

FUTURE DIRECTION (2014-2016)

1. Purpose.

The purpose of this paper is for CNPA to propose a future direction in supporting the deer sector within CNP to expedite and deliver public benefit as outlined by the key themes contained in the letter of 5 February 2014 from the Parliamentary, RACCE Committee to The Minister.

2. Action.

For CDAG to consider and agree a future direction as detailed in this paper, aimed at supporting and assisting Deer Management Groups (DMGs) in developing and implementing “demonstrably effective and environmentally responsible” management plans by end of 2016.

CDAG would agree to act as a guiding body, providing advice and direction to the actions undertaken by CNPA in support of DMGs within CNP.

3. Background.

The RACCE Committee letter covers several themes, and proposes associated approaches:

- Deer Populations.

Impacts of deer, rather than absolute numbers (counts), are most important when considering appropriate approaches to deer management.

- Economic and Social Impacts.

Further work is needed to better determine the impact of deer management on local jobs and rural communities.

- The Deer Code.

How effective is the Deer Code in assisting change in deer management?

- Effectiveness of DMGs.

DMGs must move towards developing “demonstrably effective and environmentally responsible management plans”. These plans should have been adopted by the end of 2016. Plans should be publically available.

The work of DMGs should be more transparent and publically accountable, with wider inclusion, access to meetings and publication of papers/minutes.

These themes are broadly supported by legislation, and strategies published by CNPA and ADMG :

- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (WANE Act) introduced the Code of Practice on Deer Management (Deer Code) which indicated that, to deliver sustainable deer management, actions were required covering:
 - a) Wild deer welfare
 - b) Protection and enhancement of the environment
 - c) Sustainable economic development
 - d) Support for social well-being.
- Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (CNPPP 2012-2017) sets out how CNP will be managed:
 - a) Delivering outstanding tourism destinations
 - b) Investing in Scotland's landscape and wildlife
 - c) Generating growth in rural economies.
- Cairngorm Nature Action Plan (CNAP 2013-2018) aims cover:
 - a) Improvement in the quality and connectivity of habitats for biodiversity
 - b) Conservation and enhancement of key species
 - c) Involvement of people
 - d) CNAP contributes to the delivery of strategies including Scotland's Wild Deer: a National Approach (WDNA), which guides actions on the ground to manage deer as an integral and essential part of biodiversity
- Cairngorms Deer Framework (2011)
- The DMG Benchmark Consultation Draft published by ADMG on 20 February 2014 (attached).

4. Proposed Support for Deer Sector.

CNPA proposes to **provide support and assistance to the deer sector and DMGs in CNP** towards exploring, developing and implementing processes, actions and plans to address the above themes, legislation and strategies before end 2016.

It is proposed that **support is provided through a SNH/CNPA co-operation** to make best use of available resources.

4.1 Wild Deer Best Practice (WDBP): Habitat Impact Assessment (HIA).

Emphasis would change from counting deer numbers to **basing management on HIA** and how habitat changes match the land management policies of the land holdings (eg. designated sites, woodland regeneration, sporting culls, grouse production, leisure, agriculture).

SNH is currently upgrading the HIA principles, analysis and application sections of WDBP.

Training programmes, following WDBP principles, will be needed to empower land holdings and employees to carry out HIA.

4.2 Economic and Social Impacts.

SNH commissioned research from JHI in 2013 to determine the economic impact of deer management activities at an appropriate spatial scale. This research was inconclusive and **further thinking/research** will be required to determine how to measure economic and social impacts at a geographical area level.

4.3 Effectiveness of the Deer Code.

Data will be required at a DMG level to show how the **management plan addresses the four themes contained in the Deer Code:**

- a) Safeguarding wild deer welfare
- b) Protecting and enhancing the environment
- c) Sustainable economic development
- d) Supporting social well-being.

Data needs to be readily available, easily understood, collected in a consistent format and presented in a manner to **encourage open discussion and collaboration.**

4.3.1 Wild Deer Welfare.

Examples of types of data: Aspirational Deer Densities; Authorisations (out of season, night shooting); Fencing; Deer utilisation (if measured); Zoning (if applicable).

4.3.2 Environment.

Examples of types of data: Site Condition Monitoring (designated sites); Woodland expansion and regeneration; Peatland restoration; Aspirational Deer Densities; Fencing, HIA.

4.3.3 Economic development.

Examples of types of data: Number of sporting days; Full-time equivalent jobs (FTE); Cull numbers; £/kg venison.

4.3.4 Social Well-being.

Examples of types of data: Staff training; Access; Access signage; Interpretation information.

4.3.5 Presentation.

Presentation of data at DMG meetings in the form of **graphs and maps** will help to generate discussion, identify potential conflict points and encourage collaboration.

4.4 Effectiveness of DMGs.

DMGs, with effective and environmentally responsible management plans, need to make plans more widely accessible, and to become more transparent and publically accountable.

An effective and immediate method of improving transparency would be through development of **individual DMG web sites**. Initially, information could be limited to: Welcome (incl. Explanation of what a DMG is and does); Policy/Objectives (Overview of how the DMG operates); Biological Landscape (brief description of area covered and features); Landownership and land use policies; Recent News (details of meetings, officers); Contact (opportunity for people to make contact, raise queries/comments). Once established the web site would become the **mechanism for increased transparency and public accountability**.

Individual DMG web sites might be accessed via the ADMG web site. To date, one DMG has developed a web site: www.csdmg.co.uk

4.5 DSC1 and DSC2.

CNPA proposes to continue its support for **DSC1 training** within CNP. This is considered particularly important in providing additional capacity to the deer sector towards addressing **Competence** when stalking alone in Scotland.

CNPA also proposes, in partnership, to promote opportunities for **DSC2 training**.

4.5 SRDP

A new **SRDP programme for 2014-2020** is currently under consultation. It is critical that land managers continue to make the most of SRDP. **CNPA is**

focused on assisting land managers to be ready for the next round of SRDP, with preparations for applications made in advance.

The developing SRDP programme would seem to offer a number of potential opportunities for DMGs to pursue projects in support of the Deer Code.

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