



2017/18 Action Plan



for our deer, land and people

FOREWORD

Welcome to the 7th Action Plan for Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach (WDNA). WDNA is a collectively agreed, national vision for deer management. It aims to encourage private land owners and public bodies to work together across Scotland to balance the needs of the environment, local economies and people's health and well-being.

This Action Plan is shaped by the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform's Committee's (ECCLR) inquiry into deer management in 2016. The Cabinet Secretary's response urged for deer management planning to be strengthened, for SNH to take a tougher approach to non-cooperative landowners, for an independent group to be set up to look at deer management, including one in the lowlands and to test the existing legislation.



This Action Plan incorporates these recommendations, setting out key tasks for the year ahead. The actions will be delivered by a range of organisations involved in managing Scotland's land and wildlife. Below gives a flavour of some of the main actions. Further details on all actions are set out in the following pages.

- **Establish an independent group to look at deer management**
A small independent group will be set up to look at deer management issues. This will include a separate panel to look at lowland deer management.
- **Understand delivery of the public interest in the lowlands**
A pilot area, including different management planning approaches, will be used to better understand how the Deer Code is applied in the lowlands.
- **Contribute to Woodland Targets**
Work will continue to contribute to the native woodland and woodland expansion targets set out in the 2020 Biodiversity Route Map, including providing more effective information to deer managers to enable a proactive approach at a DMG level and reviewing the range of woodland monitoring tools available.
- **Training in Deer Management**
Training opportunities will be delivered and developed for deer managers in the uplands and lowlands. This will include sessions delivered on habitat impact assessments and DCS Level 1 & 2 training courses. ADMG will develop short video clips as online tutorials to complement the Wild Deer Best Practice Guides.

This Action Plan has been compiled by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on behalf of the WDNA Steering Group (Forestry Commission Scotland, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Government) who co-ordinate the delivery of WDNA on behalf of a wide range of contributing organisations (see Annex 2 for full list).

CONTENTS

What is Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach? 4
 What are the WDNA 2015-2020 Challenges?..... 4
 What is the Purpose of the WDNA Action Plans & Reports?..... 4
 1. *Collaboration & Effective Deer Management Planning & Implementation 5*
 2. *Healthy Ecosystems 7*
 3. *Lowland & Urban Deer..... 9*
 4. *Economic & Community Development 10*
 Improve understanding of deer impacts on agriculture and forestry 11
 5. *Training & Wild Deer Welfare 12*
Focusing Ahead to 2018 13
Annex 1: Monitoring and Reporting 14
Annex 2: List of Action Leaders and Contributors for this Action Plan 15
Annex 3: Structure of WDNA 16

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What is Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach?

Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach (WDNA) is a collective vision for sustainable deer management in Scotland. It was developed and is delivered by both private and public bodies which share the same ambition that:

'We manage wild deer to achieve the best combination of benefits for the economy, environment, people and communities for now and for future generations'

Launched in 2008 and revised in 2015 WDNA includes a set of challenges for 2015 - 2020. WDNA sets common goals including sustaining jobs, providing opportunities for people to see deer, promoting venison and protecting vulnerable habitats including woodlands.

This Action Plan identifies how a range of organisations will contribute to these challenges in 2017 and into 2018.

What are the WDNA 2015-2020 Challenges?

The WDNA challenges are grouped under the following headings:

- Collaboration & Effective Deer Management Planning and Implementation
- Healthy Ecosystems
- Lowland & Urban Deer
- Economic & Community Development
- Training & Wild Deer Welfare

The challenges were developed in 2014 to guide actions on the ground for 2015-2020. They were agreed in discussion with a range of contributors who recognised the need to prioritise areas of work over the five year period to 2020. They highlight action needed across the public and private sectors.

What is the Purpose of the WDNA Action Plans & Reports?

The purpose of the WDNA Action Plans & Reports, which are published each year is to:

- Promote and encourage activity across the deer sector;
- Recognise actions from a wide range of private, public and community sectors and NGOs that contribute to the delivery of WDNA;
- Look forward to ideas for future actions;
- Capture key ongoing organisational activities which contribute to the delivery of WDNA;
- Enable an assessment of what has and what hasn't been delivered and why.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

1. Collaboration & Effective Deer Management Planning & Implementation



Wild deer are not confined by human boundaries and as a result often need to be managed collaboratively. Groups (e.g. Deer Management Groups), networks (e.g. Lowland Deer Network) and other deer partnerships and fora play a core role in enabling and supporting this collaboration.

Deer Management Groups came under parliamentary scrutiny as part of the 2016 SNH Deer Review. The Review recognised the significant progress the 44 DMGs in Scotland have made in delivering sustainable deer management. However, the report also concluded that further work was required to ensure that DMGs make their full contribution to the woodland and natural heritage objectives within the Scottish Biodiversity 2020 Route Map. 2017 will continue the focus on supporting DMGs in developing and implementing their Deer Management Plans. More broadly we will be looking at tools to resolve conflict and reinvigorating the Wild Deer Best Practice Guides including a refresh of the website.

What will be done in 2017?

Build on work to develop conflict management tools

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| 1.1 Develop handy bespoke guides on conflict management tools and techniques | SNH |
| 1.2 Deliver a workshop session on conflict management guidance | ADMG |
| 1.3 Deliver training on conflict management tools | FCS/SNH |

Ensure robust deer management planning and implementation

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| 1.4 | Develop the metrics for assessing delivery of the Public Interests in the Deer Management Group assessment | SNH/ADMG |
| 1.5 | Support DMGs in developing and implementing their DMPs | ADMG |
| 1.6 | Update the Joint Agency Fencing Guidelines | SNH/FCS |
| 1.7 | Provide training for FCS woodland officers to support their contribution to commenting on DMG deer management plans | FCS |
| 1.8 | Support ADMG in the provision and interpretation of woodland data that aids development of deer management plans | FCS |
| 1.9 | Support deer management planning activity in the Assynt area through gathering data, training land managers and investigating opportunities to create businesses from deer products | SWT/Assynt Foundation |
| 1.10 | Address the 2016 Authorisation Panel recommendations | SNH |
| 1.11 | Review deer management planning within forestry to better connect with SNHs official DMP process | FCS |

Promote and implement the Deer Code

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| 1.12 | Agree methodology for monitoring the extent of compliance with the Deer Code | SNH |
| 1.13 | Agree how to present monitoring reports to parliament on a three yearly basis | SNH |
| 1.14 | Develop short video clips as online tutorials to complement the WDBP guides | ADMG/SVP |
| 1.15 | Develop new WDBP Guides for DMGs | ADMG |
| 1.16 | Refresh the WDBP website | WDBPSG/SNH |

Raise awareness of the need for effective deer management

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| 1.17 | Deliver a series of activity sessions for school children based on deer management | SNH/BASC/LL&TNPA |
| 1.18 | Include a deer management event in the Cairngorms Nature Festival Weekend | CNPA |
| 1.19 | Deliver the 'Hill to Grill' programme with partners* as part of the Outdoor and Woodland Learning project | SWT |

Establish a shared, trusted high quality knowledge base associated with wild deer

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| 1.20 | Develop SWARD for deer managers | ADMG (SNH) |
| 1.21 | Promote deerscotland.info website | FCS/SNH/SG |
| 1.22 | Identify how to deliver the research priorities and knowledge exchange gaps set out in the report on Wild Deer Research | WDNA Steering Group |

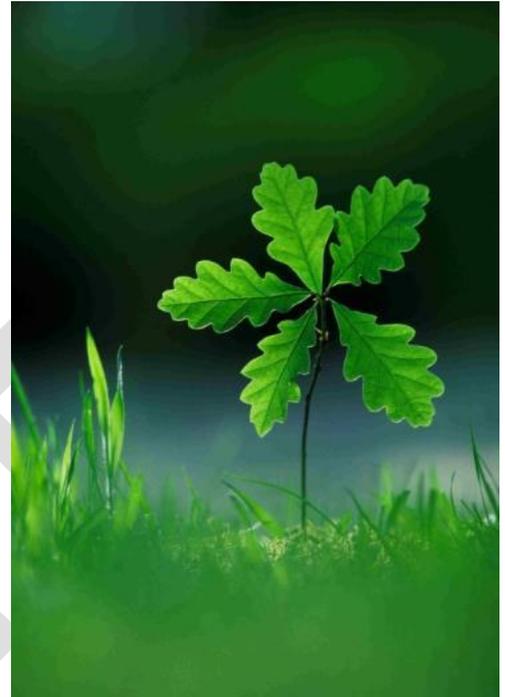
* Partners are Culag Community Woodland Trust, Assynt Foundation, JMT, Highland Council Ranger Service and Ullapool High School

2. Healthy Ecosystems

Deer are a keystone species and an integral part of the biodiversity of Scotland. However, they can also have a detrimental impact on ecosystems and biodiversity. WDNA is based around managing deer as part of an ecosystem.

Meeting the 2020 Biodiversity Challenge will rely on achieving appropriate levels of deer grazing within ecosystems and reducing their negative impacts across habitats and ecosystems.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 includes the need to reduce emissions in Scotland by 80% by 2050. Protecting peatlands and woodlands is one way to achieve this. Grazing, trampling and browsing of wild deer can have positive and negative consequences for the vegetation cover, depending on the level of impact. These impacts need to be kept in balance if woodland and forest cover are to be increased and peatland protected.



What will be done in 2017?

Contribute to the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity

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| 2.1 | Contribute to restoring native woodland into satisfactory condition | SNH/FCS/ADMG/LL&TNPA |
| 2.2 | Implement the Invasive Non-Native Species Code as and when necessary and monitor and act upon any reported sightings of Muntjac | SNH/FES |
| 2.3 | Run a session on restoring native woodlands for DMGS | ADMG |
| 2.4 | Review and co-ordinate guidance on woodland monitoring | SNH/FCS/ADMG/WDBPSG |

Carry out work to mitigate, reduce and adapt to the effects of Climate Change

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| 2.5 | Contribute to meeting 2020 targets on new woodland creation | SNH/FCS/ADMG/FES |
| 2.6 | Support DMGs in planning for and implementing opportunities for woodland expansion in their areas | ADMG/FCS |
| 2.7 | Deliver a range of peatland restoration projects | CNPA/FES/ADMG/LL&TNPA |
| 2.8 | Support establishment of riparian woodlands through National Park Grant Scheme Small Tree Planting Funding | LL&TNPA |

Contribute to achieving Favourable Condition status for designated features

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| 2.10 Contribute to addressing herbivore impacts which are contributing to unfavourable condition of designated features in woodlands | FES/FCS/ADMG |
| 2.11 Contribute to addressing herbivore impacts which are contributing to unfavourable condition of designated features in the uplands | SNH/ADMG/FES |
| 2.12 Carry out deer management to contribute to achieving Favourable Condition
Environment LINK | |
| 2.13 Carry out a deer census programme. | SNH |

Differentiate between herbivore impacts

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| 2.14 Review the guidance on distinguishing herbivore impacts in the WDBP Guides on woodland and tall herb damage and address any gaps | SNH |
| 2.15 Review training on distinguishing herbivore impacts for those involved with Site Condition Monitoring and Habitat Impact Assessments | SNH/LL&TNPA |

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3. Lowland & Urban Deer

Increasingly, deer are moving into areas in and around towns. This inevitably brings more people into contact with deer and presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include managing deer vehicle collisions and reducing the damage that can be done to urban woodlands, gardens and green spaces. The opportunities include people being able to see and learn more about deer from direct experience.



Approaches to deer management in and around towns need to vary from those in the uplands as there are fundamental differences in the patterns of landownership. There are also differences in species with roe deer tending to be the most common species in and around towns.

What will be done in 2017?

Improve understanding of deer population dynamics

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| 3.1 Improve understanding of deer population dynamics in the lowlands and urban areas | SNH/FCS/LDNS |
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Develop a range of options for lowland and urban deer management planning

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| 3.2 Deliver a Sharing Good Practice event in the lowlands in April 2017 aimed at Local Authorities | SNH |
| 3.3 Develop the lowlands Pilot project to understand what measures can be used to assess the delivery of public interests | SNH/FCS |
| 3.4 Establish a lowland deer panel | SNH |

Co-ordinate, make available and use current data on lowland and urban deer

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| 3.5 Identify key contacts e.g. councillors for training and support for deer management communications | SNH/LDNS |
| 3.6 Improve understanding of number of deer being culled and by whom in the lowlands and urban areas | SNH/LDNS |
| 3.7 Develop an understanding of the role of deer on expanding woodland/forestry in urban areas | SNH/FES |

Understand public perception of urban and lowland deer

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| 3.8 Commission a study of public perceptions on deer in the lowlands, building on the proposed methodology in the SNH commissioned report on deer perceptions | SNH |
| 3.9 Deliver a communication events programme to a wide audience on deer and deer management in the low ground | LDNS |

4. Economic & Community Development

Attempts are being made to put an economic value on Scotland's wildlife and ecosystems. This increases our understanding of the interrelationship between our natural resources, environment and economy.



The annual monetary value of wild deer management in Scotland was estimated in 2014 to be £17.6 million. Deer management supported an estimated 722 full time equivalent jobs, 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. The economic costs associated with wild deer can be significant, for instance road collisions with deer are estimated to cost £9.4million a year¹. Other costs include to agriculture and to forestry. The costs and benefits of deer need to be managed effectively to maximise the contribution deer make to sustainable economic growth.

What will be done in 2017?

Encourage diverse economic opportunities

4.1 Provide venison from National Nature Reserves and National Parks for local events and sales	SNH
4.2 Further explore the use of deer larders and cold stores in the lowgrounds	SNH/LDNS/FES
4.3 Provide a deer management sporting lease opportunity on the Isle of Rum NNR	SNH
4.4 Co-ordinate a series of events through 'Eat Scottish Venison Day'	SVP

Understand the costs and benefits of deer management

4.5 Refine a cost benefit analysis of deer culling and deer fencing	FCS
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¹ 'Scoping the economic benefits and costs of wild deer and their management in Scotland' Putman R, 2012, P16

Build on work to address deer vehicle collisions and human disease risks

- 4.6 Continue to raise awareness amongst staff and stalkers of deer-related human disease risks such as Lyme disease from ticks **FES**
- 4.7 Collate DVC records from main data sources of Road operating companies, SSPCA records and Human injury records **Transport Scotland/SNH**
- 4.8 Continue work on DVCs, including looking at identifying hotspots **Transport Scotland/SNH**
- 4.9 Facilitate the annual Spring and Autumn Deer Campaign to help raise awareness amongst road users of the likelihood of deer movements **Transport Scotland/SNH**

Develop appreciation and understanding between access and deer management

- 4.10 Support responsible access and responsible land management by operating the Heading for the Scottish Hills web service **SNH**
- 4.11 Encourage and support the use of CNPA developed and provided signs on deer stalking and education on wider moorland management **CNPA**
- 4.12 Promote Scottish Outdoor Access Code advice relating to stalking to members and to the general public via the website linking to the HFSH / Hill phones when the scheme is launched each summer **Ramblers Scotland**
- 4.13 Take opportunities to publicise and promote the rights and responsibilities of the public with regard to walking during the stalking season **Ramblers Scotland**
- 4.14 Liaise over issues relating to access and stalking through the National Access Forum **Ramblers Scotland**
- 4.15 Encourage responsible access through the Land Management Access Forum **LL&TNPA**

Improve understanding of deer impacts on agriculture and forestry

- 4.16 Review existing data and scope the feasibility of identifying new data on the impacts of deer on forestry **FES/FCS**
- 4.17 Develop the Woodland Herbivore Impact Assessment as a methodology for monitor impacts of deer on forestry **FCS**

5. Training & Wild Deer Welfare

The provision and uptake of training is central to establishing a strong skill base in the deer sector. This helps to ensure deer management is carried out effectively with knowledge and best practice underpinning all actions and decisions.



Wild deer welfare underpins WDNA. Existing work will be built on to increase understanding of practical deer welfare.

We need to ensure there continue to be plenty of opportunities to develop further employment, skills and knowledge in the sector to build capacity. We need to ensure that the current diversity of events and training courses continue and are expanded.

What will be done in 2017?

Ensure a strong skill base in deer management

5.1 Hold a WDBP Demonstration Day for colleges	SNH
5.2 Deliver annual DSC1 courses, including female only option	CNPA
5.3 Offer a DSC2 subsidised opportunity	CNPA
5.4 Encourage the use of the CNP as an education resource and provide support for education activities	CNPA
5.5 Run an event on best practice in food hygiene and carcass preparation	SNH
5.6 Hold Open Range Days and Run DSC courses	BASC/BDS
5.7 Run the advanced Deer Management course	BDS
5.8 Deliver 2 Habitat Impact Assessment Training Days	LL&TNPA
5.9 Review the SVQs and Modern Apprenticeship in gamekeeping and wildlife management	Lantra

Understand, promote and deliver wild deer welfare

5.10 Promote and run training on the updated WDBP Guides on welfare	SNH
5.11 Run welfare sessions for DMGs	SNH
5.12 Promote awareness of and ways to prevent spread of Chronic Wasting Disease	BDS/SNH
5.13 Contribute to contingency planning for Chronic Wasting Disease	SNH

Focusing Ahead to 2018

Focusing ahead is important. It allows everyone to influence future plans and actions. To do this each Action Plan includes a set of outline actions. These are ideas for actions which will be developed into specific actions in future WDNA Action Plans.

Collaboration & Effective Deer Management Planning & Implementation

- Set up a national network of sentinel sites to monitor deer populations in relation to drivers of change
- Estimate how the public interest (in terms of delivery of ecosystem, services) is affected positively or negatively relative to the current ownership pattern in the uplands
- Develop a study to capture the attitudes and beliefs of different sections of the public.

Healthy Ecosystems

- Develop, publish and promote guidance on how to reduce the carbon footprint of deer management
- Develop understanding of the capacity of DMGs to increase woodland
- Continue with further phases of peatland restoration projects and initiate new ones
- Link the land cover and ecosystem service mapping tool developed with the Aberdeenshire regional Land use pilot with DeerMAP
- Investigate methods to re-vegetate peatland under different grazing regimes in order to determine the best strategy for improving the condition of peatlands
- Review the various methods used to assess site condition and grazing impact and explore how appropriate they are for developing a national picture of grazing impact and their ability to distinguish between the effects of different herbivores
- Collate existing data on grazing impacts with a view to producing a national picture of grazing impact which will help identify gaps
- Produce a report on the relative impact of deer grazing with and without sheep.

Economic & Community Development

- Carry out an assessment of the impact of different deer management approaches on local jobs and the rural community
- Build on research carried out on extensive range management of deer for the production of venison
- Carry out research to explore the extent to which public access affects deer distribution
- Develop a practical management tool to quantify the impacts of deer management activities on neighbouring interests and the public interest and identify where these economic impacts are difficult to determine at a local level.

Annex 1: Monitoring and Reporting

WDNA will be monitored and reported in two ways:

Annual Action Reporting

Annual reports will set out progress against annual actions. These will provide an insight into the depth and breadth of actions which have been delivered across the deer sector and beyond. Each action contributes to a specific priority or in some cases multiple priorities. A summary of key achievements for the preceding year will be included in each WDNA Action Report.

Monitoring the Impacts

A set of revised indicators have been included in the 2014 WDNA. An initial report, covering the period 2008 - 2013, is available on the SNH website. These indicators reflect trends in the state of the environment, economy and society as they relate to wild deer. They will continue to be refined and developed.

Biannual reports on the indicators will be produced. Together with data and analysis from wider monitoring of ecosystems and social and economic benefits, these will help build a picture of trends and progress.

Annex 2: List of Action Leaders and Contributors for this Action Plan

Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG)

British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)

British Deer Society (BDS)

Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)

Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES)

John Muir Trust (JMT)

Lantra

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (LL&TNP)

Lowland Deer Network Scotland (LDNS)

Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS)

Scottish Country Sports and Tourism Group (SCSTG)

Scottish Environment Link (Link)

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)

Transport Scotland

Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT)

Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP)

Annex 3: Structure of WDNA

<p>Vision</p>	<p>By 2030: 1. There will be widespread understanding and achievement of sustainable deer management so as to contribute to: A high quality, robust and adaptable environment. Sustainable economic development Social well-being 2. Wild deer will be managed in an inclusive way with knowledge used to underpin all decisions</p>		
<p>Principles</p>	<p>Wild deer should be managed throughout their range in a way that - integrates deer management and other land-use objectives uses collaboration to achieve the management objectives uses a geographical scale and timescale best suited to achieving the management objectives engages and communicates with all relevant interests uses sound science and the best available evidence promotes deer welfare</p>		
<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>Contribute to healthy ecosystems and conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside Secure the favourable condition status of Scotland’s sites designated for nature Help tackle and adapt to the effects of climate change. Minimise further spread of non-native deer species in Scotland. Safeguard the welfare of all species of wild deer. f) Conserve and enhance the cultural and historic environment and the distinct identity, diverse character and special qualities of Scotland’s landscapes</p>	<p>a) Increase the economic opportunities associated with wild deer. b) Minimise economic costs attributable to wild deer. c) Provide the skills and knowledge required to manage deer as an integral part of Scotland’s natural resources. d) Contribute to the social and economic development of communities.</p> <p>Contributing to all objectives Establish a shared, trusted and high quality knowledge base associated with wild deer to support local action Develop effective frameworks for sustainable deer management Raise awareness and understanding of wild deer and their management</p>	<p>a) Contribute to a safe and healthy environment for people. b) Increase participation in management and enjoyment of wild deer. c) Manage the impacts of wild deer in and around communities. d) Promote venison as a healthy food.</p>