



Scotland's Wild Deer A National Approach

Action Plan 2009-2011

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Introduction

The Scottish Government's Strategy - Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach (wDNA) was launched in November 2008. It represents the collective approach and views of agencies, stakeholders and others with an interest in Scotland's wild deer.

wDNA sets out a 20-year vision, supported by objectives and actions which form the basis of this first Action Plan covering the period from 2009/10 to 2010/2011. This first action plan brings together existing and new work to support the vision of sustainable deer management.

Key Highlights

- **Deer in and around our towns and cities** will be a key focus. DCS will be working with local authorities to provide them with the information and tools they need to develop sustainable solutions, while keeping public safety and deer welfare in mind.
- **Public Consultation on deer legislation**, based on a review of deer legislation submitted to the Scottish Government in January 2009 a consultation is planned for later this year.
- **Projects on venison and wildlife watching** will look at how to add value to the wild deer resource. At a time when the economy is under pressure, helping to get the most from the wild deer resource is imperative, and helps support the Scottish Government's Purpose of sustainable economic growth.
- **Joint working on designated sites** where deer and other herbivores are adversely affecting site conditions will continue. This builds on the good progress made so far with agencies working in partnership with land managers in developing deer management plans to deliver these sites into favourable condition.
- **Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach will contribute to the Scottish Government's land use study.** This study is prompting research into integrated approaches to land management in recognition of the pivotal role that land plays in delivering objectives for rural communities, biodiversity and food production. This research will culminate in a land use summit in autumn 2009.

Themes

The 20 year vision is built around three outcomes: a high quality, robust and adaptable environment, sustainable economic development and social well-being. This action plan is organised into seven themes and shows the co-ordinated approach which will be taken in 2009/10 and in outline in 2010/11 to start working towards achieving these outcomes.

Theme 1: Effective Mechanisms for Delivering Sustainable Deer Management

Direct Links to wDNA

The actions set out in this theme will play a key part in delivering the vision. In particular they help deliver the second part of the vision ensuring there are 'effective mechanisms in place to assess the management interventions required to achieve the best combination of these outcomes in any area at a given time; and ensure that these interventions are carried out effectively, in good time and in accordance with best practice'.

Progress and Priorities

Wild deer are a common resource and provide private benefit and stimulate private investment. Achieving sustainable deer management is the overarching aspiration of the wDNA. It defines sustainable deer management as the conservation, control and use of all species of deer so as to contribute to: a high quality, robust and adaptable environment; sustainable economic development; and social well being. Deer have many impacts, positive and negative; cross human boundaries; and are managed for different objectives. Sustainable deer management is therefore unlikely to be achieved by a single landowner's actions alone, so effective collaborative management is fundamental.

To better understand how sustainable deer management can be delivered, DCS set up the Case Studies Project for Sustainable Deer Management in 2008. Three case study areas (East Sutherland, West Sutherland and the Borders) have been identified, each with different deer management challenges. A fourth study will be set up in 2009/10.

DCS has also been reviewing the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 to see whether changes could be made to better support sustainable deer management. Recommendations from this review were submitted to the Scottish Government in January 2009 and will be considered in 2009/10.

What will be done in 2009-2010?

Develop Effective Frameworks for Sustainable Deer Management

- Set up a fourth study as part of the Case Studies Project for Sustainable Deer Management to consider local approaches to sustainable deer management
DCS/SNH
- Produce an economic analysis of costs and benefits associated with the delivery of Sustainable Deer Management as part of the Case Studies Project
DCS
- Start to develop guidance to assist deer managers and Deer Management Groups in defining and delivering Sustainable Deer Management **DCS**

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- Consult on proposed legislation to support voluntary frameworks for Sustainable Deer Management and backstops power where these fail SG
- Hold a Best Practice Demonstration Event on cull planning targeted at Deer Management Groups **Best Practice Partnership**
- Support and attend Deer Management Groups meetings, as requested DCS/SNH
- Ensure there is relevant support for the development and implementation of collaborative deer management plans within the SRDP DCS/SNH/FCS/SG
- Raise awareness of the relevant options available for deer management through the SRDP and monitor uptake DCS
- Develop a deer management framework for the Cairngorms National Park CNPA

Theme 2: Wild Deer Welfare

Direct Links to wDNA

A guiding principle of the wDNA is that wild deer welfare should underpin all of the outcomes. Specifically, the actions here will help to deliver the high quality, robust and adaptable environment objective to 'safeguard the welfare of all species of deer'.

Progress and Priorities

Wild deer welfare is defined as 'concern for the physical and mental well-being of the population' (Best Practice Guide - Welfare). It is about avoiding exposing animals to suffering and allowing them to exhibit natural behaviour. Current thinking is that increasing intervention in the management of wild deer should place an increased obligation on those who manage deer to safeguard their welfare. The need for robust mechanisms to safeguard welfare was one of the main considerations of the recent review of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996. The review built on DCS work on competence, and has led to a series of recommendations which will be consulted on by the Scottish Government in 09/10.

In 2009/10 DCS will continue to develop a 'Responsibility of Care' framework to ensure welfare considerations are taken into account in planning and management activities. The specific responsibilities associated with managing deer in and around towns will be explored in recognition of the different challenges facing deer managers in urban settings.

DCS will look at how data is used to inform and underpin the current approach to deer welfare and to identify where improvements can be made in data collection and dissemination. In 2009/10 Forest Research and Macaulay Institute will continue research to develop health and welfare methodologies in connection with deer.

The National Occupational Standards relevant to deer management will be kept under review. This will help ensure that the deer sector has access to training which provides the appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out effective deer management including safeguarding the welfare of wild deer.

What will be done in 2009 - 2010?

Safeguard the welfare of wild deer

- Include principles to safeguard welfare in developing a 'Responsibility of Care' DCS
- Carry out the main data collection phase of research into developing deer health and welfare methodologies FR/Macaulay

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- Publish a 'Responsibility Framework' to support identification of deer management priorities and relevant stakeholders at a local scale in peri-urban locations **FR**
- Consult on changes to legislation to better secure wild deer welfare **SG**
- Produce options on collecting and using data to identify long term trends in wild deer welfare **DCS**
- Provide training focusing on skills and knowledge required to safeguard welfare, including bespoke training courses covering Best Practice topics **BASC/DCS/BDS**
- Develop criteria to assess effectiveness of non-toxic bullets, to ensure that their use does not compromise deer welfare **DCS**

Theme 3: Sustainable Economic Development

Direct Links to wDNA

The actions set out in this theme contribute to the outcome 'sustainable economic development' and to the objectives: to increase economic opportunities associated with wild deer; to minimise economic costs attributable to wild deer; to develop the market and supply chain for venison; contribute to the social and economic development of communities; and to ensure the skills and knowledge required to manage deer as an integral part of Scotland's natural resources.

Progress and Priorities

Wild deer management in Scotland was estimated in 2005 to be worth over £100 million annually to the economy, with more than 2,500 full time equivalent jobs supported, many in remote and fragile communities. There are opportunities to add value to deer-related products and activities, and to broaden the economic benefits associated. There is also a need to ensure that the economic costs associated with wild deer are managed and to develop further employment, skills and knowledge in the sector.

There has been increased focus on venison in recent months, including a venison reception held at the Scottish Parliament in January 2009. In 2009/10 DCS will explore whether a collaborative approach to venison production could reduce costs.

As deer have been identified as Scotland's top iconic species, there is an opportunity to add value to the wild deer resource by capitalising on their tourism potential. A project on developing the market for deer watching has been set up, and a seminar to explore the issues and opportunities associated with it will take place this year.

What will be done in 2009 - 2010?

Enhance the economic benefits derived from wild deer

- Analyse the current supply chain of wild deer venison and identify blockages DCS
- Explore whether local collaboration decreases costs of producing wild venison on two sites DCS
- Include Scottish wild venison as a healthy food within the Government's Food Strategy **Scottish Government/VWG**
- Hold a seminar/workshop to explore issues and opportunities associated with setting up deer watching experiences **DCS/Wild Scotland**
- Produce guidance and deer-related interpretative resources for potential and existing deer watching activity providers/operators DCS

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- Develop an Ecosystem Approach framework for Scotland which includes a better understand of the costs and benefits of deer related ecological services
SNH
- Promote wildlife tourism opportunities based on wild deer in the Cairngorms National Park by developing links between estates and tourism operators
CNPA

Minimise costs to land-use objectives and rural development

- Assess all new proposals for publicly funded fences DCS
- Process and issue authorisations to shoot deer out of season or at night to prevent serious damage to commercial forestry and agriculture within 10 days of receipt DCS

Ensure the skills and knowledge required to manage deer as an integral part of Scotland's natural resources

- Continue to review/update the National Occupational Standards to ensure they are relevant to employers needs within the deer Lantra/DCS

Theme 4: Environmental Quality and Biodiversity

Direct Links to wDNA

The actions set out in this theme contribute to the outcome 'a high quality, robust and adaptable environment' and to the objectives under this heading: to secure the favourable condition of features in designated sites; conserve and enhance biodiversity; minimise further spread of non-native species; maintain the integrity of natural processes; and conserve and enhance the cultural and historic environment.

Progress and Priorities

DCS, FCS, SNH and the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate will continue working together to achieve the favourable condition of Scotland's most important nature conservation features. The main priority for 2009/10 is to continue to work towards bringing 95% of features identified as vulnerable to the grazing, browsing and trampling impacts of deer and other herbivores into favourable condition.

These designated features sit within a wider context working towards enhancing, diversifying and strengthening the biodiversity of Scotland. One of the potential threats to biodiversity comes from the impact of non-native species. In 2009/10 DCS will build on recent research looking at the effects of hybridisation between sika and red deer. There will also be a focus on the refugia islands, to ensure the genetic integrity of the resident red deer populations is safeguarded, with an analysis of tests carried out to identify whether any sika genes are present. Changes in legislation for non-native deer species are being considered and will be consulted on. Reports of muntjac sightings will be dealt with and monitored accordingly.

What will be done in 2009 - 2010?

Conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside

- Ensure the role of deer and their impacts are considered within the relevant Biodiversity Ecosystem Groups and action plans DCS
- Carry out and analyse the results of re-testing of refugia populations DCS
- Monitor and investigate any reports of muntjac in the wild on an on-going basis DCS
- Consult and bring forward Orders under the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1991 to address concerns about non native deer species and better protection of the refugia populations SG
- Hold a Best Practice Demonstration Event on habitat assessment targeted at DMGs DCS
- Ensure deer interests are represented at local biodiversity groups DCS

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Achieve the favourable condition of Scotland's most important nature conservation sites

- Ensure 95% of features affected by deer are in the Joint Working Programme DCS
- Encourage and support collaborative grazing management to deliver favourable condition targets through existing advice and support mechanisms including SRDP DCS/ SNH/ FCS/SG
- Review progress on five Section 7 sites, including annual habitat monitoring and census work DCS
- Revisit baseline surveys at three Joint Working sites to quantify changes in condition DCS
- Carry out summer deer census at three Joint Working sites DCS
- Carry out winter count programme DCS
- Manage Natural Care scheme at Kinveachy SNH

Theme 5: Climate Change and Research

Direct Links to wDNA

The actions set out in this theme contribute to the outcome 'a high quality, robust and adaptable environment' and to the objectives to 'help tackle and adapt to the effects of climate change'. The actions also support the principle that wild deer should be managed in a way that 'uses sound science and the best available evidence'.

Progress and Priorities

Increasing focus on adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change requires a better understanding of the role that deer play. Grazing, trampling and browsing of wild deer can have positive and negative consequences for the structure and composition of vegetation cover, depending on the level of impact. Grazing needs to be kept in balance if woodland and forest cover are to be increased and peatland protected. This plan will primarily focus on improving understanding and carrying out research.

DCS is working with SNH to investigate the role of deer trampling in the erosion and re-vegetation of blanket bog. DCS will scope current and planned climate change research related to deer. This will allow DCS to identify areas where value can be added; either by drawing together existing research, co-funding future research or by reviewing research from a 'deer perspective'.

DCS is also undertaking a project to assess the carbon footprint of Scottish wild venison. This project will use the new British Standard (PAS 2050) to assess the energy consumption of stalking, larding, and transporting venison in terms of carbon emissions. This should allow comparison between the carbon cost of the production of wild venison and other products. It will also identify areas where estates and game dealers can reduce their carbon footprint.

There will be a focus on wider research to ensure management decisions are based on good science. Ways of capturing and disseminating data on deer will be explored and a methodology to gather data on distributions and trends of red and roe will be developed.

Sustainable deer management also has a key role to play in helping to deliver the Scottish Governments' Scottish woodland expansion target of 25% cover. The Scottish Government is committed to achieving this target primarily to help tackle climate change. This approach recognises that deer management will play a vital role in helping to achieve this target.

What will be done in 09/10?

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

- Host a seminar to better understand the links between deer and climate change DCS

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- Carry out research to improve understanding of the impacts of deer on blanket bogs **SNH/DCS**
- Drawing on feedback gathered from the seminar above circulate explanatory material aimed at deer managers exploring the links between deer and climate change **DCS**
- Implement deer-related actions within SNH's climate change action plan, including developing and disseminating guidance on grazing **SNH**
- Promote findings of the carbon lifecycle analysis of wild venison research **DCS**

Use sound science to underpin management decisions

- Develop recommendations to establish a more comprehensive and efficient system for gathering data on wild deer **DCS**
- Trial a Radio Frequency Identification data collection system **DCS**
- Disseminate current/published deer research **DCS**
- Agree a methodology for undertaking a sampling strategy to provide data on population and trends of red and roe deer in Scotland by region **DCS**

Theme 6: Social Well-being

Direct Links to wDNA

The actions set out in this theme contribute to the outcome 'Social Well-being' and to the objectives: increase participation in management and enjoyment of wild deer; contribute to a safe and healthy environment for people; manage the impacts of wild deer in and around communities; integrate opportunities for outdoor recreation; promote venison as a healthy food.

Progress and Priorities

A priority for 2009/10 is to add value to venison from Scottish wild deer and to raise awareness of venison as a healthy meat. In 2009/10 collaborative local approaches will be encouraged. DCS will promote the inclusion of venison onto public sector menus like those in schools and hospitals. Schools are an important target as good, healthy and informed food choices are often set at an early age.

The deer-watching project (mentioned in the sustainable economic development theme) will gauge the benefits derived from deer watching to provide an insight into how best to open up such opportunities to as many people as possible. There will also be actions in 2009/10 aimed at increasing stalking opportunities to meet interest in deer stalking. DCS and SNH will be looking at how to encourage understanding between the needs of deer management and the rights of public access.

Reducing the number of deer related road traffic accidents remains a priority. Data will be collated through the national database and this will inform where further exploratory work may be required or mitigation needs to be put in place.

What will be done in 09/10?

Promote Venison as a Healthy Food

- Deliver events to promote Scottish venison in schools in two areas DCS
- Develop effective partnerships to promote Scottish venison in schools DCS
- Facilitate and stimulate promotional events to extend the inclusion of Scottish venison onto public sector menus DCS
- Facilitate the inclusion of Scottish venison on the menus of two public bodies DCS
- Promote venison in the Cairngorms National Park Food and Drink Action Plan CNPA

Increase Opportunities and Quality of Experience for Observing and Enjoying Wild Deer

- Produce promotion materials on Scotland's wild deer for use through eco schools and by community chests DCS

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- Explore effective ways of communicating issues/messages on public access where stalking occurs as an addition to Hillphones **SNH/National Access Forum**
- Develop a questionnaire to gauge the social benefits derived from people involved in deer watching **DCS**
- Increase awareness of deer related outdoor experiences at the Royal Highland Show **DCS**
- Seek opportunities to develop deer-related wildlife watching on the national forest estate/National Nature Reserves **FCS/SNH**
- Launch a new website providing details on country sports activities and sporting providers, including deer, throughout Scotland **CSTG**
- Embed the delivery of schools events into the work of ranger services and wider education work within the Cairngorms National Park **DCS/CNPA**
- Provide stalking opportunities through the deer stalking scheme on the Isle of Arran **BASC**

Safeguard Health and Safety

- Carry out fencing, signage and vegetation management on the A835, A82 and A87 **DCS/Transport Scotland**
- Monitor the effectiveness of the fencing, signage and vegetation management carried out on the A835, A82 and A87 **DCS**
- Analyse and monitor the 'Deer Collisions UK' database in Scotland, identifying areas for further investigation **DCS**
- Co-ordinate emergency measures when required to prevent deer posing a threat to public safety **DCS**
- Implement road awareness campaign for spring dispersal followed up by a reminder for the Autumn clock change **DCS/Transport Scotland**
- Increase awareness of deer-related human-disease risks **SG**

Manage the Impacts of Wild Deer in and around Communities

- Develop Guidance on how to integrate deer into landscape planning in and around towns **DCS**
- Review the impact of facilitated roe management on two sites in and around towns and identify any additional training needs **DCS**
- Develop strategic planning to deal with the impacts of wild deer in and around communities **DCS**

Theme 7: Raising Awareness

Direct Links to wDNA

The actions set out in this theme contribute to all of the outcomes. They help deliver the objectives: to increase participation in management and enjoyment of wild deer and to manage the impacts of wild deer in and around communities.

Progress and Priorities:

Raising awareness of deer management should lead to more meaningful and informed public debate which in turn should have a positive effect on deer management.

The annual Scone and Moy Game Fairs and the Royal Highland Show provide an ideal opportunity to engage directly with the general public. At the 2008 Royal Highland Show, deer issues were included as part of the SEARs presence. This will be the case again in 2009 with the focus being on health and well-being.

The work on deer in and around towns and cities mentioned in the wild deer welfare and social well-being themes includes developing an understanding of perceptions and attitudes towards deer in urban settings. This will help identify key audiences and how best to engage them.

One of the most successful ways that DCS has raised awareness within the deer sector has been through the Best Practice Demonstration Events. These events have been attended by over 1000 people to date and have helped raise awareness and increase understanding amongst the sector.

Work in this coming year will focus on holding a Best Practice Demonstration Event for colleges and two further events each of which will focus on a specific topic in more detail. DCS will provide information on wild deer for use through eco schools and community chests. This recognises that influencing school children at an early age will help to create a generation with a greater awareness of deer management issues.

What will be done in 09/10?

Raise awareness and understanding of wild deer and their management

- Raise awareness of deer management issues at Scone and Moy Game Fairs DCS
- Publish results of social research into public understanding of, and attitudes towards, wild deer in the peri-urban areas of the Central Belt FR
- Hold a two day Best Practice Demonstration event for practitioners and a one day event for Colleges **BP Partnership**
- Hold two Best Practice Demonstration Workshops on specific topics **BP Partnership**

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- Hold a seminar for relevant SEARS staff to highlight the role of the Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach in achieving SRDP/Scottish Government objectives DCS
- Embed the wild deer national approach within the Scottish Government's land use study DCS

Outline Programme for 2010-2011

Set out below are outline actions for 2010/11. These will be developed into detailed actions for delivery in 2010/11 and will be presented, together with outline actions for future years, in the next publication of the wDNA Action Plan in April 2010.

Effective Mechanisms for Delivering Sustainable Deer Management

The future outline programme will be shaped by the Scottish Government's response to the review of deer legislation and results of the Case Studies Project

Wild Deer Welfare

- Produce a Project Report on health and welfare methodologies

Sustainable Economic Development

- Develop a better understanding of the economic value of wild deer
- Work with partners to identify where deer can be added to existing economic or tourism surveys
- Investigate new opportunities and models to increase availability of stalking

Environmental Quality and Biodiversity

- Keep under review legislation relating to movement of wild deer within, into and out of Scotland
- Continue refinement of methods of measuring impacts of wild deer on habitats

Climate Change & Research

- Develop links to the implementation of the Climate Change Bill
- Review the role and potential of grazing to maintain and enhance woodland and open habitats on the national forest estate
- Continue refinement of methods of measuring impacts of wild deer on habitats
- Undertake the sampling strategy to gather data on deer populations and trends

Social Well-being

- Develop mechanisms to help local deer management take account of local community and stakeholder interests

Raising Awareness

- Encourage public agencies to and authorities to celebrate achievements in collaborative deer management

Annex 1: List of Action Leaders and Contributors

Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG)
British Association of Shooting and Conservation (BASC)
British Deer Society (BDS)
Best Practice Partnership (BP Partnership)
Case Studies Steering Group
Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG)
Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)
Countryside Tourism Group (CSTG)
Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS)
Environment Link
Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)
Forest Research (FR)
Lantra
Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (LL&TNP)
Local Authorities
Macaulay Institute (Macaulay)
National Access Forum
Scottish Government (SG)
Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA)
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
Scottish Society for Protection for Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA)
Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA)
Transport Scotland
Wild Scotland
Venison Working Group (VWG)

Annex 2: Structure of wDNA

<p>Vision</p>	<p>In 20 years time:</p> <p>1. There will be widespread understanding and achievement of 'sustainable deer management' - the conservation, control and use of all species of deer so as to contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high quality, robust and adaptable environment. • Sustainable economic development • Social well-being <p>2. Effective mechanisms will be in place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assess the management interventions required to achieve the best combination of these outcomes in any area at a given time; and - ensure that these interventions are carried out effectively, in good time and in accordance with best practice. 		
<p>Principles</p>	<p>Wild deer should be managed throughout their range in a way that -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. integrates deer management and other land-use objectives 2. uses collaboration to achieve the management objectives 3. uses a geographical scale and timescale best suited to achieving the management objectives 4. engages and communicates with all relevant interests 5. uses sound science and the best available evidence 6. promotes deer welfare 		
<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>Management of all species of wild deer will contribute to:</p>		
	<p>A high quality, robust & adaptable environment</p>	<p>Sustainable economic development</p>	<p>Social well-being</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>a) Safeguard the welfare of all species of wild deer. b) Minimise further spread of non-native deer species in Scotland. c) Secure the favourable condition of features in designated sites. d) Conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside. e) Maintain the integrity of natural processes. f) Help tackle and adapt to the effects of climate change. g) Conserve and enhance the cultural and historic environment.</p>	<p>a) Increase the economic opportunities associated with wild deer. b) Minimise economic costs attributable to wild deer. c) Develop the market and supply chain for venison. d) Contribute to the social and economic development of communities. e) Ensure the skills and knowledge required to manage deer as an integral part of Scotland's natural resources.</p>	<p>a) Increase participation in management and enjoyment of wild deer. b) Contribute to a safe and healthy environment for people. c) Manage the impacts of wild deer in and around communities. d) Integrate opportunities for outdoor recreation. e) Promote venison as a healthy food.</p>

Annex 3: Diagram showing relationship between themes and wDNA structure:

