

Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach

Progress & Gap Analysis 2008 - 2014

1. Introduction

This paper provides a summary of what has been delivered through the WDNA and some outline analysis of the gaps. It draws on two principal sources:

- Annual reports on actions delivered through the WDNA Action Plans (reports on individual actions are submitted by each of the organisations responsible for their delivery);
- The 2008 -2012 WDNA indicator report.

2. What has the WDNA delivered 2008-2014?

The 2008 WDNA is made up of a vision, 17 objectives (the Public Interest in deer management) and a set of 'key actions'. These are all being delivered through a series of WDNA Action Plans. These Action Plans are refreshed annually and list between 50 to 70 actions for the year ahead and ideas for actions for the following 2 years. Each action in the WDNA Action Plan has a lead organisation/s who is/are responsible for the delivery of the action.

3. Key Achievements

Summary of Key Achievements (taken from extracts from the 'key achievements' in the WDNA Action Plans):

- Published the Code of Practice on Deer Management
- Increased understanding of costs and benefits of 'deer in and around towns'
- Sustained action on designated sites vulnerable to deer impacts
- Launched the Lowland Deer Network Scotland
- Raised the profile of venison
- Building capacity for Deer Management Groups

4. Key Gaps

Below is a summary of key gaps based on a list of 'key actions' and objectives with no activity recorded against them. This analysis is based on data up until the end of March 2014. An outline analysis of these gaps is included in Annex 2.

Summary of Gaps

- Conserve and enhance the cultural and historic environment (WDNA objective)
- Maintain the integrity of natural processes (WDNA objective)
- Minimise the further spread of sika on the mainland through active local management
- Protect woodlands, bogs and carbon-rich soils in order to enhance carbon storage
- Achieve long term solutions for designated sites
- Agree a common understanding of deer welfare
- Seek effective collaboration between interests at a local level to engage local communities and businesses in deer management and as a forum to resolve differences
- Develop further the capacity to manage deer in woodlands cost effectively
- Improve knowledge of, and develop guidance on, optimal grazing regimes and managing livestock in the presence of wild deer
- Gather data on the socio-economic impacts on local communities and businesses associated with wild deer

5. Further Details on Progress

Below are further details of what has been achieved under each objective and an excerpt from the WDNA indicator report 2008-2012 (refreshed November 2013), where relevant.

CONTRIBUTE TO A HIGH QUALITY, ROBUST AND ADAPTABLE ENVIRONMENT

- **Safeguard the welfare of all species of wild deer**

Actions on welfare have included running training courses and carrying out research. Recent work has focused on what we mean by welfare and how to apply this at a practical level. Welfare is likely to remain a focus and a priority throughout the next 5 year period, particularly focusing on how to integrate deer welfare into planning, especially urban planning.

What the WDNA Indicator is telling us: Number of deer welfare incidents (excluding poaching and DVCs which are reported under another indicator)

The number of deer welfare incidents reported to SSPCA has risen by approximately 45% between 2010 and 2012. More work needs to be done to determine why there has been such an increase. However in general there have been a higher volume of calls to SSPCA in 2012 than in preceding years (a 22% increase in calls), this could be in part because of a greater awareness of SSPCA. It should also be noted that reporting of incidents is based on individual perceptions. The majority of the issues reported are in urban areas. We will continue to explore whether we can develop additional indicators to give us a fuller picture of issues affecting all species of wild deer welfare in rural as well as urban areas.

- **Minimise the further spread of non-native deer species in Scotland**

Work has been carried out on maintaining the refugia free of sika. Legislation on muntjac has also been progressed and there have been no official recordings of muntjac in Scotland.

What the WDNA indicator is telling us: Number and distribution of deer species in Scotland

The number of deer species in Scotland has remained the same (i.e. 4) since 2008. This indicates that measures to prevent muntjac from becoming established in Scotland have so far been successful.

- **Secure the favourable condition of features in designated sites**

This objective includes core work of the Wildlife Operations Unit within SNH and formerly the Deer Commission. Some of the individual actions under this objective are of significant weight and demand considerable staff resources. This continues to be a challenging objective, particularly when taken in context with other deer management objectives. This will continue to be a priority for the next 5 year period.

What the favourable condition indicator is telling us:

To date we have established baseline data on this indicator. Future data will enable us to compare figures and draw conclusions. The data is drawn from the Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) process. It is difficult to extract deer specific data from the SCM process as deer impacts tend to be reported as part of other herbivore impacts.

- **Conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside**

During the first 5 year delivery period there has been more of a focus on designated sites. This is likely (with the publishing of the Biodiversity 2020 challenge) to widen in

the next 5 years to include biodiversity in the wider countryside. There is no indicator associated with this objective. This should be a priority for the next phase of delivering WDNA.

- **Maintain the integrity of natural processes**

No actions have been delivered under this objective. See gap analysis for a suggestion as to why and what will be done to address this.

- **Help tackle and adapt to the effects of climate change**

Work under this objective has mostly focused on carrying out research. In many ways this could be said to establishing the groundwork for delivering actions on the ground. There is no indicator for this objective. With the increasing focus on climate change this should be a priority for the next 5 years and beyond.

- **Conserve and enhance the cultural and historic environment**

No actions have been delivered under this objective. See gap analysis for a suggestion as to why and what will be done to address this.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Increase the economic opportunities associated with wild deer**

Actions under this objective have focused on providing training opportunities. Work has also been carried out on understanding the economic value of deer. Marketing initiatives have also been launched including Eat Venison Day. Trends show that both the numbers of actions planned and delivered have shown a steady increase since 2008. It is likely that strengthening the economy will remain a priority over the next 5 years. There have been issues collating data on the economic indicators.

- **Minimise economic costs attributable to wild deer**

Three actions have been achieved under this objective. One on assessing publicly funded fences against Joint Agency Fencing Guidelines, one on issuing Authorisations and one on using the National Forest Estate as an exemplar of Best Practice.

- **Develop the market and supply chain for venison**

Several actions have been delivered under this objective. These include promotional events e.g. at NNRs, exploring different ways of marketing venison e.g. local added value. With its links to healthy eating there will continue to be a focus on venison. There have been issues associated with collating data for the WDNA indicator on venison.

- **Contribute to the social and economic development of communities**

Four actions have been achieved under this objective. Two of these relate to getting support for collaborative deer management under SRDP and the other two were research based. It is likely that some actions which do make a contribution to this objective are being recorded under the more general increasing economic opportunities objective.

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

Many actions have been achieved under this objective with a range of training courses being run. These include DSC 1 and 2, HNC, Wild Deer Best Practice demonstration events and specific technical training events e.g. habitat impact assessment. Focus on provision and take up of training will continue to be a priority over the next 5 years, particularly in the context of the 'Competence' review.

What the 'number of people achieving deer related qualifications' indicator is telling us:

The uptake of the Deer Stalking Certificate 1 (DSC1) and the Gamekeeping National Certificates have increased since 2008, particularly DSC1. There has been a drop of 1 in the Gamekeeping Higher National Certificates, but this is unlikely to be significant.

CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL WELL-BEING

- **Increase participation in management and enjoyment of wild deer**
Many actions have been delivered under this objective including material aimed at schools, sharing information on deer and providing deer stalking schemes.
- **Contribute to a safe and healthy environment for people**
There has been considerable action to raise awareness of road safety issues – press releases, variable message signs on relevant main roads, DVC database.

What the indicator on DVCs is telling us

The number of deer vehicle collisions which SSPCA has been called out to assist with has increased by over 100% between 2008 and 2012. These call outs are primarily around urban areas and may be linked to a general increase in deer in and around our towns and cities. Other possible explanations for this increase could be improvements in data recording, increase in road traffic and increase in traffic speed. Additionally anecdotal evidence suggests that SSPCA are being called out to more incidents in preference to vets to reduce costs.

The number of deer vehicle collisions which Transport Scotland has dealt with on trunk roads has increased by approximately 65% between 2008 and 2012. This is a Scotland wide figure. Possible explanations for the increase could be the number of cars on the roads and/or improvements in data recording and reporting. We will report again on further data gathered to help determine any emerging trends.

- **Manage the impacts of wild deer in and around communities**
Many actions have been delivered under this objective including the publication of the Peri Urban deer report and the formation of the LDNS. Deer impacts on green spaces etc. is likely to increase, particularly on woodlands in and around towns. A sustained focus on this objective will be needed during the next 5 years.
- **Integrate the opportunities for outdoor recreation**
Two actions have been delivered under this objective on the hillphone initiative and general messages on public access. Consideration should be given as to whether this will continue to be a priority for the next 5 years.
- **Promote venison as a healthy food**
A number of actions have been delivered under this objective including education events and adding venison to public sector menus.

CROSS CUTTING ACTIONS (Collaboration, Raising Awareness and Research)

- **Develop effective frameworks for sustainable deer management**
Some notable pieces of work have taken place under this heading including publishing the Deer Code, establishing the Lowland Deer Network Scotland, publishing the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) Deer Framework and developing mapping technologies in deer management planning.

What the indicator on the Number of Effective Deer Management Plans is telling us:

To date we have established baseline data on this indicator. Future data will allow for a comparison between figures and for any conclusions drawn/interpretation made.

- **Use sound science to underpin management decisions**
Research carried out under this theme includes understanding the carbon lifecycle of venison. A seminar was held to gather views on research needs. The results of this will need to be implemented.
- **Raise awareness and understanding of wild deer and their management**
Participation at the Scone and Moy Game Fairs and the Best Practice Demonstration events combined with the promotional events organised by WDNA partners are the main activities under this theme. There are no substantial gaps in delivery.

What the indicator on the public's perceptions of deer is telling us:

Almost three quarters of the Scottish public said that deer are the wildlife they most associate with Scotland. This perception has declined by 16% since 2009. However this may not be a cause for concern. The change may be because the Scottish public have widened their understanding and appreciation of other wildlife species.

Annex 1: Details on Progress Reports

The chart and bar graph below give an indication of the breadth of actions that have been delivered under WDNA.

A word of caution: The numbers of actions are limited in what they can tell us as the actions are not of equal weight.

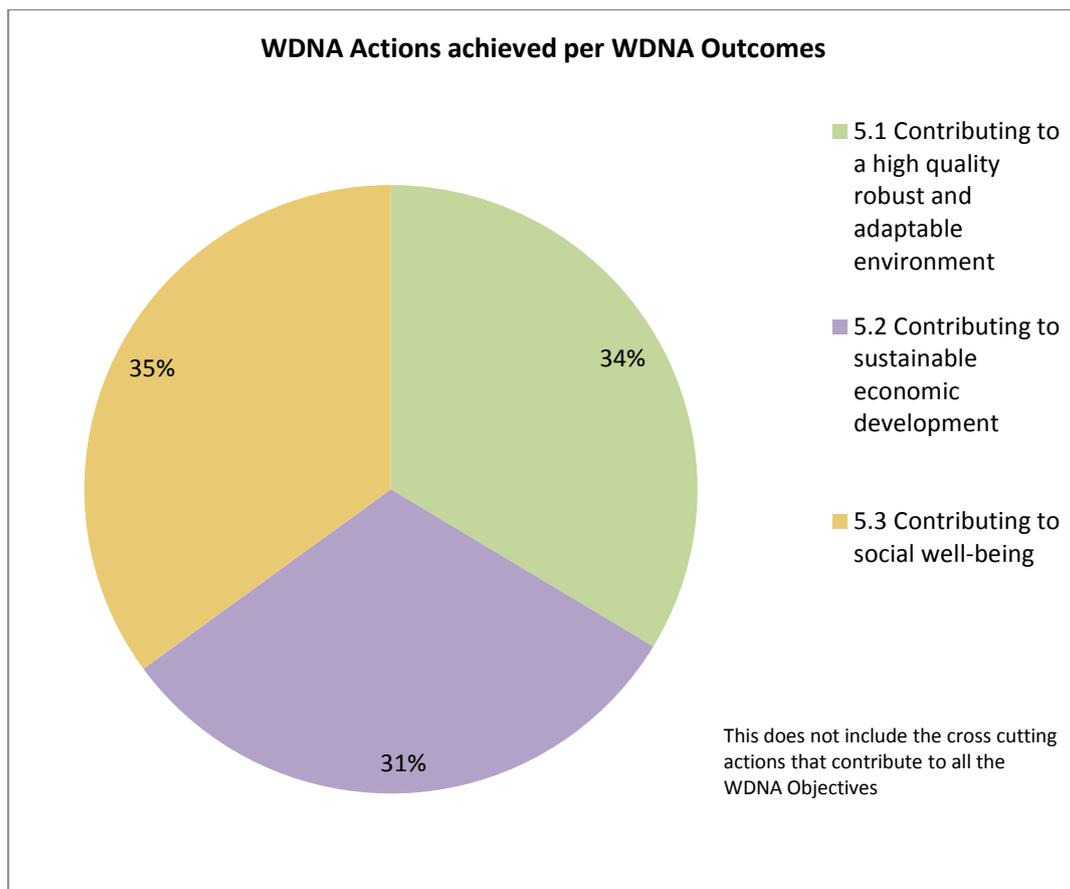


Diagram1: Number of actions delivered against each WDNA vision outcome

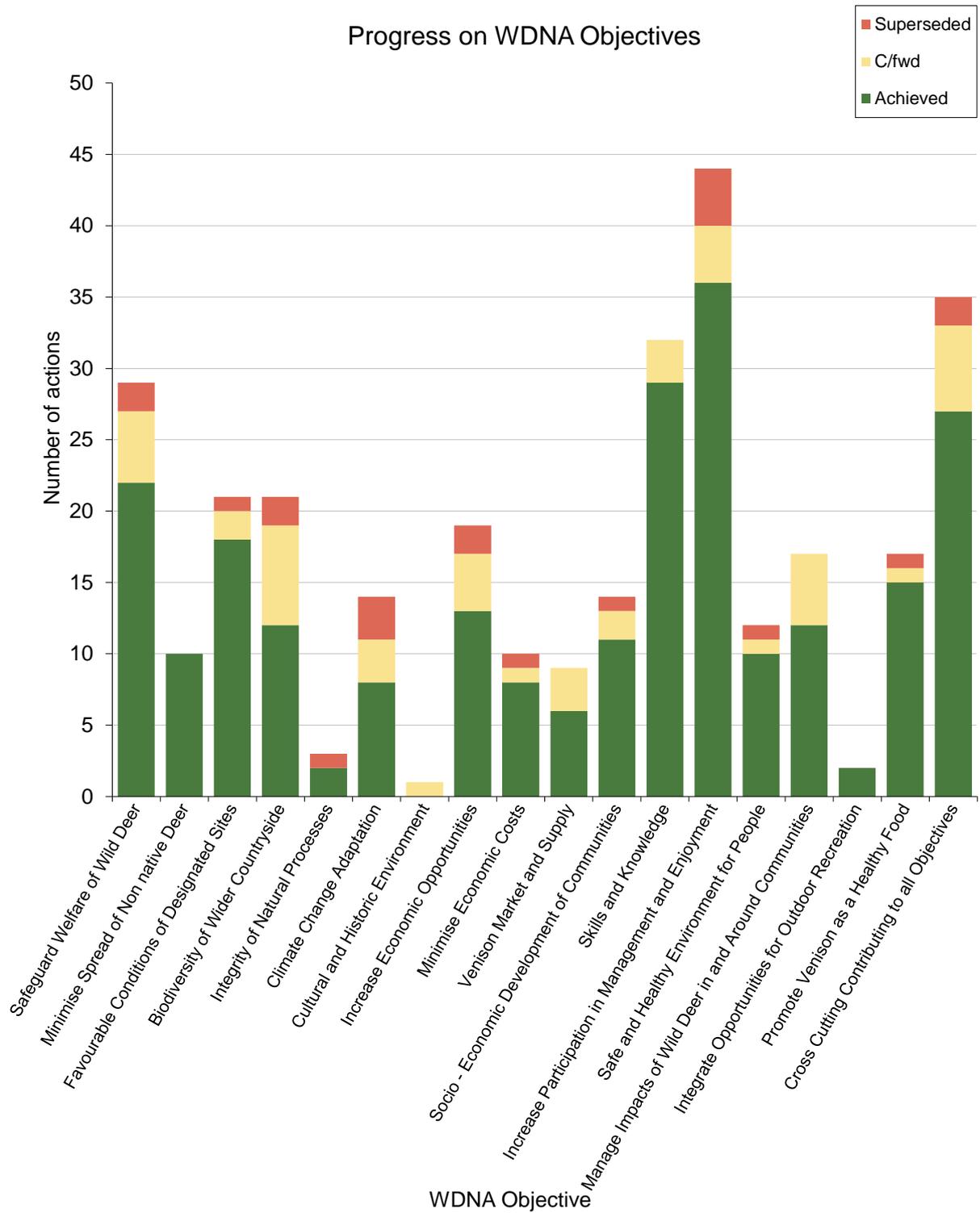


Diagram 2: Progress against WDNA Objectives since 2008

Annex 2: GAP ANALYSIS OF WDNA KEY ACTIONS

Summary of Gaps/Issues	Analysis/ Suggestions for addressing in 2014 Review
A HIGH QUALITY, ROBUST AND ADAPTABLE ENVIRONMENT	
Conserve and enhance the cultural and historic environment (WDNA objective)	This objective will be expanded to include landscapes in the 2014 Review. This will hopefully make it more relevant and stimulate actions. There will also have been actions that haven't been recorded under this objective e.g. protection of scheduled ancient monuments through processes such as long term forest management plans.
Maintain the integrity of natural processes (WDNA objective)	It is most likely that nothing was recorded against this objective as it wasn't sufficiently clear. It will be incorporated into the objective on wider biodiversity and ecosystem health in the 2014 Review.
Minimise the further spread of sika on the mainland through active local management	This action will be carried forward into the 2014 version but requires review in light of the Invasive Non- Native species legislation and guidance.
Protect woodlands, bogs and carbon-rich soils in order to enhance carbon storage	It is likely that nothing was recorded against this action because it wasn't SMART enough. This action will be divided into 2 - one on contributing to the woodland expansion target, the other on protecting bogs and carbon rich soils.
Achieve long term solutions for designated sites	The initial priority has been to bring the sites into favourable condition. The process by which they are brought into favourable condition takes long term timescales into account. The priority for the 2014 version will focus on bringing sites into favourable condition
Agree a common understanding of deer welfare	Work has been progressing on this since March 2013.
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Develop further the capacity to manage deer in woodlands cost effectively	A re-worded version of will be included in the 2014 reviewed version.
Seek effective collaboration between interests at a local level to engage local communities and businesses in deer management and as a forum to resolve differences	The need to improve communications and make DMGs and the deer planning process more inclusive will be included in the 2014 Review version.

CROSS CUTTING ACTIONS (Collaboration, Raising Awareness and Research)	
Improve knowledge of, and develop guidance on, optimal grazing regimes and managing livestock in the presence of wild deer	A re-worded version of this will be included in the revised WDNA.
Gather data on the socio-economic impacts on local communities and businesses associated with wild deer	A report to SNH from the James Hutton Institute has suggested a methodology by which data can be gathered. This is being tested and will contribute to an action for priority in the 2014 Review.