



# Deer Management Plans: Delivering the Public Interest



## Introduction

The sustainable management of red deer in the open range requires a collaborative approach. For this reason voluntary Deer Management Groups (DMGs) have been formed across most of the red deer range. An increasing diversity of ownership and management objectives is now a feature of most DMGs and as a result, delivering effective management of the deer across a group area also requires positive, proactive engagement.

Deer management currently delivers, and potentially could contribute further to, a range of benefits to the people of Scotland. These benefits, also referred to as the “Public Interest”, are set out in the Scottish Government joint Agencies strategy “Scotland’s Wild Deer: A National Approach” (WDNA) – which is currently under Review. This Public Interest is translated for practical land and deer managers in the Code of Practice for Deer Management (Deer Code).

Following recommendations from the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee Enquiry in 2013, all DMGs, working under the voluntary principle, have an opportunity to show progress towards having demonstrably effective and environmentally responsible management plans in place by the end of 2016. Further recommendations stated that the work of DMGs should be open, transparent, inclusive and publically accountable and that deer management plans (DMPs) should be publically available.

So what is meant by an “effective” DMP? Deer managers already deliver a level of Public Interest as a result of their private management objectives. DMGs are being tasked with seeking ‘additional’ Public Interest through modification of the management of some private interests. SNH have identified 14 possible practical Public Interest Actions derived from the Deer Code which will demonstrate how a DMG is and will follow the Deer Code and deliver sustainable deer management. These Public Interest Actions are linked to a number of areas of Scottish Government policy and are detailed in this document. In line with the Deer Code they have been grouped into the Environment, Economy, Social Wellbeing and Deer Welfare.

To deliver these Public Interest Actions DMGs need to function effectively and have an effective deer management planning process in place (Figure 1). Effective planning is a dynamic process based on setting objectives and targets, carrying out actions, monitoring and reviewing. ADMG have developed some guiding principles for effective deer management groups which are detailed in the ADMG Benchmark.

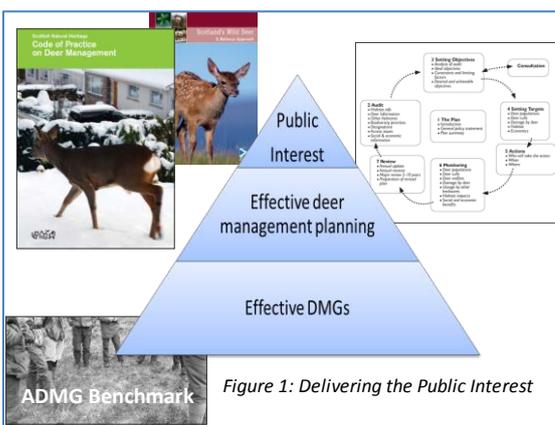


Figure 1: Delivering the Public Interest

### DMG Actions to demonstrate delivery

- **Establish a baseline** by collating information on current activity/ extent / or actions. This can be used to establish the current DMG contribution and also provide the basis to measure the effectiveness of future actions.
- **Identify and plan actions** which will contribute to the delivering the outcome. These should be contained or be annexed to the Deer Management Plan.
- **Implement the agreed actions** – Likely to be done at the individual land holding basis but should seek to use collaborative approaches where possible.
- **Monitor effectiveness** of the actions through comparing progress against the established baseline.
- **Review actions** and decide to continue /amend /change these in light of new information.

## Upland Deer Management Groups - delivering public interest.

This section seeks to identify a number of areas of Scottish Government policy that upland Deer Management Groups (DMGs) are expected to contribute towards delivering in managing populations of deer at a landscape scale.

DMGs will need to demonstrate how they contribute to this delivery through reporting on a series of actions which can be prioritised and agreed on a local basis.

Deer managers will be delivering a level of public benefit as a result of their private management interests. DMGs are being tasked with acknowledging existing and identifying where 'additional' public benefits may be delivered through some modification of the management of private interests.

In line with the Code of Practice for Deer Management these public interests have been grouped into Environment, Economy, Social Well-being and Deer Welfare.

### Environment

- 1 Contribute to the delivery of designated features into Favourable Condition** through managing deer impacts. There are around 356 designated features (15.8% of total) within the current DMG network where herbivores impacts are contributing to the unfavourable condition of the feature. It is expected that the DMG will contribute to the Scottish Government target of achieving 80% of features in Favourable or Unfavourable recovering condition by 2016 by facilitating the reduction of herbivore impacts where this is contributing to the unfavourable condition. The DMG will manage deer impacts to deliver and sustain favourable condition of designated features. DMGs may also be able to directly influence non-deer issues for designated sites due to the land management role of their members.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Natura legislation (Birds & Habitats Directives) , Nature Conservation(Scotland) Act 2004, Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. (National Indicator)

- 2 Contribute to the Scottish Government woodland expansion target of 25% woodland cover.** To achieve this a further 10,000 ha of woodland per year will have to be created. The DMG network area covers some 3,249,442 Ha with significant opportunity to contribute to the delivery of this target through identifying areas for further woodland creation and managing deer impacts to allow for successful establishment of new woodland. Priority should be given to expansion opportunities where this improves habitat networks. It is expected that DMGs will be pro-active in contributing to this target.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Scottish Forestry Strategy, Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027 - The Second Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP2), Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, Woodland Carbon Code. (National Indicator)

- 3 Manage deer to retain existing native woodland cover and improve woodland condition in the medium to long term.** The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) was published in 2014. This maps non-designated native woodland cover, reports condition and highlights herbivore impacts which threaten medium to long term condition of these important woodlands. It is expected that the DMGs will implement management to reduce the proportion of native woodland area identified within the 'High' and 'Very High' categories of herbivore impact according to targets set by Scottish Government Agencies. Where other herbivores may be present and contributing to the measured herbivore impact, SNH and FCS will clarify the component of unfavourable condition that needs to be addressed by the deer managers. In areas where DMGs are not functioning, an alternative approach may need to be developed.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Scottish Forestry Strategy, Scottish Bio-diversity Strategy, Woodland Carbon Code. (National Indicator)

- 4 Monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside (not improved agricultural land)** by establishing monitoring throughout wider countryside habitats assessing herbivore impacts and manage those impacts within acceptable ranges (MacDonald et al 1998<sup>1</sup>) to secure sustained presence of these habitats. It is expected that DMGs will take responsibility for the monitoring of herbivore impacts on across the deer range and seek to manage these to contribute to wider ecosystem health.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Scottish Bio-diversity Strategy, Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027 - The Second Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP2). Land Use Strategy. (National Indicator)<sup>1</sup>

- 5 Improve Scotland’s ability to store carbon** by maintaining or improving ecosystem health. In partnership with Government agencies, DMGs will contribute to research and implement and deliver actions to deliver optimum habitat condition for carbon capture and storage.

Main public drivers – Scotland’s National Peatland Plan, WDNA, Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027 - The Second Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP2), Woodland Carbon Code. (National Indicator)

- 6 Reduce or mitigate the risk of establishment of invasive non-native species** by assisting Scottish Government Agencies in monitoring for presence and preventing establishment. DMGs will report sightings and work with SNH to and take action to prevent Muntjac establishment in Scotland and prevent the translocation of Sika and Fallow.

Main public drivers –WDNA, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. (National Indicator)

- 7 Protect landscapes and historic features from deer and deer management activity.** DMGs should consider deer management actions which contribute or impact on delivery of conserving and enhancing the local cultural and historic landscape.

Main public drivers –WDNA, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended, Natura legislation (Birds & Habitats Directives), Nature Conservation(Scotland) Act 2004, Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991.

## Economy

- 8 Optimise economic benefits of Deer Management in Scotland** by establishing and quantifying current benefits within DMG areas, determining opportunities for increasing economic benefit, particularly where collaborative opportunities exist, and through seeking and promoting investment opportunities which delivers increased economic benefit. DMGs should seek to broaden economic activity associated with deer management through sport, tourism, and venison production.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Scottish Government Economic Strategy, Scottish Government Economic Development Strategy, Land Use Strategy. (National Indicator)

---

<sup>1</sup> 1.MacDonald, A., P. Stevens, H. Armstrong,P. Immirzi & P. Reynolds (1998) A Guide to Upland Habitats: Surveying Land Management Impacts. Scottish Natural Heritage

- 9 Minimise the economic cost of deer** through identifying issues and implementing management to reduce or mitigate deer impacts where this results in an economic cost. DMGs will be active in understanding where deer are having an economic cost particularly with regard to forestry and agricultural impacts, deer vehicle collisions, and seek to plan and work collaboratively to reduce these costs.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended, WDNA, Scottish Government Economic Strategy, Scottish Government Economic **Development Strategy**. (National Indicator)

## Social Wellbeing

- 10 Contribute to delivering higher standards of competence in deer management** through promoting and offering opportunities for members to take up formal training opportunities, continuous professional development and ensure Wild Deer Best Practice guidance is adopted in deer management activities throughout the DMG.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Code of Practice for Deer Management, Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance. (National Indicator)

- 11 Identify and promote opportunities contributing to public health and wellbeing benefits** associated with deer and deer management. DMG should raise awareness of road safety issues associated with deer to reduce the risks of road traffic accidents, co-ordinate action to minimise deer-related human disease risks and promote the following of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Main public drivers – Scottish Government Strategic objective - Healthier (National Indicator) WDNA, Transport Scotland - Strategic Road Safety Plan, Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 (as amended). (National Indicator). Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

- 12 Ensure effective communication on deer management issues** within the DMG,; within the wider community and promote better awareness and education of deer and deer management. Ensure DMGs are inclusive, open and transparent, and can articulate and communicate public benefits being delivered through deer management activity.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Code of Practice for Deer management, RACCE committee recommendations (National Indicator)

## Welfare

- 13 Ensure deer welfare is taken fully into account at individual animal and population level** through effective planning and delivery of deer management activities. DMGs should carry out an assessment of welfare state of deer and promote positive welfare.

Main public drivers – WDNA, Code of Practice on Deer Management.

## Collaboration & Effective Deer Management Planning & Implementation

- 14. Develop effective mechanisms to manage deer.** DMGs should improve representation and membership of DMGs to ensure there is greater integration of different land-uses at a local level. DMGs should also ensure that the deer management planning process is consultative, transparent and open.

Main public drivers – WDNA, RACCE Committee recommendations.

