

The Deer Initiative

Deer, Habitats and Impacts Conference March 2007

Deer Vehicle Collisions – The Scottish Approach

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As some background to the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS), it was constituted by the Deer Scotland Act - and is charged to:

Further the conservation, control and sustainable management of deer in Scotland, and keep under review all matters, including their welfare, relating to deer

In addition the Commission has a range of powers to control deer, some of which relate to where deer may pose a threat to public safety.

Road Traffic Accidents is one of the main concerns with respect to both deer welfare and public safety.

In 2002 DCS took the decision to prioritise our resources, concentrating where deer are – and can objectively be shown to be – causing serious detrimental impact to Natural Heritage or Public Safety. It was a concerted attempt to get away, once and for all, from the over-simplistic ‘too many deer in Scotland’ debate and required clear and transparent procedures for assessment.

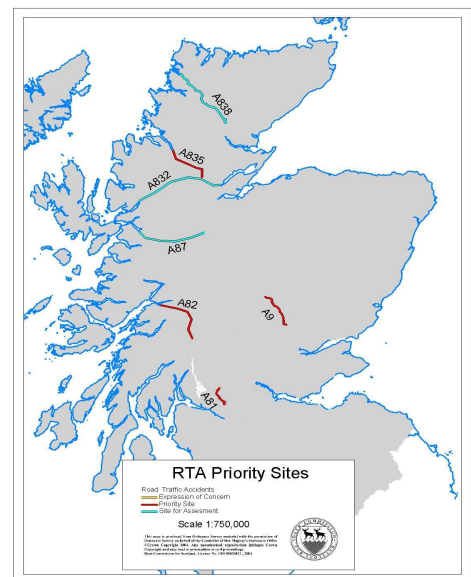
Selecting the priority sites was a 3 stage process:

- Expressions of Concern
- Sites For Assessment
- Choose Priority Sites

We also:

- Did a Review in 2001 of Available Data
- Identified specific stretches
- Additional Expressions of Concern

How do you assess the threat?



- Is the threat to Public Safety greater than reasonably expected?
- How do you quantify the risk?
- What are the contributing factors?

Assessment Stage

- Deer numbers and distance from the road
- Locations of carcasses
- Possible contributors to deer collisions
 - Areas of high density
 - Fencing pushing deer to particular crossing points
 - Roadside vegetation
 - Traffic speed
 - Presence of Warning signs and reflectors

Fact:

Deer are posing a threat to public safety
 Effective mitigation needs to be identified and implemented

The Way Forward

A panel has been established under Section 4 of the Deer Act comprising Northern Constabulary, the Scottish Executive, BEAR, Highland Council and the Association of Deer Management Groups.

Summary of Proposed Mitigation

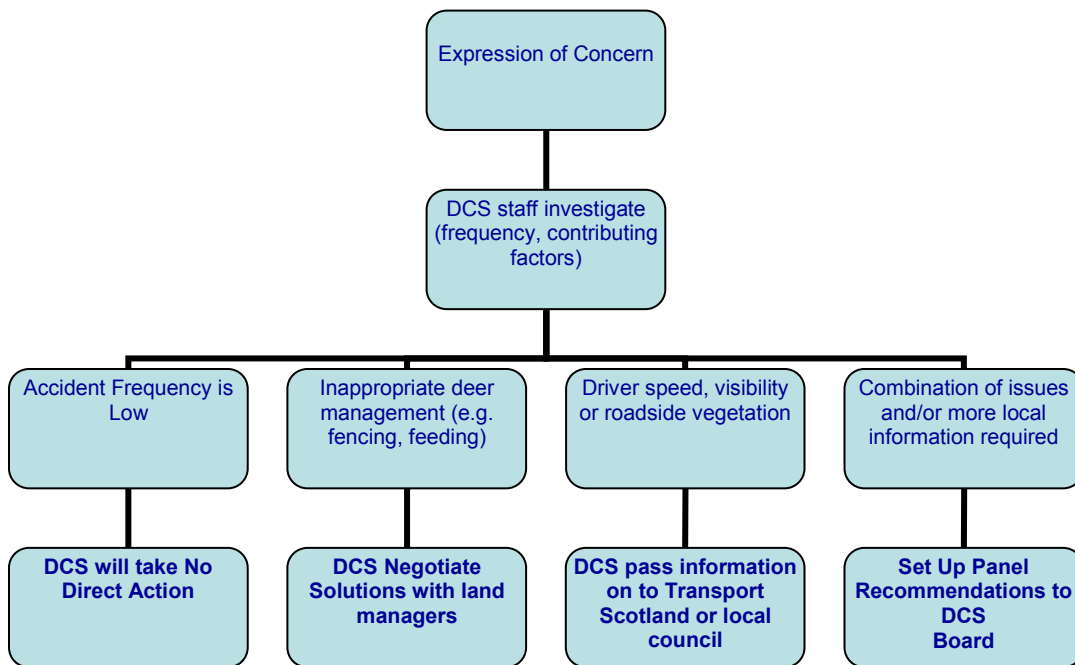
- Raise Driver Awareness
 - general measures
 - Traffic Scotland Variable Message Signs (VMS) (“matrix signs”) to warn of high risk areas
- Influence Driver Behaviour – using signs
 - Warn drivers at 50mph
 - Targeted at specific crossing points
 - Feedback mechanism and monitoring
- Fencing
 - Most effective
 - Well Planned
 - Negative Impacts
 - Public Safety
 - Deer Welfare
 - Landscape
 - Access

- Increased Culling Activity
 - Night Shooting – the DCS has a Code of Practice on this
 - Shooting Out of Season
 - Collaborative Control Groups
- Vegetation Management

Summary

- Not just as simple as too many deer
- There is no straight-forward solution
- Site Specific
- Requires a joined up approach

Developing Process:



Challenges

- Responsibility?
- Data Capture
- Implementing Appropriate Mitigation
 - Realistic
 - Cost Effective
 - Monitoring