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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title:** Deer Framework for the National Park

**Prepared by:** Will Boyd-Wallis, Senior Land Management Officer

**Purpose:**

To update the Board on progress made in “Supporting Sustainable Deer Management” in the National Park and to recommend endorsement of the “Deer Framework” prepared by the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group.

**Recommendations**

That the Board:

- a) considers progress made on the National Park Plan Priority for Action: Supporting Sustainable Deer Management
- b) congratulates the CDAG on the preparation of the Deer Framework
- c) endorses the content of the Deer Framework (in particular Sections 9 & 10)

**Executive Summary**

“Supporting Sustainable Deer Management” is a priority in the National Park Plan because deer management is one of the most significant influences on the habitats of the National Park and a key element of many estate businesses. There has in the past been controversy and conflict over differing objectives for deer management. By bringing a focus to this as a priority in the National Park Plan the intention is to improve communication, reduce conflict and reconcile multiple objectives, so as to enhance the habitats of the Park while delivering socio-economic outcomes.

This paper provides a brief summary of some of the work that has been undertaken to deliver the Priority for Action on Deer and explains the background to the production of a Deer Framework. The Framework, produced on behalf of the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group, sets out a number of ‘principles’ and a ‘delivery plan’ that provide a positive focus for “sustaining the deer resource” into the future. The aspiration is that the framework will provide the basis by which deer and their management will no longer need to be such a high priority in the National Park Plan. The Framework does not signal an end to CNPA’s involvement in deer issues but provides a way to continue to engage the efforts of all with an interest in deer in the Park.

**DEER FRAMEWORK FOR THE NATIONAL PARK  
NATIONAL PARK PLAN PRIORITY FOR ACTION:  
6.3 SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEER MANAGEMENT**

**Update on Progress**

1. This brief update focuses on the 5 outcomes as they are set out in the National Park Plan:

**Outcome 1 - There will be a large-scale patchwork of deer densities across the National Park underpinned by an inclusive deer management planning process.**

2. There is already a “large-scale patchwork of deer densities across the National Park”. This is partly because of the natural movements of deer seeking out available habitat and ranging from place to place and partly because of widely differing objectives for deer management.
3. This outcome is intended to demonstrate that a range of deer densities across the National Park is acceptable and that a homogenous density of deer is neither possible nor desirable. The Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) has promoted the understanding that there are many acceptable different objectives for deer management, with the proviso that the underlying primary resource (the habitat) is protected and where necessary enhanced.
4. The “deer management planning process” is undertaken by individual estates within six Deer Management Groups (DMGs) that cover most of the National Park. All of the DMGs have deer management plans, but at varying degrees of detail and success. A successful plan could be defined as one that ‘facilitates compromise and change to practice where necessary to accommodate neighbours objectives as well as your own’. This is quite rare in practice and remains a challenge.
5. Experience has shown that some of the most “inclusive”, detailed and expensive plans are not necessarily the most effective. However there is a general acceptance amongst the DMGs that involving the community and wider interests in the preparation of a plan is worthwhile in gaining support for collective deer management. Most DMGs are demonstrating a willingness to involve all interested parties, e.g. community representatives.

**Outcome 2 - Designated sites will be protected and enhanced and the deer range throughout the Park will be managed to a good environmental standard appropriate to the management unit. This standard will be agreed as an integral part of the deer management planning process.**

6. There are eleven *Joint Agency Working Priority Sites* in the National Park (sites where work to achieve favourable condition of designated sites is focused). There has been considerable activity in this area, primarily by SNH, FCS and previously the Deer Commission for Scotland before merger with SNH. In summary most of the key areas where attention has been focused on designated sites (e.g. Glen Feshie,

Kinveachy, Cairngorms, Caenlochan, Monadhliath, Drummochter Hills) are now under some form of deer control agreement or partnership agreement between the agencies and the estates.

7. The pressure to ensure designated sites are in “favourable condition” within a short time span has been considerable both for the agencies and the estates and has not been without its problems. However the results on the ground speak for themselves in some areas where habitat recovery has been hard won, but remarkable, for example Glenfeshie.

**Outcome 3 - There will be good communication and understanding between all sectors involved in deer management including public agencies, local communities and other interest groups. Better understanding of objectives, requirements and deer management activities should reduce conflict between different sectors.**

8. The Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) was set up in 2006 to
  - a) promote better communication and understanding between all organisations with an interest in deer and their management in the National Park.
  - b) advise the CNPA on deer and their management.
9. Deer Management Groups and the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils are represented to give a land management and a local perspective. Public agencies and other voluntary organisations and interest groups also help to provide a national perspective.
10. CDAG has played a key role in bringing together (potentially) disparate groups and fostering a collective motivation to see deer recognised as an important component of the National Park’s natural and cultural heritage and as an economic asset.
11. CDAG continues to meet four times a year, covering a wide range of issues aimed at improving understanding and awareness and at resolving problems. Arguably the most important job CDAG has progressed to date, the Deer Framework, is covered later in this paper.

**Outcome 4 - The economic value of the deer resource will be enhanced.**

12. The main focus on this outcome has been in promoting venison as a valuable local food source. Working alongside the *Scottish Venison Working Group* a wide range of events has taken place over the last few years. In particular events with schools to explain the role of deer managers and stalkers and how the venison ends up on the plate have been very successful and well received. A recent event at Glen Tanar with chefs helped to reduce the mystique that sometime surrounds venison cooking. There is a huge market opportunity for venison. The intention is to continue promoting the value of venison through the “Food For Life” programme, perhaps also exploring deer farming or deer parks as a diversification option for farmers in order to meet the increasing demand

## **Outcome 5 - There will be more opportunities and fewer perceived barriers for a wider range of people to enjoy stalking.**

13. This is perhaps one of the most challenging of the five outcomes. It is important because deer management serves an important function socially, economically and environmentally and wider acceptance of that fact will help to recruit future deer managers and a better understanding of complexity of rural issues. Some preliminary attempts have been made to encourage estates to offer stalking opportunities to new people. With the help of CDAG and the Country Sports Tourism Initiative it is intended that more ideas and opportunities will develop to broaden awareness and understanding of stalking and deer management.

### **Recommendation**

14. **That the Board considers progress made on the National Park Plan Priority for Action: Supporting Sustainable Deer Management**

### **Deer Framework**

15. The full draft Deer Framework is provided in **Annex I** to this paper.
16. The Deer Framework has been developed by the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group. The original aim of producing it was “to openly develop a process with all those interested in deer in the Cairngorms National Park in order to ensure this natural asset is managed in ways that help to sustain a high quality environment and support the local economy”.
17. The development of the framework by a wide range of interested individuals and groups represented on CDAG has been just as important as the end product. Developing a collective vision for deer management across the National Park has already helped to improve communication and resolve differences. The final published product will also help to widen understanding of complexities and challenges of deer management in the CNP.
18. Throughout its development it has been of key importance that the Framework demonstrates local delivery of the national policy “Scotland’s Wild Deer – A National Approach” and yet retains its local ‘grass roots’.
19. It is important to note that the Deer Framework is not intended to duplicate or overlap with the role of Deer Management Groups and Deer Management Planning. It is for this reason that the title is simply “Deer Framework” and not “Deer Management Framework or plan”.
20. In summary, it is anticipated that the Deer Framework will...
  - a) Provide a bridge between National Policy (Scotland’s Wild Deer – A National Approach) and the local management of deer by Deer Management Groups;
  - b) Set out strategic principles for deer management across the National Park recognising differing objectives;

- c) Build a collective understanding of deer and deer-related issues in the National Park;
  - d) Build cohesion amongst deer managers across the National Park;
  - e) Support land managers in pursuit of objectives that support the local economy and protect the natural heritage;
  - f) Assist in the provision of funding and advisory mechanisms;
  - g) Promote protection of the deer population and their welfare
  - h) Promote wider involvement in the management of deer;
  - i) Promote the value of deer as a management tool for maintaining a high quality environment;
  - j) Promote the value of deer related tourism and sporting as an economic asset;
  - k) Promote the marketing of venison as a valuable and healthy food source;
  - l) Promote the sourcing and marketing of deer related products from within the NP;
  - m) Develop opportunities for expanding economic activities associated with deer;
  - n) Develop opportunities for expanding economic activities associated with deer; and
  - o) Develop National Park wide policies on managing Sika deer.
21. In these ways, delivery guided by the framework will contribute to several outcomes of the National Park Plan. The success of delivery in future will be able to be assessed in part through State of the Park indicators of habitat quality and the health of the land-based economy, and through a reduced level of conflict and controversy relating to deer management. Although less measurable, this last indicator gives a valuable insight into the effectiveness of the framework and CNPA's approach to supporting sustainable deer management.

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

22. There are no direct financial implications associated with this paper. CNPA's financial and staffing contribution to work outline in the framework will be guided by our operational planning processes for future years as normal.

### ***Presentational Implications***

23. The Deer Framework is a significant step and signal of the progress that CDAG and individual partners have made in addressing the priority for action on sustainable deer management. The next National Park Plan will need to show how this framework is to be used within the wider policy context.

### ***Implications for Stakeholders***

24. A range of partners identified in the framework will be responsible for delivering elements, overseen by CDAG as a group. In particular, discussions with Deer Management Groups, led by their representatives on CDAG will be crucial to effective connections being made.

## Next Steps

25. The table below shows the key stages that have taken place so far in the preparation of the deer framework and the final steps that need to be taken to its completion.

<b>Key stages</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>DRAFTING and CONSULTATION</b>	
Framework Discussion paper to CDAG	8 <sup>th</sup> June 2009
Scope and timing paper to CDAG	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2009
Content, Vision and Principles to CDAG	5 Nov 2009
Principles (renamed <i>Sustaining the Deer Resource</i> ) to CDAG subgroup	28 Jan 2010
<i>Sustaining the Deer Resource</i> to Scottish Environment LINK 'Deer Task Force'	2 Feb 2010
<i>Sustaining the Deer Resource</i> to CDAG	11 Feb 2010
<i>Sustaining the Deer Resource</i> to CNPA Board	19 Feb 2010
<i>Sustaining the Deer Resource and Actions</i> to CDAG	6 May 2010
Full <i>Deer Framework</i> to CDAG	11 Aug 2010
Full <i>Deer Framework</i> to DMGs and others	1 Oct 2010
<b>Full <i>Deer Framework</i> to CNPA board</b>	<b>29 Oct 2010</b>
Final <i>Deer Framework</i> approved by CDAG	11 Nov 2010
Land Management Forum informed	25 Nov 2010
Final completion of all text and images	20 Nov 2010
<b>PUBLICATION</b>	
Finalise text and images	31 Dec 2010
To designers	10 Jan 2011
Printed copies	25 Mar 2011
<b>DISTRIBUTION</b>	
Press release and launch	Apr 2011
Distribute to CDAG, DMGs, Scottish Government, SNH, FCS etc.	Apr 2011

## Recommendations

26. **That the Board:**
- a) **congratulates the CDAG on the preparation of the Deer Framework**
  - b) **endorses the content of the Deer Framework (in particular Sections 9 & 10)**

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**30<sup>th</sup> September 2010**  
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