



Scotland's Wild Deer
A National Approach

Report for 2016/17



for our deer, land and people

Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach (WDNA)

FOREWORD

Welcome to the 6th Action Report 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 Report highlights the achievements of the past year by a range of organisations involved in managing Scotland's land and wildlife.

2016 was a significant year for deer and land management:

- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 was published, including additional powers to encourage sustainable deer management;
- Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) 2016 review of Deer Management in Scotland set out a comprehensive analysis of deer related data and was the focus of extensive and wide ranging parliamentary debate and the Cabinet Secretary's response to the 2016 review highlighted the need for further progress in delivering sustainable deer management;
- The Deer research web resource was launched <http://deerscotland.info/>.



This focus on making further progress in delivering sustainable deer management will be carried forward into the 2017/18 WDNA Action Plan.

WDNA recognises that considerable effort already goes into deer management. This year marks the half-way point in delivering the WDNA 2015-2020 priorities. These priorities give a deer focus to existing government priorities, such as the SBS 2020 Route Map. Delivering them is best achieved by all of us continuing to work together.

This report 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 1 for full list).

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What is the Vision for Wild Deer in Scotland?

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 who 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 priorities 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 Report demonstrates how a range of organisations contributed to these priorities in 2016/17.

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.



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Headlines for 2016/17:

- 2016 was a significant year for deer and land management
- Progress was made across all the WDNA priorities
- The SNH 2016 Review of Deer Management in Scotland was published
- A new deer research web resource was launched <http://deerscotland.info/>

In 2016/17, 92 activities were carried out by 19 organisations. Of these 72 were achieved and 20 were carried over into 2017/18. 15 key achievements are summarised below.

WDNA 2015-2020 Priorities

1. Collaboration & effective deer management planning & implementation
2. Healthy ecosystems
3. Lowland & urban deer
4. Economic & community development
5. Training & wild deer welfare



The figure above shows that progress was made across all the priorities in 2016/17.

A summary of progress with all actions delivered in 2016/17 is available as a separate appendix (insert link).

Key Achievements in 2016/17:

1. **The SNH Review of Deer Management in Scotland** was produced by SNH for the Scottish Government and submitted to the Cabinet Secretary in October 2016. The report represents a thorough assessment of data on the impacts of deer on the natural heritage, as set out in the commission provided by the Scottish Government. Whilst commending the considerable progress that has been made by some DMGs, the report concluded that a step change had not taken place and that Deer Management Groups needed to do more.
2. A re-assessment of **Deer Management Groups (DMGs) and Deer Management Plans (DMPs)** took place. This formed a significant part of the 2016 SNH Deer Review. Most DMGs performed well against most public interest categories with overall significant progress detected. However the Review noted that progress was not uniform and was less evident for public interest categories most relevant to the natural heritage. This was a significant area of work in 2016 with further work planned for 2017.
3. **Increased engagement by Local Authorities with the Deer Code.** A letter to Local Authorities on the Deer Code was sent from the Chair of SNH requesting that Local Authorities explain their responsibilities in relation to the Deer Code. As public bodies, Local Authorities are required to take account of the Deer Code when carrying out any of their functions which could impact on deer. The Deer Code sets out responsibilities for all those who own or manage land where deer occur.
4. A **Report on Wild Deer Research** commissioned by SNH, FCS and SG was completed by Scottish Agricultural College and University of Highlands & Islands. The report is built around an extensive literature review and sets out available research associated with each of the WDNA priorities and highlights gaps in research and knowledge exchange. It also sets out priorities for future research to support delivery of WDNA. The report incorporated views from stakeholders gathered through a series of workshops and a seminar.
5. **Publication of a new web resource:** <http://deerscotland.info/> providing easy access to a broad range of research papers grouped under the WDNA priorities.
6. **Protected Sites for Nature Conservation** showed some improvements between 2015 and 2016 with the condition of 43 designated nature conservation features with herbivore targets having improved. These features were either brought into favourable condition, or a clear plan of action was established to do so or the herbivore targets were met. Of these 13 were woodland features and 18 were upland. However, herbivores continue to be a major driver of unfavourable condition of natural features.
7. **Development of SWARD** continued in 2016. SWARD is a database, under development, which will hold data on Habitat Impact Assessments to assist practitioners in implementing their Deer Management Plans. SWARD is being developed by SNH and ADMG. It is a complex database and work will continue into 2017/18.

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8. [Deer on Your Doorstep](#), a promotional, informative series of display panels and posters developed through Lowland Deer Network Scotland was used to provide information to the public on deer and their management in urban settings. It includes a poster highlighting the dangers when dogs chase deer.
9. [The PACEC Report on the contribution of the deer industry to the Scottish economy](#) was commissioned by ADMG and published in 2016. The report used PACEC's research on the economic impact of shooting in the UK and the volume and value of country sports tourism to Scotland to estimate the total economic impact of deer management in Scotland, including supply chain effects and expenditure by stalking participants on other attractions while visiting Scotland.
10. [A Deer Authorisations Report](#) was published. An independent review of deer Authorisations was carried out in 2016 by a panel approved by the Minister for the Environment. The evidence presented during the review demonstrated the importance of, and the continued need for, out of season and night shooting deer control to support key public policy objectives, as well as to protect private interests.
11. **Supply and Promotion of Venison** continued during 2016. Private estates and Forest Enterprise Scotland provided a significant number of venison carcasses. FES supplied around 28,300 SQWV assured carcasses. These were sold through game dealers to local supermarkets and made available for local sales. Venison was further promoted through Eat Scottish Venison Day on 4th September - an annual event. An application for Protected Geographical Indication was also drafted by the Scottish Venison Partnership.
12. [A Report on Deer Vehicle Collisions: data collection and collation to end 2015](#) was published. This presents findings from January 2013 to December 2015. It showed a 10% increase in DVCs from the previous three year period. This is likely to reflect the overall expansion in range of deer especially in the Scottish Lowlands and urban fringes over recent years. Data on DVCs will continue to be collated in 2017/18.
13. **Recreational stalking opportunities** were provided in Scotland, including opportunities for 330 recreational stalkers on the National Forest Estate.
14. **Deer Training Events & Workshops** ran in 2016. These included open range days, DSC Level 1 and 2 courses and the BDS advanced deer management course. Three venison butchery workshops were held, teaching skills and techniques in safe and hygienic venison butchery and preparation. The workshops were organised through Scotland's Natural Larder, with input from others including Forest Enterprise Scotland. They demonstrated how to achieve Best Practice standards in the preparation and handling of carcasses and reminded practitioners of the importance of attaining the highest hygiene standards.
15. [A report on Deer Welfare](#) was published. It sets out practical indicators to assess the welfare of wild deer. The report builds on earlier work exploring what is meant by welfare and principles in relation to individual deer and deer populations.

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ANNEX 1: LIST OF ACTION LEADERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

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)
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
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)
Ramblers Scotland
Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET)
Scottish Country Sports and Tourism Group (SCSTG)
Scottish Environment Link (Link)
Scottish Government (SG)
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP)
Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT)
Transport Scotland
University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI)
Wild Deer Best Practice Steering Group (WDBPSG)
Wild Scotland

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ANNEX 2: STRUCTURE OF WDNA

Vision	<p>By 2030 there will be widespread understanding and achievement of sustainable deer management 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>Wild deer will be managed in an inclusive way with knowledge used to underpin all decisions</p>		
Principles	<p>Wild deer should be managed throughout their range in a way that -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
Outcomes	Management of all species of wild deer will contribute to:		
	A high quality, robust & adaptable environment	Sustainable economic development	Social well-being
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Contribute to healthy ecosystems and conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside b) Secure the favourable condition status of Scotland's sites designated for nature c) Help tackle and adapt to the effects of climate change. d) Minimise further spread of non-native deer species in Scotland. e) 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>Contributing to all objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Establish a shared, trusted and high quality knowledge base associated with wild deer to support local action b) Develop effective frameworks for sustainable deer management c) Raise awareness and understanding of wild deer and their management 	