

**Deer Commission for Scotland Board Meeting
1st October 2003 in The Winnoch Hotel, Drymen**

Agenda

Open Session – 4.00pm

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| 1 | Apologies | |
| 2 | Minutes of Meeting held on 19 th August 2003 | Paper: 270/1 |
| 3 | Matters Arising | Paper: 270/2 |
| 4. | Count Programme 2003/04 | Paper: 270/3 |
| 5 | SFGS Desk Guidance | Paper: 270/4 |
| 6 | DCS Board Meetings 2004 | Paper: 270/5 |
| 7 | Ministerial Visit | Oral Report |
| 8 | Policy & Financial Management Review | Paper 270/6 |
| 9 | Management Action Plan | Paper: 270/7 |
| 10 | External Meetings attended | Paper: 270/8 |
| 11 | Any Other Business | |
| 12 | Date of next meeting (9 th December 2003 – Thistle Hotel, Inverness) | |

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION BY THE DEER COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND
BOARD MEETING ON 1st OCTOBER 2003**

COLLABORATIVE COUNT REQUESTS

Purpose

To update the Commission on collaborative count assistance.

Action

Approval is sought from the Commission on criteria to apply in order to prioritise future count assistance to DMGs.

Background

In June 2003 DCS sent a letter to DMGs seeking requests for DCS assistance with DMG deer counts as part of collaborative deer management. Due to increasing count commitments for the Priority Site process and the count trial, the requests received as of 8th September (from approximately 50% of DMGs that responded) have exceeded the budget allocated for collaborative assistance by £100K (as presented to the Deer Management Committee on 8th September: DMC/31/2003). More count requests are expected from the remaining 50% of DMGs.

Those DMGs that have requested assistance have been told that due to over-subscription their requests may not be met, and they have been asked to indicate: a) how much they would be willing to contribute towards costs and b) to what purpose they intend to use the count information collected. It is proposed to then prioritise those requests received on the basis of their responses to these questions.

In the meantime, additional resources are being requested from SEERAD towards meeting this shortfall on the grounds that DCS assistance with collaborative counting this year is a form of training. The aim of this training is that those DMGs will be able to conduct their own counts more effectively thereafter.

The planned increasing demand of the Priority Site process on the count budget means that in future years resources towards collaborative DMG counts will become increasingly competitive. At the DMC meeting on 8th September it was proposed that a number of criteria (including those outlined above) are applied to future requests for assistance towards collaborative DMG counts, namely:

- Will the assistance be used for training purposes (to enable the DMG to then conduct their own counts more effectively)
- Will the DMG be able to contribute up to 50% of the count costs (contractors, helicopters, map production)
- In addition to training, will the information be used to inform deer management and if so how (e.g. towards collaborative culling)
- Does the DMG requesting assistance have a Constitution and / or a Deer Management Plan

EXTERNAL MEETINGS ATTENDED BY CHAIRMAN / DIRECTOR / TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

5-Oct-03	Tech Director	S Ross DMG meeting	
6-Oct-03	V. Chairman	Revision of CAP meeting	Edinburgh
7-Oct-03	Tech Director	SNH Board seminar	Battleby
15-Oct-03	V. Chairman, Tech Director	Welfare workshop	Stirling
27-Oct-03	V. Chairman, Tech Director	S 7 Caenlochan	Glenshee
28-Oct-03	Tech Director	S 7 Inverpolly	Ullapool
29-Oct-03	Director	Participation / Consultation workshop MLURI	Aberdeen
30-Oct-03	Director, Tech Director	SNH Conference - Farming, Forestry & the Natural Heritage	
5-Nov-03	Tech Director	Affric & Kintail DMG	
10-Nov-03	V. Chairman, Director	SNH Board dinner	
11-Nov-03	V. Chairman	W Sutherland DMG	
12-Nov-03	Director	Scottish Parliament - ERA committee	Edinburgh
17-Nov-03	Director	Frank Strang - SEERAD Land Use & Rural Policy	Inverness
19-Nov-03	V. Chairman	ADMG	Inverarry
24-Nov-03	Tech Director	FCS Working Group	Stirling
2-Dec-03	V. Chairman, Tech Director	S 7 Caenlochan	Glenshee
4-Dec-03	V. Chairman, Tech Director	Deer Management Round Table	Stirling

EXTERNAL MEETINGS TO BE ATTENDED

11-Dec-03	Tech Director	DMG/DCS/FC/SNH Liaison meeting	Stirling
17-Dec-03	Tech Director	SNH Liaison meeting	Battleby
18-Dec-03	Tech Director	DMP/SFGSS	Dingwall
7-Jan-04	Director, Tech Director	Inverpolly site visit (SEERAD)	Inverpolly
8-Jan-04	V. Chairman, Director	ADMG liaison meeting	Stirling
9-Jan-04	V. Chairman, Director, Tech Director	Incentives & Regulations workshop	TBC
29-Jan-04	Director	Malvern programme	London
30-Jan-04			

FREQUENCY AND FORMAT OF DCS BOARD MEETINGS

Report by Director to Commission Meeting on 1 October 2003

Introduction

1. At the Board meeting on 19 August, Members asked for a paper to be prepared to reconsider the number and format of Board meetings. In particular, they wished to consider reducing the number of meetings annually whilst increasing the number of two-day meetings.

Current arrangements

2. At present the Board meets 6 times a year. One of these meetings (normally held in June) is a two-day meeting including field visits. Over the past year the Commission began to hold half its meetings out of Inverness and to include a “meet the DCS” session in the evening – for some Members and staff this involved an overnight stay. Board meetings are now held in public (supplemented by a closed session and a Members only session), but members of the public have seldom attended. All meetings are now held in hired premises, whether in Inverness or outside.
3. Dates for meetings in 2004 have been provisionally set for 4 February, 24 March, 2 & 3 June, 18 August, 20 October and 1 December.
4. The Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 does not lay down any minimum number or meetings per year; it merely sets a minimum quorum of 5.

Case for change

5. Since the re-organisation of the Committee structure and other changes in the work pattern of DCS, Board Agendas have become noticeably lighter. This was intentional: the Committees appear to be working well and the Board is increasingly able to concentrate on a few key strategic issues. Increased use of e-mail to deal with urgent issues has also meant that Members can be fully involved in decisions taken in between meetings.
6. Some Members have also remarked that the two-day meeting in June is particularly valuable in that it gives Members, staff and guests the opportunity to discuss issues and brainstorm ideas in a way which is difficult at a formal and limited-time Board meeting. Many Members have to travel a considerable distance to attend Board meetings, and to do so for a short and light Agenda may not constitute best value or best use of their time.
7. It is therefore proposed that Members consider changing to the following arrangements:
 - 4 Meetings per year: March, June, September and December would work best in terms of annual cycles of work;

- Two to be two-day events to include site visits, presentations, training or seminars;
 - The other two to be one day meetings (venue normally Inverness area);
 - “Meet the DCS” events to be held at 3 of the 4 meetings.
8. This arrangement would almost certainly make better use of Members’ time, ensure meatier Agendas, and give greater opportunity for discussion outwith formal agenda items.
 9. Although it is difficult to be precise about costs (as venues differ), initial estimates suggest that overall there would be a minor annual saving of about £2500.
 10. One disadvantage with the proposed change is that it would introduce one additional two-day session, which might be difficult for some Members. On the other hand, it does reduce the total amount of travelling and releases one full day per year.
 11. Continued development of e-mail / fax clearance of papers as necessary between meetings would ensure that the longer gaps between meetings would not diminish Member involvement when needed.

Recommendation

12. It is recommended that Members consider adopting the new frequency for Board meetings for 2004, on a one-year trial basis.
13. If Members so decide, it is recommended that the dates for meetings in 2004 be agreed for early March if possible (rather than 24 March previously proposed), 2 & 3 June, a date in September if possible (in preference to the 18 August date previously proposed), and 1 & 2 December (unless Members would prefer the second 2-day meeting in the Autumn or Spring).

**Paper for Discussion at DCS Board Meeting to be held at
The Thistle Hotel, Inverness on Tuesday, 9th December 2003**

Management Action Plan – Report to Members

1 Introduction

The Management Action Plan advises Members of the current position with regard to various ongoing projects.

2 Points to Note

Members will wish to note the following amendments since the last report to Members on 1st October 2003.

A The deadlines for the following projects have been extended: -

- Appoint Branch Assistant (Inverness)
- Sika Hybridisation (Publish Report)
- Review of regulatory role, powers, duties and procedures

B The following projects have been deleted: -

- Appoint Deer Liaison Officers
- Appoint Deer Data Liaison Officer
- Appoint Best Practice Project Officer

3 Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the contents of the paper.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE
DCS BOARD HELD ON 19th AUGUST 2003**

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on matters outstanding following the Open Session of the Board meeting held on 19th August 2003.

Item 2 Minutes of Meeting held on 9th June 2003

- 2.1 The Minutes were amended accordingly. The Director will provide an oral update at the meeting on progress with regard to development of procedures in order that DCS be given an early opportunity to comment on consultation papers.

Item 3 Matters Arising

Minutes of Meetings

Strategy Committee Meetings – 22nd April 2003

- 3.3 See Item 6 on this Agenda.

Management Action Plan

- 3.4 The Director continues to pursue this proposal.

Item 4 HIPP

4.2/3 The potential benefits of a formal recognition for best practice and delivery of public benefit beyond basic good land stewardship through a kite mark was discussed informally with Ross Finnie. Comments from funding partners expressed strong support in principle for the project and a request that the project focus on scoping the challenges rather than seeking to produce an award a Kite mark within two years. A condition of HIPP funding is the ability to demonstrate change and consequently the redefined scope of the project makes it ineligible for funding under HIPP. DCS is organising a meeting of the funding partners later in the year to agree the funding and scope of the project.

Item 5 Minutes of Committee Meetings

Strategy Committee Meeting – 5th August 2003

- 5.4 The topic of deer and ticks is being discussed at the welfare workshop on the 15th Oct 2003.

Item 6 Management Action Plan

- 6.2 This is in hand.

Item 8 Dates of DCS Board meetings – 2004

8.2 See item 6 on this agenda.

**POLICY & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF DEER
COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND**

Report by Head of Administration to Commission Meeting on 1 October 2003

Introduction

Attached is a progress report on the PFMR Action Plan. A number of the recommendations have been implemented and DCS will be meeting with SEERAD, hopefully before the end of October, to review progress.

Recommendation

That the Board note progress to date.

SCOTTISH FORESTRY GRANT SCHEMES: DRAFT STAFF GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURES.

Purpose

To present a Staff Guidance for dealing with SFGS to the Commission for approval.

Action

The Commission is asked to discuss and endorse the proposed procedures.

Background

The attached paper has prepared by Peter Kirk with input from John Milne, Sir Michael Strang Steel, Donald Irwin-Houston and David Balharry. It was discussed by the DMC on the 8th Sept and comments made at that time have been taken on board.