 2010. Once these measures are in place the genetic integrity of red deer should be better secured for the future.

Sika deer continue to spread along a front from their original release sites almost a century ago and a degree of hybridisation with red deer has occurred. Whilst the policy of DCS, and SNH, is that it is not possible to stop the spread of Sika deer in Scotland, attempts should be made to slow the spread where there was local agreement to do so. The proposal of the Scottish Government to increase the area of woodland in Scotland is likely to increase the rate of spread of Sika deer and occurrences of hybridisation with red deer. Conflicts between the policies of individual land owners on the one hand to avoid damage to woodland and on the other hand to increase the value of deer for sport are likely to increase in the future and offer a challenge to the implementation of this policy.

Numbers of roe deer and their spread have increased considerably in the view of most deer practitioners and from evidence in cull returns to DCS although it is difficult to obtain accurate evidence of actual numbers. DCS has successfully used thermal imaging equipment to assess local populations in areas of the central belt of Scotland. The increased population of roe deer around urban areas has increased the incidence of road traffic accidents, damage to gardens and general interactions with people. A challenge for the future is for local authorities to develop plans for the management of roe deer and, in collaboration with other land managers and government agencies, to manage the populations of roe deer and their interactions with the human population.

Fallow deer numbers and their distribution have changed less than the other three main deer species although this may change if the amount of woodland increases.

Although Muntjac have not yet been found in the wild in Scotland, there have been escapes from deer parks and private collections which DCS has attempted to monitor with reasonable success. This has been a cause for concern as the most likely way in which muntjac would become a wild species in Scotland. DCS has advocated that such collections should be licensed and comply with minimum standards relating to enclosures. DCS also needs to be able to act in the event of an escape as the current deer legislation does not allow for this. Such proposals have received broad public support. In the future there will be a need for SNH to be vigilant to avoid escapees colonising in the wild.

## **5. Control of deer numbers**

As well as the many positive benefits that deer provide, deer numbers can negatively impact upon the natural heritage and also on agriculture and forestry, and they can be a source of road traffic accidents. DCS has responsibilities under the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 to enter into voluntary agreements with land managers to avoid these negative impacts and to give authorisations for the control of deer.

### Natural Heritage

The main focus of the work of DCS over the past five years has been in entering into agreements of various types with landowners to ensure that features of the natural heritage, particularly in Natura-designated sites and those impacted by deer, are under assured management to allow their favourable condition to be delivered and maintained through the management of deer numbers and their distribution. At the end of March 2010, 89 % of the natural heritage features in designated sites were in favourable or recovering condition and this is predicted to rise to 95 % by March 2011 once agreements that have been reached have been signed or funding from the Scottish Government through the Scottish Rural Development Programme is in place.

In this International Year of Biodiversity, this is a worthy achievement. This has been largely achieved through the commitment of the staff of the Deer Commission for Scotland and the support that they have received, in the most part, from landowners and Deer Management Groups in developing deer management plans and in entering into management agreements. It should also be noted that DCS staff contributed to the culling of deer in the Caenlochan area to facilitate the reduction in density of red deer. For such culls, which involve large numbers of stalkers operating together, DCS has developed a high level of expertise which will be available to SNH in the future.

Many of these agreements are for up to 10 years. This is because it takes time for plant communities to reach favourable condition - there is always the vagaries of the weather to cope with and deer densities have to be kept in balance with habitats whilst attempting to meet the sporting objectives of land managers. It is unlikely that there will be major changes in Natura legislation in the foreseeable future and thus there will need to be a continuing commitment by deer managers to deliver on the plans agreed. From the evidence of those deer managers who have delivered in the past, it will involve a high level of commitment and hard work. Equally considerable resources will have to be made available by SNH to monitor the success of the agreements through deer counts and habitat assessments, and through the input of staff in advising and overseeing the delivery of plans.

### Forestry and agriculture

The perceived negative impact that deer have on forestry and agricultural crops depends upon the value of the crop and the severity of damage. In forestry, the value of the crop has been lower than in past decades and hence in the private sector there has been less emphasis on control of deer numbers. This has not been the case in the public sector where, according to the number of authorisations for out-of-season culling sought, control of deer numbers has remained a high priority. In the agricultural sector the increase in roe deer numbers around agricultural land has not led to an increase in authorisations which perhaps reflect that the browsing of oilseed rape and cereals in winter is not considered to have a large impact on yield.

DCS has to satisfy itself that those seeking authorisations are fit and competent to cull deer and the introduction of a register, which now contains over 1000 individuals, has reduced the amount of bureaucracy associated with seeking an authorisation. The degree of bureaucracy associated with authorisations in the future depends on the outcome of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill but it is not likely to decrease and may even increase which is against the advice given by DCS to the Scottish Government.

### Road Traffic Accidents

In a series of new initiatives, DCS has attempted to reduce the number and impact of road traffic accidents on a number of trunk roads through changes to roadside fencing and verges, and the erection of warning signs activated by the speed of vehicles. Ongoing monitoring suggests that these measures have been successful. A key plank of DCS policy has been to raise driver-awareness of the presence of deer near roads. To engage the wider driving public, the use of variable message signs has been used to highlight times of the year when red deer and roe deer are likely to lead to an increased risk of road traffic accidents.

DCS has also part-funded a web site for recording road traffic accidents associated with deer with a new emphasis on roads other than trunk roads. This will facilitate the identification of “hot spots” particularly in relation to roe deer around urban areas. DCS has also been asked for the first time to offer advice on deer management issues in the building of new roads. In the future it is likely that the issue of road traffic accidents and deer will continue to have a high profile with the public particularly if the Scottish Government’s target for increased amount of woodland cover is met.

## **6. Other matters**

DCS has a responsibility to “keep under review all matters, including their welfare, relating to deer”. Two issues that DCS has tackled in the past five years under this responsibility have been Best Practice and the welfare of deer. In the context of sustainable deer management, DCS has offered advice and guidance on a range of socio-economic issues, allocating more resources for this area than in the past, and supporting research on a diverse set of deer-related topics.

### Best Practice

It was identified that there was a need to raise the competence of those who managed deer. A Steering Group of stakeholder representatives was set up which with a large input of staff time from DCS. This led to the development of a set of almost 80 guides on Best Practice. Almost 3,000 guides have been purchased which probably covers about a third of those involved in some way or other in deer management in Scotland. In addition, a series of practical events was organised by DCS to expand upon the material in the guides and to help the development of new guides.

This has been a highly successful initiative and is likely to have improved the competence of those who manage deer although this has not been formally assessed. It is important that the introduction of new guides and revision of old guides continues and that Best Practice events are used to keep everyone up to speed on changes in best practice in deer management that are always occurring.

DCS has been seeking to move the ownership for Best Practice from the Agencies to the deer sector but this has proved difficult. In the future, it is essential that the deer sector is able to demonstrate its commitment to maintaining the momentum of Best Practice. In relation to the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, the deer sector has given a commitment to the Scottish Government that all those who shoot deer will have an appropriate level of competence. From experience in relation to Best Practice, there must be considerable doubt as to whether the sector can deliver what it has said it will.

#### Welfare of deer

In the past five years the welfare of deer has exercised DCS more than in the past. This has been partly due to the increased concern of the public, as evidenced by the amount of newspaper articles and news items, on deer welfare, often arising from issues in relation to roe deer around Scotland's urban areas. There is also a trend in current thinking that the more that wild deer are managed by man the more that those that manage deer have responsibility for their welfare. DCS has always taken the view that the necessary cull of deer that is required to keep deer populations in balance with other land use objectives should be undertaken by deer managers rather than by the state. For the public to be satisfied that this is being done with due regard to the welfare of deer, it is important that those who cull deer should have demonstrated competence to undertake this task.

The issue of welfare of wild deer is considered directly for the first time in law in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill. The proposals put forward by DCS that all those who cull deer should be on a register to demonstrate their competence has not been accepted fully by the Scottish Government but their proposals are a step in the right direction. SNH will have an important task in seeking to ensure that the growing interest of the public in deer welfare, for example as witnessed by the media coverage of the mortality of deer in the winter of 2010, is recognised and acted upon appropriately.

#### Advice and guidance

Much of the advice and guidance that has been given in the past five years has been in relation to diseases, such as Foot and Mouth Disease and Blue Tongue, and on deer-related socio-economic issues. On the issue of potential disease epidemics in the future, there is a need to remain vigilant and to have appropriate disease control systems in place.

In relation to socio-economic issues, DCS, in particular, has supported the raising of the profile of venison as a healthy meat through participating in the

activities of the sector-led Venison Working Group. The price of venison to deer managers has remained low but the demand in the UK has grown which could lead to higher prices for venison in the future. However, since the price of venison is set at a world level, it is not easy to see how prices can rise significantly at current world levels of demand and supply. It will be difficult for Scottish venison to differentiate itself from venison in general. Venison has also been used as part of a package to explore sustainable deer management in primary schools and it is important that this initiative is sustained to raise the awareness in Scotland of deer issues in the longer term. DCS has also given advice and guidance on wildlife tourism opportunities and in the future the need for this advice is likely to become greater.

### Research

Many of the subject areas that research has been needed in the past five years relate to socio-economic issues. The lack of capacity of researchers in this area has limited the provision of an evidence base which has in turn limited the ability of DCS to meet its desire to make decisions in this area based on a strong evidence base. This will be a challenge for SNH in the future.

### Carbon

Within a broader sustainability context, DCS has also had to consider its ways of working to meet a target, agreed with the Scottish Government, of reducing its carbon emissions by 10 % over the last three years. This has been achieved through reductions in carbon emissions from offices, reduced car mileage and increased use of public transport, and increasing the efficiency of use of helicopters in counting deer. In the future there will be difficult challenges for both SNH and the deer sector in meeting the targets that have been agreed by the Scottish Parliament on reducing carbon emissions further.

## **7. Sustainable management of deer**

DCS led the development of a new strategy for the sustainable management of wild deer between 2006 and 2008 based on achieving an appropriate balance between environmental, social and economic objectives. The Scottish Government published this strategy in 2008 in a document entitled "Scotland's Wild Deer – a National Approach", which described a vision for the sustainable management of deer in Scotland over the next 20 years and which laid out a new approach for its delivery by government, its agencies and stakeholder organisations who all signed up to its delivery. This was the first time that the public and private sectors have signed up to the delivery of a common approach to sustainable deer management. Delivery of this new approach is through agreed annual action plans. DCS has been active in developing and helping to deliver these action plans and now passes the baton to SNH to continue their development and delivery. This is an important challenge for SNH and the deer sector in delivering sustainable deer management.

Delivery of sustainable deer management is a partnership between the Scottish Government, its agencies and the deer sector. The Scottish Government can play its part by ensuring that current legislation on deer is fit for purpose and that the funding of sustainable deer management to deliver the public interest is adequate. SNH will have many challenges to face in implementing the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 and its proposed amendment through the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill that the Scottish Government has introduced into the Scottish Parliament this summer. In particular the proposals for the delivery of sustainable deer management contained in the Bill, although they helpfully expand the definition of the public interest, place a strong emphasis on SNH to deliver sustainable deer management. DCS advised the Scottish Government that this role should be placed on deer managers.

DCS has always encouraged the setting up of Deer Management Groups because it is only through collaboration that red deer can be managed effectively and it continues to be supportive of the Deer Management Group system. It is surely right that decisions about the objectives of local sustainable management and how they should be implemented should be made locally by those with the knowledge and experience of managing deer. However, the current voluntary system has not evolved much in the last 20 years and with the changes in the context and operation of land management in the intervening period, there is a need for the system to explore whether the boundaries of deer management groups are appropriate, how the functionality of Deer Management Groups can be improved and how capacity building within the structure of Deer Management Groups can be enhanced. The Code of Sustainable Deer Management, proposed in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, should focus the mind of Deer Management Groups on how they operate and what they deliver but the ability to enforce appropriate working within the Deer Management Group system, as proposed in the Bill, may be insufficient to ensure that this occurs.

The prize of having an effective voluntary Deer Management Group system is high because, if won, it will allow sustainable deer management to be delivered by the private sector in a voluntary manner. If opportunities for reform are not taken then other more draconian approaches will be advocated. The sector needs to be seen to grasp this thistle now and show it has changed in the interests of the deer themselves.

An important element of the challenge of delivering sustainable deer management is that the context within which sustainable deer management has to be delivered continues to change. In the past five years there has been a continuation of the trend for more complex and diverse patterns of objectives of landowners and land use, the range and numbers of some of the four deer species found in Scotland has expanded, and there is a continuing emphasis on delivering the public interest whether it be in terms of land management, deer welfare or access.

This changing context will continue in the future. Moves to a low carbon economy requiring greater tree cover in Scotland will increase the habitat for all four species of Scotland's deer. The potentially diverse impacts of climate change, including the requirement to protect carbon-rich soils from damage, may restrict the access to these habitats by deer. The reduction in hill sheep numbers that has occurred and is likely to continue to occur will increase the range of red and roe deer to fill the vacuum left by the removal of sheep. These changes in the context of land use will be mirrored by changes in the economic circumstances and social attitudes of Scotland's people which will impact upon how sustainable deer management is defined. It is important that the Scottish Government, SNH and stakeholder organisations have the foresight and leadership to identify how the definition of sustainable deer management needs to change and how it can be delivered, a role previously provided by DCS.

An important component of the sustainable management of deer in Scotland has been the role that the Board and the staff of DCS has played in advising the Scottish Government on sustainable deer management and in encouraging the deer sector to adopt sustainable practices. This role now falls to SNH but it is encouraging that all the staff of DCS, with a high level of competence on deer-related issues, are transferring to SNH to help continue this contribution to sustainable deer management.