

SNH Lowland Deer Panel: Terms of Reference

Background

The Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Review of Sustainable Deer Management and the subsequent report by the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee identified concerns about the harmful impacts of deer in the lowlands, the amount of information available on lowland deer, and the effectiveness of current deer management. Particular issues raised included:

- the perception that ‘there is a significant problem with deer in the lowlands’;
- the need for collaboration when dealing with a territorial species ranging over a fragmented pattern of land ownership;
- the lack of engagement of particular sectors, including agricultural interests, local authorities and other public agencies;
- the lack of available data on deer numbers, impacts, cull returns and numbers of people controlling deer;
- the need for new structures to conduct, support and monitor effective lowland deer management, and;
- the ineffective supply chain for lowland venison and the limited availability of deer larder facilities.

SNH is seeking to appoint a Deer Panel under section 4 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 (as amended) to consider deer management in lowland Scotland, particularly in relation to the Scottish Government’s Deer Strategy WDNA, the Deer Code and public interest.

Geographical scope

There is no single agreed definition of the lowlands. For this purpose, however, the key distinction is between predominantly upland areas, which have large management units that are well suited to collaborative deer management, and surrounding areas of more fragmented land ownership – and the Panel should focus on the latter.

These areas are characterised by a mosaic of mixed land-use including large urban settlements, scattered housing, transport infrastructure, industry, agriculture, forestry and more ‘natural’ areas. Roe deer are the typical focus for management, but sika or fallow deer may also be present in some areas, such as parts of Dumfries and Galloway, Perthshire, Aberdeenshire and Caithness.

Remit

The Deer Panel will review and make practical recommendations addressing the following key questions:

- Do lowland deer managers need to collaborate to achieve sustainable deer management?
- If so, at what scale does this need to take place, and what is the most efficient and effective approach?

- What knowledge and information are needed to support this process and to determine whether the public interest is being met?
- What are the practical implications of public perceptions of deer and deer management in the lowlands?
- What further action could SNH take in the context of the existing legislative and policy framework?

Outputs

The required output of the Panel will be a report to SNH addressing the above issues. The process will be as follows:

- The Panel will produce a draft report with technical and secretariat support from SNH.
- Panel members will comment on the draft, suggesting any revisions.
- The Panel chair will have final sign-off.
- The report will be submitted to SNH by the end of September 2018. SNH will review the report and decide on the next steps.
- The report will be shared publically on SNH's website.

Governance

- The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform will approve the appointment of the Panel.
- SNH will appoint the chair and Panel members.
- Meetings of the Panel will be convened by the chair, with secretariat support from SNH.
- SNH will provide additional technical support for the Panel as required.
- The Panel will liaise with the Deer Working Group as appropriate.
- SNH will provide agreed payment to Panel members.
- The Panel will be formally established for nine months and will conclude when its report has been submitted to SNH.

SNH

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