



The Deer Initiative

Corporate Strategy 2008-2015



Foreword

Since its creation in 1995, the Deer Initiative has had a lead responsibility for ensuring the delivery of a sustainable, well-managed wild deer population in England and Wales.

In 2007 we successfully negotiated new contracts with our major Government funding partners, aligned to a revised vision and related strategic objectives developed and agreed by the whole Partnership. The commitment of Government remains firm and a funding package has been agreed for the next 3 years, strengthened by the secondment of 3 members of staff from the Forestry Commission and one from Natural England. The review that led to the revised objectives looked at the period out to 2015, and incorporates many targets (such as SSSI improvement) that were part of the previous delivery plan. This Strategy sets out the context and objectives against the expectations of our Partners in particular over the next 3-year period covered by our funding agreement with the Defra family. It includes revised objectives negotiated with our major funding Partners in Wales for the period up until 2011. Building on



achievements to date, the Strategy sets challenging targets for the future, and outlines the framework for accountability.

The Strategy is supported by the Deer Initiative Ltd's Annual Operating Plans which set out in more detail the priorities and plans for action.

Jane Rabagliati
Chairman



Background

The Deer Initiative (DI) is a wide partnership comprising statutory agencies, nature conservation and animal welfare non-governmental organisations, Government, landowners and a range of other interests, who share a vision for a healthy and sustainable future for wild deer in England and Wales.

Our vision is:

'the achievement and maintenance of a sustainable and healthy population of wild deer in England and Wales'

We aim to achieve this both through the direct efforts of Partners themselves and through focused and coordinated activity and projects run through the Partnership's executive arm – Deer Initiative Ltd. Throughout its activities the DI adopts a humane, responsible and sensitive approach to the management of wild deer. It seeks to be the leading authority on all matters relating to deer management, works by building consensus and is open and transparent in all its dealings within the partnership and with the public.

The Partnership came together in 1995 and our current



approach of delivery through the DI Partnership was put in place in 2004. In drawing together this strategy, DI has undertaken a review of current approaches and operations to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in achieving its aim. The main conclusion is that the DI has made an excellent start in achieving its purpose, but the challenges confronting, and issues surrounding, the future management of deer remain considerable. The partnership approach, supported by a strongly coordinated project team, is reaping dividends; but momentum must be maintained at this critical time of increasing deer populations if the progress achieved is to be built upon and consolidated.

The context for action

All species of deer, with the possible exception of Chinese water deer, are increasing in numbers and expanding their ranges in England and Wales. Fallow, roe and muntjac deer are now widespread, while red and sika are locally abundant. It is now believed that deer of at least one species are present in nearly every 10 kilometre square of Great Britain.



This expansion has been encouraged by changes in land use, particularly the expansion of forestry that has increased suitable habitat for foraging and shelter. Researchers believe that there is currently no reason why the trend in increasing deer numbers and range expansion should not continue.

Virtually all woodlands in Britain have evolved in the presence of deer. Deer are an important part of woodland ecosystems and can, depending on their density, increase or decrease the variety of habitat within them. In the past, populations would have been kept in balance through natural predation, food supply, disease and climatic effects.

However, there is a wealth of evidence that indicates that growing numbers are causing adverse effects upon the natural systems that support them, leading to declines in the conservation status, or in extremis, loss of some of our most precious woodland habitats.

Following the 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the UK government committed itself to the sustainable management of forests that provide a wide range of benefits to society. This commitment was detailed in the publication of

The context for action (continued)

Sustainable Forestry, The UK-Programme; Sustainable Development, the UK-Strategy and Biodiversity, the UK Action Plan. On a European scale, the Helsinki Resolutions and the Natura 2000 programme each make commitments to the sustainable management of forests. More recently *A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests* was launched by Defra (June 2007). The sustainable management and development of our current and future woodland resource therefore will rely upon continued and active management of deer populations.

The negative impacts upon habitat are likely to be exaggerated in the short term through increased development pressures across the rural and urban landscape. These range from the new home building programme to the growth of 'horse culture' in the urban fringe to possible intensification of agriculture for improved food and fuel security (e. g. biofuels). In the medium to long term the effects of climate change are likely to become more obvious and conservation planning has already begun on the most effective ways to adapt to possible new scenarios. Adopting both landscape-

scale and ecosystem-services approaches will be essential in ensuring flexible responses to the coming period of substantial uncertainty. The DI has been at the forefront of working at a landscape scale and is developing approaches to sustainable deer management that take full account of ecosystem services.



The growth in the number of deer, in conjunction with the growth in road traffic, means that there is an increasing number of road traffic accidents involving deer. It is estimated that there may be around 80,000 deer-related road traffic accidents a year with a growing number of human fatalities. In addition to this tragic loss of life, these incidents also cause immeasurable suffering to both people and deer.

Like all wild animals, deer are subject to a range of naturally occurring diseases and incidence of infection increases with higher populations. Transmission of infection and parasites between species is also a higher risk. Increased incidence of disease transfer between deer and livestock is suspected, and there are increasing reports of Lyme disease in people (transmitted by the tick *Ixodes ricinus*).

Deer also impact on the tree, agricultural and horticultural crops adjacent to the woodland and also, in suburban and urban areas, may visit and damage gardens. That said, deer also provide a range of economic benefits from recreational, sporting and associated industries including the embryonic, though growing, wild venison market.



Despite these growing conflicts, people wish to see deer in the wild – and are thrilled when they do so. In many areas where deer are considered by ecologists and foresters to be a pest, the general public is not aware that they pose a threat to woodlands and there is considerable work to be done in order to raise levels of understanding. There is a growing need to engage a wider public in a debate on possible futures.

Deer Initiative Partnership – planned response

What are we aiming to achieve?

The overarching vision of the Deer Initiative is *the achievement and maintenance of a sustainable and healthy population of wild deer in England and Wales*

Our aim is to **ensure the delivery** of the above and in doing so, over the next three years we will pursue three main outcomes:

- Contribute to the conservation and sustainable management of woodlands and other habitats; in particular, the achievement of favourable conservation status of protected areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Halt the growth of, and subsequently reduce, the number and seriousness of deer-vehicle collisions on our roads
- Build the capability to react effectively to contain and control emerging zoonoses and other animal health issues relating to deer

The Partnership's Strategic Objectives

We plan to achieve these outcomes by focusing upon five strategic objectives:

- **Managing deer:** to continue to manage populations at a landscape scale through partnership working.
- **Developing the evidence base:** to review, collect and, where necessary, commission research and evidence-gathering on population dynamics, management methodologies and other fields as required.
- **Building capacity:** to ensure that best-practice knowledge and skills are utilised across the sector, through the development and encouragement of accredited training and professional support for all those with deer management remits and interests.
- **Informing and communicating** with policy-makers, decision-takers and the general public, to ensure that high quality, evidence-based information is available and effectively disseminated to all those with both a direct and indirect impact upon the issues related to deer management; and to engage the wider public in developing understanding of the issues, the challenges and possible solutions.
- **Building and maintaining an effective delivery partnership:** to ensure the most efficient, sustainable and cost-effective delivery of the outcomes.

How will we deliver these objectives?

The partner organisations will contribute to the achievement of these objectives through their own individual corporate planning and other activities. In addition the DI Partners will support, and in turn benefit from, the activities of their executive team – Deer Initiative Ltd – in the achievement of its specific delivery objectives.

The delivery objectives of the Deer Initiative Ltd are clustered under three activity types:

- **Advisory/communications**
- **Coordination**
- **Corporate governance and management**

Advisory/Communications

Advise government (central and regional) and our partners on the national and regional policy, support and priorities required for the sustainable management of wild deer.

Act as a central focal point for improved communications on all matters relating to wild deer for the Partnership, landowners, land managers and the public.

Promote public safety on the roads in relation to wild deer.

Coordination

Co-ordinate, promote and assist collaborative deer management and related activities, at a landscape scale.

Co-ordinate partners efforts to develop and promote best practice in all aspects of wild deer management, including

the development of a system of accreditation on behalf of the whole partnership.

Keep abreast of current developments in science and evidence in relation to deer populations and their management. Review, commission and, where appropriate, act as a clearing-house mechanism for research and information relating to deer populations, their impacts and management.

Assist in the coordination of national disease surveillance in wild deer particularly with regard to bovine tuberculosis.

Assist in the development of mechanisms to improve public safety on the roads in relation to wild deer.

Corporate governance and management

To maintain partner confidence and support in DI Ltd through exemplary customer service.

To secure the resources necessary for both the short-to-medium and long terms for the DI to adequately achieve its objectives.

To ensure that the staff of DI Ltd have the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the business aims and objectives.

To develop the structural capacity of DI Ltd at regional level.

The Executive Director and Board of DI Ltd will produce annual operating plans based upon these objectives.



Funding and accountability

The initial funding strategy for DI Ltd for the next 3 years in both England and Wales is based on a combination of 4 sources:

- Central funding (from the Defra family in England, Forestry Commission Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales). This includes staff seconded as in-kind support from the Forestry Commission and Natural England.
- Membership funding.
- Project funds; there are currently 3 major project areas:
 - SSSI projects.
 - DVC research projects.
 - Disease research/monitoring.
- Partnership in-kind support (Partners give significant in-kind support at both the national and regional level. Each Partner completes a bi-lateral agreement with DI Ltd which sets out both financial and in-kind support. DI Ltd estimates that in-kind support amounts to over £0.25 million annually.)



MIKE LANE

Long term funding

We are also looking at producing long term regional and national funding through a variety of approaches:

- Rural Development Programme for England – We have a significant bid with the East of England Development Agency to support sustainable deer management in the Eastern Region. If this is successful we will pursue a similar strategy in a number of other Regions.
- Charitable fund-raising – We are looking to broaden our support from both the charitable and commercial sectors.

Accountability

As a charitable company limited by guarantee and recipients of public funding we are very aware of the need for the organisation to have transparent accounting and management procedures in place. The Trustees of DI Ltd are drawn from the Partner organisations and a key role of the Board is to ensure that the resources entrusted to DI Ltd are utilised in a cost effective and open manner.



Partners

The Deer Initiative Partnership is made up of representatives from our partner organisations (see right). The Deer Initiative staff co-ordinate all activities agreed by the Partnership. The Deer Initiative is a registered charity with a Board of Trustees drawn from the full partners.

The Deer Initiative receives financial support from the partnership, the principal sponsors being the Forestry Commission, Defra and Natural England.



Association of Chief Police Officers
British Association for Shooting and Conservation
British Deer Society
ConFor
Country Land & Business Association
Countryside Alliance
Countryside Council for Wales
Defra
Forestry Commission (England)
Forestry Commission (Wales)
Forest Research
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Highways Agency
Ministry of Defence
National Farmers' Union
National Forest Company
National Gamekeepers' Organisation
National Trust
Natural England
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
Union of Countryside Workers
Veterinary Deer Society
Woodland Trust



The Deer Initiative

The Carriage House
Brynkinalt Business Centre
Chirk
Wrexham LL14 5NS

0845 872 4956
admin@thedeerinitiative.co.uk
<http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk>