

**DEER COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND
OPEN BOARD MEETING**

**HILTON CRAIGENDARROCH HOTEL, BALLATER
TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2005**

Agenda

Open Session – 1400 Hours

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 14 June 2005 Paper: 278/1
- 3 Matters Arising from Meeting held on 14 June 2005 Paper: 278/2
- 4 Efficient Government Paper: 278/3
- 5 Seasons: Responses & Next Steps Paper: 278/4
- 6 Revision of Best Practice Programme Paper: 278/5
- 8 Dates and Venues of DCS Board Meetings 2006 Paper: 278/7
- 9 External Meetings attended Paper: 278/11
- 10 Any other business
- 11 Date of next meeting (7 December 2005 - Inverness)

Minutes of the 277th Meeting of the Deer Commission for Scotland held in The Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown on Spey on Tuesday, 14th June 2005

Open Session

Present: Prof. J Milne (Chairman)
Mr. J Duncan Millar
Dr. P Mayhew
Dr. C Shedden
Dr A Barbour
Mr. A Hamilton
The Earl of Dalhousie
Mr. N Rowantree
Sir Michael Strang Steel
Dr S Walker
Dr J Pemberton
Mr S Pepper (Items 5 – 11 only)

Mr. N Reiter (Director)
Dr. D Balharry (Technical Director)
Mr. R Edwards (Head of Administration)
Mr E Barclay (Communications Officer)
Mr. I Hope (Deer Officer)
Mr. A MacGugan (Collaborative Deer Officer)

Mr. R Dunsmore, FC
Mr. R Burton SNH
Mr. R Wakeford (SEERAD) (Items 5 – 11 only)
Mr. R Weatherston (SEERAD)
Mr. G Selkirk, SEERAD

1 Opening Remarks

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting. There were 3 members of the public in attendance.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Mr. A Hampson who was substituted for by Mr R Burton (SNH).

2 Draft Minutes of Meeting of held on 1st March 2005 Paper: 277/1

- 2.1 The Minutes were approved.

3 Matters Arising from Meeting held on 1st March 2005 Paper: 277/2

- 3.1 Members noted the contents of Paper 277/2.

4 Seasons Consultation: Summary and Analysis of Responses Paper: 277/3

- 4.1 The Board considered a report providing a summary and analysis of the responses received to the Commission's consultation on the Close Seasons.

- 4.2 The meeting was advised that the responses had been considered by a DCS internal working group, the Strategy Committee and all Members (through correspondence).
- 4.3 Members were also advised the summary would be in the public domain once all amendments agreed at the meeting had been incorporated.
- 4.4 During discussion, a number of presentational amendments were **agreed**.
- 4.5 Other amendments **agreed** included the provision of a digest of the questions and summary of responses, a revised introduction, the headlines be amended to reflect the key strands of the document and that the list of respondents in the Appendix be amended.
- 4.6 It was also **agreed** that all respondents to the document be advised by post when the document appears on the DCS web site and at the same time be sent a summary of responses together with the Commission's response to Ministers.

Action: Director

5 Collaborative Deer Management

Paper: 277/4

- 5.1 The meeting was advised that a detailed draft Project Plan for Sustainable / Collaborative Deer Management Project was being developed by a Member / Staff Working Group and a wider Project Group which included Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Association of Deer Management Groups.
 - 5.2 The report before the meeting sought Member's approval to the general principles of the project, its main objectives, the methods of project management and the indicative resource implications.
 - 5.3 It was **noted** that the proposed project would run for 5 years using a three-phase approach. The purpose was to develop and demonstrate through 6 case studies, a future for sustainable deer management based on an appropriate balance between the needs of the public and private sectors, and to make recommendations on what is required to facilitate this on a wider scale.
 - 5.4 Members also **noted** the resource implications of delivering the project plan.
 - 5.5 During discussion, Members were content with the contents of the outline project plan but emphasised the need to ensure that an appropriate communications strategy was in place.
- Action: Communications Officer
- 5.6 It was also **agreed** that the document be amended to indicate more clearly that the project plan was in respect of all species of deer.
- Action: Director
- 5.7 Members were also advised that the development of this project would result in the creation of new post(s) within and possibly outwith DCS and that this proposal would require to be considered by the Resources and Audit Committee.

- 5.8 The meeting was also advised that it was intended to submit regular progress reports through the Commission's Deer Management Committee. The progress of the project would also receive regular consideration by the Strategy and Resources and Audit Committees within their ongoing consideration of the Annual Plan.
- 5.9 Following discussion, Members **agreed** the general principles of the Project as outlined in the report, and delegated detailed development and implementation of the Project to the Working Group.

6 Annual Report 2004-05: Draft Outline

Paper: 277/5

- 6.1 The Board considered a paper providing a suggested timetable and contents guidelines for the production of the DCS Annual Report for 2004/05. Members were advised that the Communications Officer had taken up post the previous day and would provide further input on the content and also the design of the report.
- 6.2 During discussion, it was **agreed** that a leaflet version of the report, providing headline messages, be prepared.
- 6.3 It was also suggested that the Annual Report make reference to winter mortality rates in deer.
- 6.4 Other suggestions included the need for reference to be made of the impact on DCS arising from Glenfeshie and also include reference to ongoing research.
- 6.5 Members **approved** the proposed timetable and draft contents guidelines and **agreed** that further development of the report be co-ordinated by the Communications Officer, working closely with the Chairman, Director and Technical Director. It was also **agreed** that Members of the Board would provide comment on the draft of the Annual Report by e-mail.

Action: Communications Officer

7 Procedures for Issuing Board and Committee Papers

Papers: 277/6

- 7.1 Members considered a paper suggesting proposed procedures for papers for DCS Board and Committee meetings.
- 7.2 Following discussion, Members **agreed** the proposed procedures as outlined in the paper.

Action: Head of Administration

8 Abstract of Income & Expenditure 2004 / 05

Paper: 277/7

- 8.1 The meeting considered a draft Abstract of DCS Income and Expenditure for the financial year ending 31st March 2005. It was **noted** that the Resources and Audit Committee had considered this issue at their meeting on 17th May 2005 and the draft Abstract before the meeting incorporated the amendments agreed by the Committee.
- 8.2 During discussion, minor amendments were **agreed**.

Action: Head of Administration

8.3 Members **approved** the draft Abstract subject to the **agreed** amendments.

9 Minutes of Meetings

a) Draft Minutes of Deer Management Committee meeting held on 3rd May 2005

Paper: 277/8

9.1 The meeting considered the draft Minutes of the Deer Management Committee meeting held on 3rd May 2005.

9.2 Members **noted** that a Best Practice Guide Demonstration event would be held on Corrour Estate on 2nd, 3rd and 4th August 2005.

9.3 It was also **noted** that the format for the Drumossie Seminar to be held on 21st June 2005 had been amended to allow more time for discussion.

9.4 The draft Minute of the meeting was **noted**.

b) Draft Minutes of Strategy Committee held on 17th May 2005

Paper: 277/9

9.5 The meeting considered the draft Minutes of the Strategy Committee meeting held on 17th May 2005.

9.6 It was **noted** that a paper on 'Fit and Competent', due for discussion at this meeting, would be available for discussion at the next meeting of the DCS Board

9.7 Members were also advised that the DCS response to the consultation on the draft Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill would shortly be completed and circulated for comment.

9.8 The draft Minute of the Meeting was **noted**.

c) Draft minutes of Resources & Audit Committee held on 17th May 2005

Paper: 277/10

9.9 The meeting considered the draft Minutes of the Resources and Audit Committee meeting held on 17th May 2005.

9.10 Reference was made to the discussions that took place at the meeting on the reviews of support staff deployment, and information technology requirements.

9.11 The draft Minute of the Meeting was **noted**.

10 External Meetings Attended

Paper: 277/11

10.1 Members considered a paper detailing external meetings attended, and to be attended, by the Chairman, Director and Technical Director.

10.2 It was **noted** that the date of the meeting with DILG due to be held on 17th June 2005 would now be held on 11th August 2005.

- 10.3 Members also **noted** that a joint meeting of the DCS and SNH Board would be held in Mar Lodge, Braemar on 24th August 2005. Mr Pepper submitted his apologies.
- 10.4 Board Members were also encouraged to attend the Game Fairs at Scone and Moy.
- 10.5 It was also **noted** that, at the next meeting of the DCS Board to be held on 27th and 28th September 2005, it was intended to hold a meeting between the Boards of both DCS and the Cairngorm National Park Authority.
- 10.6 It was **noted** that Mr J Duncan Millar would be attending the meeting of the Loch Lomond National Park Deer Forum to be held on 10th August 2005 and it was **agreed** that Mr S Pepper would also attend.

Action: Mr J Duncan Millar

- 10.7 The contents of the paper were **noted**.

11 Any other business

- 11.1 There was no other business.

12 Date of next meeting

- 12.1 The next meeting of the Board will be held in Deeside on 27th and 28th September 2005

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE OPEN SESSION OF THE DCS BOARD
HELD ON 14th JUNE 2005**

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on matters outstanding following the Open Session of the Board meeting held on 14th June 2005.

Item 4 Seasons Consultation: Summary and Analysis of Responses

4.6 All respondents sent copy of letter and summary of responses

Item 5 Collaborative Deer Management

5.5 Communications strategy being developed.

5.6 Document amended

Item 6 Annual Report 2004 – 05: Draft Outline

6.5 Final draft completed and report to go to external proof-reader/designer.

Item 7 Procedures for Issuing Board and Committee Papers

7.2 These procedures are now in place.

Item 8 Abstract of Income & Expenditure 2004 / 05

8.2 The agreed amendments were incorporated.

EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT
Report by Director to Board meeting 27 September 2005

Purpose

1. The Strategy Committee considered a report on Efficient Government at its 7 September meeting. The Chairman and Director also took part in a meeting with Deputy Environment and Rural Development Minister Rhona Brankin with Inverness-based NDPBs on 6 September. This report reflects the discussions at those meetings and updates the Board on the Efficient Government agenda.

Action

2. To agree a proposed DCS approach to examining options and meeting the requirements of the Efficient Government targets.

Introduction

3. As a letter from SEERAD has made clear, *“Ministers are committed to find ways of delivering Scotland’s public services in ways that deliver more productivity. They have set out a challenging series of targets. ...The savings made will be directed into frontline services, and for us in the ERAD family that means that we can redeploy those savings into the areas of the portfolio that we identify as being a priority for service delivery.”*
4. In addition, Rhona Brankin has asked Inverness-based NDPBs and SEERAD offices to look actively at providing a model for the rest of Scotland for how joint working and resource sharing can work. She has asked for a joint report by end November.
5. DCS will need to continue to play a full part in the Efficient Government / Best Value Agenda. Whilst DCS has not been set any specific financial or other targets, we will need to examine how we currently deliver our services and how we might find more efficient ways of doing so.
6. As a first step toward the joint report to Rhona Brankin, each body will need to provide a list of potential opportunities for joint working. DCS’ contribution will cover the following:
 - Moving existing resources into “front line” DCS services;
 - Sharing of back- office, support and possibly front-office services with other agencies in the SEERAD “family” or wider;
 - Possible co-location with other agencies (not necessarily within the SEERAD “family”).

Maximising front-line use of resources

7. DCS is perhaps well ahead here, in that we have for nearly two years now been able to allocate with reasonable accuracy the time spent by each member of staff on tasks within the Annual Plan. We are able to identify staff (and to a less accurate degree non-staff) costs to categories which broadly translate into “front line” and “support”, although they are not shown as such in the Annual Plan.
8. I propose that we use this data further to examine:
 - how we should differentiate more clearly still between front line and support;
 - what scope there is to increase the (already high) percentage of our resources devoted to front line service delivery.

This should allow DCS to make an objective assessment of opportunities further to enhance our effectiveness.

9. DCS has been given no specific savings targets – our budget is comparatively so small and our funding arrangements such that this might not have much significance. However, we might note that if we adopted a similar percentage target to other land sector agencies, we might be looking for savings of the order of £50,000 per annum.

Sharing support services

10. Again, DCS has been working with other Inverness-based bodies for some time on options for sharing resources and services. We will need to examine any further opportunities to share back office or externally-sourced services with other agencies if these could lead to more efficient, effective or better value outcomes.
11. Areas to include in our initial contribution to the report to Ministers are:

I.T.:SEPA is currently advising us on IT issues (a separate report was considered by the Resources and Audit Committee), and FCS is looking promising as a possible partner for many of our IT needs.

GIS: From its inception DCS’ GIS system was designed to be compatible with SNH and FCS data. Wider compatibility issues will lie largely with SEERAD. There may be further opportunities for sharing skills and training.

Payroll: currently provided by Scottish Executive (SE): unlikely to make sense for DCS to move to another provided given the current status of DCS staff.

Human Resources: currently provided by Scottish Executive (SE). Likely to remain there, although there may be scope for sharing some specific services with other Inverness-based bodies.

Internal Audit: currently provided by Scottish Executive (SE). Makes sense to remain there.

Finance: currently provided by Scottish Executive (SE) – part of S.E. Accounting System and needs to remain there.

Legal: currently provided by Scottish Executive (SE); but would be merit in examining possible arrangements for specialist legal advice with other NDPBs.

Procurement: mostly within S.E. arrangements, but some flexibility to seek joint contracts for more specialist needs with other NDPBs (e.g. FCS or SNH) would be useful and could yield significant benefits.

Training: DCS has already undertaken some joint training initiatives with other NDPBs; there is scope for a more planned approach to joint training.

Green Office: DCS had largely independent arrangements for recycling etc. Look at scope for joint arrangements.

Building Maintenance: currently provided by private sector contract. No action here pending decision on location.

Reception/Front Office services: will depend on decision on location.

Website: DCS largely runs its own website, with private sector contractor helping with design and technical support. Scope here for a more integrated/better linked approach with other NDPBs and SEERAD.

Travel: DCS uses combination of car pool, specialist vehicles and public transport. May be scope for sharing some resources, partly dependent on location decision.

Members may be able to suggest other areas to look at.

Co-location

12. DCS has been reviewing its current and likely future accommodation needs in Inverness for some months. DCS has already undertaken some detailed work on its needs (bearing in mind that we remain to a considerable degree a field rather than office based organisation).
13. Two options worth pursuing had emerged from discussions with other agencies and form initial scoping reviews:
 - Remain at Knowsley, possibly with some structural alterations;
 - Share the new Forest Enterprise site at Smithton, with opportunities for also sharing some back-office, front-office, equipment and operational services: some discussions and broad scoping has already been done on this option. The main impediment may be planning.
14. DCS and SNH have now been asked specifically to look at the case for co-location in Inverness (albeit the SNH building is close to being completed). DCS has therefore added this option to the other two and will prepare a detailed comparative analysis. I have already begun discussions with SNH on the issues which need to be examined to assess the feasibility of co-location. Alternatives of other bodies co-locating with SNH are also being examined.
15. The analysis should be based, inter alia, on the target benefits set out by SE:
 - rationalisation of SEERAD and its agencies and NDPBs
 - amalgamation of front and back services with associated savings
 - management savings in each office
 - single contact telephone number
 - benefits of joined up working for staff who are part of a larger all encompassing organisation
 - greater awareness of the range of work within SEERAD, its agencies and NDPBs
 - joined up approach to customers
 - enhanced customer service
 - extended range of offices for customers to visit
 - maximising use of space in a single office with associated reduced accommodation costs
 - opportunity to select the best and most suitable building in one town when there are more than one to choose from

Clearly some of the above criteria may have greater weight than others.

Given that the SNH building is due to be completed and ready for occupation by late May 2005, it is important that the feasibility study for co-location is completed quickly, to give the opportunity for at least minor modifications to be made if the decision to go ahead is taken.

Next Steps

16. It is essential that DCS wholeheartedly embraces the Efficient Government Agenda. As a small and integrated body, we have the advantage of being quick on our feet and able to identify and implement change quickly.

17. Strategy Committee has agreed that the overall Efficient Government Agenda should be led by Management Team (Director, Technical Director, Head of Administration), supported by a Member/Officer limited-life sub-group which will meet as necessary to prepare advice for the Committees and Board.

18. Most immediately, DCS will need to submit its first thoughts on areas to examine under the Efficient Government in Inverness agenda. I propose that the elements described in this report should form that response (which only needs to be an informal “shopping list” to be collated by Andy Robb in SEERAD).

19. The Strategy and Resources & Audit Committees have agreed that Efficient Government becomes a standing item on both their Agendas.

Recommendations

- That DCS devote the necessary staff and other resources to further the Efficient Government Agenda energetically and in good time;

- that an initial list of areas for examination based on this report be sent to SEERAD.

Seasons: Responses and next steps**1 PURPOSE**

To update the Board on the reaction to the letter sent to the Minister and to outline how the recommendations, if accepted will be advanced.

2 ACTION

2.1 Note the background.

2.2 Agree the way forward.

3 BACKGROUND

The Summary of Responses to the Close Season Consultation and the DCS recommendation were sent to the Minister on Wednesday 31 August. The letter to the Minister and an Executive Summary of the Responses were sent out to all 1193 respondents. In addition all the relevant documents have been made available on the DCS web site.

3.1 Initial reaction

Press: The press release was picked up by the *Press & Journal*, Moray Firth Radio, BBC Highland and Grampian lunchtime news. There was little analysis, simply using the release. As at 13 September, an article was being written by *Shooting Times* (oral update will be provided).

Organisations: ADMG issued a press release that cautiously acknowledged the approach adopted. The Association cautioned on the need to be closely involved with the development of new proposals and interestingly talked about the need to develop a “comprehensive approach” to securing deer welfare and sustainable deer management. Fundamental to future developments would be Best Practice Guidance.

BASC issued a press release from their head quarters in Rossett, providing quotes through their Deer Officer Alan McCormack. The central theme was the need to protect against mandatory testing and guard against DCS seeking extra powers. The Association’s release makes assumptions regarding proposals on rolling fit & competence out beyond its present use within the authorisation process. It is interesting that while BASC vociferously attacks any move to mandatory testing, it openly supports the ‘mandatory’ requirement for the Deer Stalking Certificate Level 2 if stalking on public land through the Forestry Commission.

BDS were in the process of providing a response by way of letter. In discussion with John Bruce, the Scottish Chairman, concern was expressed that DCS had not indicated greater support for the Deer Stalking Certificate Level 2 as the mechanism by which competence can be demonstrated. As with the previous two organisations, concern was expressed about the manner in which future fit & competence demands would be implemented.

The confusion between the current fit & competent procedures required by the legislation when DCS issues authorisations and any future proposals to introduce competence for all who shoot deer is a common theme. In future discussions it will be important to correct this and provide assurance that we are starting from a clean slate.

All three organisations have sought meetings with DCS at the earliest opportunity.

3.2 Next Steps - Continued understanding of the debate

The challenge being made in response to the recommendations is not about the pros and cons for some date line but about the need for greater clarity on the principles surrounding competency for all. There appears to be little disagreement that the competency of the individual is key. There is disquiet about extending this to a competency register that will impact on the individual's ability to go stalking.

Specifically concern centres on how an individual gets onto any such register, what ‘height’ the ‘competency bar’ will be set and ultimately this proposal acting as a block to those wishing to stalk deer. While these concerns are valid, the hub of the debate is not how individuals get onto a competency register but more about how they stay on it. The principles relating to defining competency are already well advanced for deer stalking through the continued development of National Occupational Standards and the resultant training courses, college courses and industry led voluntary qualifications. The height of the ‘competency bar’ and methods to demonstrate that competency have already been put in place by the industry, albeit that further refinement is required.

What does need further debate is how the industry should deal with any practitioners who continually operate below the set competency and in doing so endanger deer welfare, food safety and public safety.

3.3 Next Steps – Fit & Competent

The criteria to determine fit & competent has been reworked to be more robust and the Fit & Competent database of controllers is now live and running. It is important to reiterate that this work relates solely to the current legal obligations placed on DCS under Section 37 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996. It is not a blue print for any consideration as to how competence could be applied to all practitioners as a pre-condition for shooting deer.

Discussions, within staff, on the principles behind how competence could be applied to all can be summarised as:

- DCS believe practitioners must follow practice that meets welfare, food safety and public safety concerns. It is for the industry to help further develop what should define this practice.
- DCS believe practitioners should show they have the knowledge that enables this practice. It is for the industry to agree how that knowledge should be demonstrated.
- DCS believe there should be consequences for those who, without good reason, operate against this practice. It is for industry to help develop what these consequences should be.

This last bullet point is the critical factor and there are a number of models, ranging from responsibility resting with membership organisations to a statutory stalking licence that require further examination and discussion with the deer sector.

3.4 Next steps – Unified Data System

The requirements of the new EU Hygiene Regulations have provided a timely mechanism by which the records required to be kept by practitioners could be rationalised. In addition the Declaration Tag, demanded by the regulations could be used as one monitoring tool.

A number of pilots are being implemented that will test the efficiency in collecting and analysing the data required. In tandem with this, is the need to further explore the practical meaning of wound tracts recorded and how criteria can be developed that will act as a trigger for further investigation.

There is a further requirement to investigate what other indicators can be used to highlight welfare concerns. Such work may tie in with research aimed assessing the impact of disturbance to deer.

3.5 Next steps – Sustainable Deer Management

The Sustainable Deer Management Plan is addressed under paper 278/6. It is of no surprise that the expectations as to what this should deliver are as wide as the understanding of the term sustainability itself. It would be of benefit therefore to further explore the concept of sustainable deer management in the context of current government policy. How it relates to what the ERAD family are expected to deliver and how this political expectation has shifted the Deer Commission's role. A modern day role as mediator in public v private interests as opposed to private v private interests, that was fundamentally the role of the Red Deer Commission.

Such a discussion would further help define what the public interest is in terms of deer and tie in with the proposed development of case studies described under the Sustainable Deer Management Plan. Ultimately, while there may develop a high level definition of Sustainable Deer Management, it will only be through the practical critical review of current deer management and the testing of resulting proposals, that such a definition will be fully understood.

4 WAY FORWARD

Assuming the Minister accepts DCS recommendations:

- 4.1 Meetings to discuss and expand the "next steps" are arranged with ADMG, BASC Scotland, SGA and BDS, specifically in relation to the development of competence for all.
- 4.2 Staff continue to trial a unified data system and associated criteria that could be used to highlight welfare concerns.
- 4.3 Staff continue to ensure that sustainable deer management is delivered in the context of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and commitments under the Nature Conservation Act and that in the first place, updates on how this is being achieved are provided to the Strategy Committee.

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD OF THE DEER COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND
AT THEIR MEETING ON THE 27TH SEPTEMBER 2005.**

REPORT BY Linzi Seivwright

Background

Staff are keen to make progress with Best Practice now that a new Steering Group Chairman has been appointed. The attached paper is being discussed by the Deer Management Committee Working Group for Best Practice. The views of the Working Group will be presented orally at the meeting and the Board meeting is being used as an opportunity to ensure that the recommendations of the Working Group have full Commission backing. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval from the Board for textual changes to the Terms of Reference and the Definition of Best Practice prior to them being discussed with the Steering Group.

Following an induction meeting with the Technical Director and the BP Project Officer, Bob McIntosh, the new Steering Group Chairman, has requested that consideration be given to presenting a paper to the next Steering Group meeting for discussion which seeks to a) remove any ambiguity with regard to what constitutes Best Practice and b) to revise the terms of reference to make it clear that ownership of the project rests with the Steering Group.

In clarifying the definition of Best Practice it should also be noted that the Best Practice series provides a mechanism which could be used to clarify a minimum level of competence required of those culling deer (categories 1 + 2). As competence is a key part of the DCS response on seasons it may be useful to consider the potential role of the BPG in defining competence at an early stage.

Purpose

This paper presents amended Terms of Reference and Definition of Best Practice which, while not changing the substance of what was previously agreed, addresses the concerns raised by Bob McIntosh. In addition the paper presents a revised production schedule, as it is now clear that the target of 24 guides to be reviewed and published during 05/06 as agreed by the DMC in Feb 05 will be difficult for staff and the Steering Group to meet, given time constraints imposed by the stalking season. The current expectation is that it will be possible to agree the production schedule for the remaining guides at the next meeting of the Core BPSG, scheduled for 15th or 18th November 05.

Action

The Committee are asked to:

1. Comment on the revised Terms of Reference (appendix 1)
2. Comment on the updated Definition of Best Practice/ Categorisation (appendix 2)
3. Note the updated production schedule (appendix 3-to be tabled)

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference

The aim is to commit the collective expertise and experience of the individuals and organisations involved to support the development and promotion of technical guidance on Best Practice for the deer industry.

Membership of the steering group:

The steering group has two types of member organisations, “core” and “topic dependant”, the latter being co-opted by the core group as required. All Members are expected to promote BP in words and actions, participate in activities related to developing, assessing, disseminating or promoting guidance.

Core Group members (DCS, SGA, BDS, BASC, FCS, ADMG, LANTRA)

These organisations are involved in all aspects of developing and review of guidance. As members of the core group they are expected to:

1. Review and agree the content of guides.
2. Recommend topics for guides and assess the relative priority for production.
3. Attend all steering group meetings.
4. Contribute to the strategic development of BPG.

Topic dependant members (SNH, SSPCA, FSA, HSE, SVS, Police (e.g. firearms and wildlife liaison), AGDP, SGDP, COSLA, plus others as identified as appropriate).

These organisations have expertise in a specific area, relevant to one or more of the topics covered in the series. Members of the topic dependant group are invited to:

1. Review guides, and amendments to guides, relevant to their specialist remit.
2. Attend meetings and workshops where relevant guides are discussed.

The purpose of Best Practice Guidance is to:

Make practitioners aware of the procedures that i) are a legal requirement, ii) are required to safeguard public safety, food safety and animal welfare, iii) are required to carry out a task effectively and iv) may add value.

Allow practitioners to feel that if following the guidance they are on safe ground.

Provide information to support rational and considered management based on best current information.

Help inform DCS assessment of whether an individual is Fit and Competent when issuing authorisations.

Provide support to those seeking vocational qualifications.

Contribute to the transparency and accountability of public bodies.

Method of working for member organisations

Each organisation to provide feedback, in writing via email, in accordance with agreed schedules. Only one individual to provide feedback on any one topic. One individual per organisation to take responsibility for signing-off guides.

In reviewing material, representatives from each organisation will:

- ensure that it is accurate, free from bias, and incorporates all the procedures required of a competent practitioner.
- recommend categorisation of guidance as i) a legal requirement; ii) required of all practitioners in order to safeguard public safety, food safety and animal welfare; iii) required of practitioners in order to carry out a task effectively.
- ensure that feedback and contributions are i) representative of their organisation, ii) objective, iii) technically accurate and iv) in keeping with the role of the group.

Representatives will be responsible for ensuring that draft guidance is not circulated outwith the organisation. Where originals or copies are circulated internally, then the caveat stating that it is “draft guidance, confidential to recipient, not for wider circulation” should be clearly visible, and the attention of recipients should be drawn to this.

Should the need arise the group will meet with DCS to discuss technically difficult topics. All organisations forming the core group will be invited to attend, along with any organisations from the topic dependant group relevant to the purpose of the meeting.

Where, exceptionally, and after substantive discussion in the steering group, organisations are unable to endorse guidance the technical reason should be made clear, and evidence provided to support the reasoning. In this instance time-limited interim guidance will be published, acknowledging areas of concern, to be replaced when consensus is achieved.

The contribution of organisations will be recognised on promotional publications and organisations may use their involvement and the series logo in their own promotional activities.

Addressing Concerns

Members of the group are expected to address concerns, in writing, to the Chairman. Representatives are responsible for ensuring that concerns are not circulated outwith the Group.

If this does not bring about satisfactory resolution the member is required to present a paper addressing their concern to either the next scheduled group meeting, or if urgent, request a meeting of all members of the group.

Appendix 2

Definition of “Best Practice”

Best Practice is about carrying out a task effectively with regard to legal, safety and welfare issues. This requires *“Consideration of all aspects of the guidance, implementation of elements from the background text where there is benefit, and implementation of all guidance in categories 1, 2 and 3”*.

In the series, guidance is provided on some tasks that are optional for deer managers. These guides have no legal safety or welfare issues and are optional for deer manager to include. However if a topic covered by guidance is included as part of the deer management activities then there is an expectation that BP will be followed (for example, the decision on whether or to age jaws rest with the manager, however if they are intent on aging then effective methods are described in the BP.) The concept of Best Practice recognises that there will always be more than one way to complete a task and individuals adopting alternative working practices to those described in the series should be prepared to explain their reasoning if they wish to be regarded as following Best Practice.

The categories

1	A legal requirement. It is an offence not to comply.
2	Required in order to safeguard public safety, food safety and animal welfare.
3	Required in order to carry out the task effectively.
Background	Advantages & disadvantages associated with the method Situations where the method is appropriate. Examples of what could happen and advice on how to minimise. (For example ATV encountering soft ground.) Procedures which reduce costs, reduce effort, or save time, or represent the ideal option if not constrained by limited time or money. The costs of implementing these may outweigh the benefits.

Paper for Discussion by Board at Meeting on 27th September 2005

MEETING DATES / VENUES 2006

1. Introduction

1.1 Meeting Dates

The DCS Board meetings during 2005 were held during March, June, September and December.

1.2 Venues

In 2003, the DCS Board decided to reduce the number of Board meetings held during the year from 6 to 4.

The table below indicates where DCS have held Board meetings since 2000.

Year	Venues
2000	Newtonmore 5 meetings held in Inverness
2001	Edzell 5 meetings held in Inverness
2002	Moffat Aviemore Stirling 3 meetings held in Inverness
2003	Oban / Fort William Loch Lomond / Trossachs 2 meetings held in Inverness
2004	Ullapool Dumfries Inverness Stirling
2005	Deeside Speyside 2 meetings to be held in Inverness

2. Proposed Meeting Dates

All Members were asked to supply details of suitable for DCS Board meeting in 2006. Following consideration of the responses received and consultation with the Chairman, the following dates and venues are recommended: -

- March – 22nd March 2006
- June – 20th & 21st June 2006
- September – 11th & 12th September 2006
- December – 6th December

3. Proposed venues

It is proposed that the meetings in March and December are held in Inverness. The meetings in June and September are normally held in different areas of Scotland to allow the public to attend Board meetings, for the Board to meet those interested in deer management in those areas and to undertake field visits to discuss local issues. It is proposed that the June meeting is held in the north of Scotland to meet those interested in deer management in an area in which a Board meeting has not been held for many years and to visit the Flow Country. It is proposed that the September meeting is held in lowland Scotland to explore woodland deer issues.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board agree the proposed meeting dates and venues as outlined above.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS ATTENDED BY CHAIRMAN/DIRECTOR/TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Date	Staff	Meeting	Location
17-Jun-05	Chair Director, Tech Dir	DILG meeting	Battleby
21-Jun-05	Chair, Director, Tech Dir	North Seminar/Drumossie	Inverness
22-June-05	Chair, Director, Tech Dir	Deer Management Round Table	Kenmore
24-June-05	Chair, Director, Tech Dir	BDS meeting	Elgin
2-July-05	Chair, Tech Dir	Scone Game Fair	Perth
27-July-05	Director	Richard Wakeford	Edinburgh
28-July-05	Chair, Director, Tech Dir	DCS/CNPA seminar	Tomintoul
6-Aug-05	Chair, Tech Dir	Moy Game Fair	Inverness
8-Aug-05	Tech Dir	SNH/DCS Liaison Meeting	Battleby
11-Aug-05	Chair, Tech Dir	DILG	Battleby
12-Aug-05	Director, Tech Dir	Natura Seminar	Battleby
17-Aug-05	Chair, Dir, Tech Dir	Rhona Brankin	Site visits
18-Aug-05	Chair, Dir	LANTRA	Glen Tanar
21-Aug-05	Chair	West Grampian/Tayside DMG	Blair Atholl
24-Aug-05	Chair, Director, Tech Dir	DCS/SNH Boards meeting	Braemar
	Director	Ian Edgeler, SNH	Inverness
25-Aug-05	Director	CNPA meeting	Inverness
26-Aug-05	Director, Tech Dir	NTS meeting	Braemar
29-Aug-05	Tech Dir	Highland Game	Inverness
	Chairman	Hugh Clayden, FCS	Edinburgh
30-Aug-05	Tech Dir	Northern Ireland Police Service - Head of Firearms and Explosives	Belfast
1-Sept-05	Chairman, Dir, Tech Dir	Nature Conservation Act Seminar	Inverness
6 Sept-05	Chairman, Director	Rhona Brankin, Efficient Govt.	Inverness
16-Sept-05	Tech Dir	A Laing, PDG	Dalcross
21-Sept-05	Chair, Tech Dir	Glenfeshie	Grantown
25-Sept-05	Chair	SW Ross DMG	Kishorn

EXTERNAL MEETINGS TO BE ATTENDED

Date	Staff	Meeting	Location
5-Oct-05	Chair	Gairloch Deer Group	Gairloch
6-Oct-05	Chair	Border DMG	
9-Oct-05	Chair	North Ross and West Ross DMGs	
16-Oct-05	Chair	Mid-West Association DMG	
23-Oct-05	Chair	Breadalbane DMG	
27-Oct-05	Director	DMG	Edzell
2-Nov-05	Chair, Dir, Tech Dir	SGA	Birnam
	Chair, Dir, Tech Dir	ADMG	Birnam
4-Nov-05	Chair	East Sutherland DMG	Golspie
10-Nov-05	Chair, Dir, Tech Dir	Deer Management Round Table	
14-Nov-05	Tech Dir	ADMG	
28-Nov-05	Tech Dir	SNH Liaison	Birnam