

Sustainable Deer Management in Action



Chairman's introduction



This is my first report as Chairman of the Deer Initiative. Since my appointment in April 2005 I have become even more convinced that sustainable deer management in England and Wales can only be achieved through a true Partnership supported by both Government and the private sector. This review highlights the achievements of both the Partnership and its supporting organisation – the Deer Initiative Limited (DI Ltd).

Since its creation in 1995, the Deer Initiative has had a lead responsibility for sustainable deer management in England and Wales. The Defra family provides core funding for our activity, and its Deer Action Plan, launched in December 2004, together with a renewed financial commitment, reaffirmed its expectations of the Deer Initiative and our aim of “ensuring the delivery of a sustainable, well-managed wild deer population in England and Wales”.

This year has seen a formalising of the Partnership with each organisation confirming commitment to the Deer Accord. We have also seen a significant increase in the resources available to DI Ltd and we now have Deer Liaison Officers (DLOs) in 4 English Regions and a Deer Officer in Wales. Much has been achieved with these increased resources and in

particular the DLOs act as a potent catalyst for further regional involvement and funding.

In 2005/6 the Partnership continued to provide a forum for government bodies and non-governmental organisations. Partners are encouraged to debate openly the deer management issues of concern to their organisations, to respect each other's positions and where possible to identify agreed solutions. The Partnership also provides an important opportunity for influencing Government policy and advising on deer management priorities. Of course our Partners have a wide range of views and cannot always reach agreement on every point. However, the opportunity for discussion on controversial matters helps to ensure a balanced and focussed response to Government consultations.

We remain convinced that good wild deer management plays an essential part in the maintenance of the woodlands and other natural habitats that make the British countryside so special. By working on a landscape scale with landowners and land managers, we can help ensure that wild deer populations are healthy and sustainable and that they contribute to everyone's enjoyment of our countryside and to the economy of our rural areas, and that their negative





impacts on issues as wide-ranging as biodiversity and road safety are kept to a minimum.

In particular deer related road traffic accidents are a matter of major concern. They are the cause of very serious injury to road users and our research suggest that the estimated average number of deer-related Personal Injury Accidents (PIAs) in Britain is 554; which are likely to include around 12 fatal, 86 serious and 456 slight injury accidents. The economic 'value

of prevention' of that level of human injury accidents may exceed £40M.

Deer vehicle collisions also result in a very significant animal welfare problem, especially as many of the deer involved in accidents are not killed outright but leave the scene badly injured or have to be destroyed at the roadside.

We have developed a web based entry system to enable those involved in accidents, or those who see



Surveillance camera footage

dead deer at the roadside to directly enter these to the database www.deercollisions.co.uk and we continue to work with the Highways Agency to develop potential mitigation measures.

The review highlights the work which we carried out in 2005/6 and sets the scene for our future priorities and work programme.

We have also included contact details for all our staff to enable you to follow up on any area which is of particular interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jane Rabagliati'.

Jane Rabagliati
Chairman

The Deer Initiative Partnership

The Partnership is supported by the Deer Initiative Limited (DI Ltd), to provide more effective joint working between partners and to take forward collective actions on behalf of the Partnership as a whole. Whilst collectively, deer remain a national issue, it is at a local or landscape level that their impacts are felt most. It follows that any solution to these impacts can, therefore, only be achieved by co-operation at a local level (albeit, within a policy framework determined at a national and regional level). Consequently, we remain convinced that the key to successful deer management will only be achieved through the collaboration of local landowners and managers who can operate at a landscape scale.



The Partnership

Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)

British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)

British Deer Society (BDS)

Countryside Agency (CoAg)

Countryside Alliance (CA)

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

Countryside Land and Business Association (CLA)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

English Nature (EN)

Forestry and Timber Association (FTA)

Forestry Commission (FC)

Forest Research (FR)

Forestry Commission (Wales)

Forest Enterprise (FE)

Game Conservancy Trust (GCT)

Highways Agency (HA)

National Forest Company (NFC)

National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO)

National Trust (NT)

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Union of Country Sports Workers (UCSW)

Veterinary Deer Society (VDS)

Woodland Trust (WT)

Advice to Government

DI Ltd continued to provide advice, both formal and informal, to Government on national and regional needs, support and priorities for sustainable management of wild deer.

- There has been a considerable effort in this period to ensure that monitoring for Bovine tuberculosis (Btb) in wild deer is included in any future disease control strategy both in England and Wales.
- The Partnership was given an opportunity at the autumn meeting to comment on the consultation on the future status of Wild Boar.
- This year DI Ltd also produced the initial draft guidance to the wild game industry on the implementation of the new EU meat hygiene regulations on behalf of the FSA.

We continue to participate in:

- The Wildlife Health and Welfare Strategy forum
- The Non-native Species forum
- Annual Bovine TB Meeting for Great Britain
- The Meat Hygiene Policy forum

Advice to Landowners and Managers

In the regions we aim to reflect the local priorities and to work with Partners to address the key issues. We established the first Regional Wild Deer Forum in Eastern England in response to the need for a strategy to address the impacts of deer in the region. The forum brings together those organisations within the East of England who have a role to play in the delivery of a sustainable wild deer population. The Forum acts as a networking, co-ordinating and supporting group for the Eastern Region Deer Strategy and promotes:

- responsible deer management.
- enhancement of the environment for other flora and fauna.
- an awareness of sustainable deer management to the public.

We will watch developments in this Forum closely and, where appropriate, look to establish similar fora elsewhere.

Research

Our aim as a Partnership is to maintain an awareness of current and proposed research to ensure that priority issues are addressed and minimise overlap. In April 2005 the first Deer Research Working Group was held. This meeting was chaired by Defra and brought together for the first time all the Government bodies involved in commissioning wild deer research. The meeting examined priorities and current funding. The results of the meeting were circulated to all Partners and it has been agreed that the next meeting in September 2007 will also include private sector organisations involved in commissioning wild deer research. The meeting will again be chaired by Defra but will be facilitated by DI Ltd.

We continue to contribute to the Tracking Mammals Partnership and all the deer population data we collect from Deer Management Groups (DMGs) and other projects is fed into the project.

In addition to this work we have been heavily involved in disease surveillance and Deer Vehicle Collision (DVC) research and these projects are highlighted later in the report.

Promoting collaborative deer management

We remain convinced that the key to achieving success on the ground is the involvement and awareness of local landowners and land managers. During 2005/6 DI Ltd has organised Deer Awareness Seminars across the country as well as attending numerous Partner seminars and field visits. The seminars focus on identifying and monitoring impacts and the practical aspects of collaborative deer management at a landscape scale.

We continue to work with a wide range of partners to promote collaborative deer management at a landscape scale, particularly to address the issue of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) improvement. The Government has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to ensure that 95% of England's SSSIs, by area, are in 'favourable condition' by 2010. The national figure has risen from 57% favourable in March 2003, and currently stands at 68%. Since SSSIs cover over 1 million hectares, the size of the task (i.e.



converting nearly 300,000 ha from 'unfavourable' to 'favourable' over the next 5 years) is challenging.

After upland heaths and bogs, and estuaries, lowland woodland is the fourth largest contributing habitat type of SSSIs in 'unfavourable' condition - 22,500 ha of lowland wood is SSSI but in unfavourable condition. Getting our lowland woods in good condition is essential if the Government's PSA target is to be met. Furthermore, deer grazing or browsing, along with inappropriate (or lack of) woodland management, are the major causes of woodland SSSIs being in unfavourable condition – deer grazing in fact directly causes over 3500 ha of the problem. This year, in collaboration with EN and FC, we have



identified a number of national Woodland SSSI Priority areas in which we will target resources to attain the best improvement in woodland condition over the next 3 years.

The areas in which our efforts will be focussed are:

East England

Hatfield Cluster Deer Project.
Bury St Edmunds Deer Project.

East Midlands

Rockingham Forest Deer Management Project.
South Lincs Deer Management Project.
Leighfield Deer Management Project.

South East England

Bernwood Deer Management Project.
Leith Hill Priority Area Deer Management Project.
Butter Wood Hants.

South West England

Exmoor/Quantocks project.

West Midlands

The Marches Deer Project (including the Wyre, Woolhope Dome and Dinmore Hill)

Case Study

THE MARCHES DEER PROJECT

We have already started work on SSSI improvement in some areas. In 2003, DI Ltd, in partnership with EN, CLA, FTA and FC established the Marches Deer Management Project. This project now provides a successful model of how a public/private partnership can bring about real change in deer management at a landscape scale. This year we have achieved:

- An improvement in the condition of the woodland SSSIs in the main project area
- Increased local and regional awareness of deer, their impacts (particularly on native biodiversity) and the need for their management among private and public sector landowners.
- Increased collaboration between landowners and agreement to carry out more effective landscape scale deer management
- A significant targeted increase in collaborative culling activities to reduce deer impacts in woodland SSSIs

The project has also:

- Increased awareness and a coordinated approach to deer-related Deer Vehicle Collisions
- Resulted in greater engagement with, and training of, local

deer stalkers to undertake more effective humane culling and production of quality venison.

- Successful promotion of the benefits of wild venison to the catering trade and public.

We will continue to monitor the condition of the SSSIs across the project area since there is an inevitable time lag between a reduction in deer densities and the recovery of the woodland.



Working together

In 2005/6 DI Ltd worked with Partners to utilise our combined resources more effectively including transfer of knowledge and skills to other organisations, Deer Management Groups and the public. Increasingly the regional staff members of DI Ltd are working with their counterparts from Partner organisations to ensure a coordinated approach to deer management and to the promotion of such management.

We are now working together to develop and promote best practice in all aspects of wild deer management. This year we established a Best Practice Working Group with support from all the Partners. The Group is chaired by Ian Forshaw (Director FC Wales) and will build on the work already underway in Scotland to create a comprehensive Best Practice Guide for landowners, managers and practitioners. It is intended that publication of the first sections of the Guide will take place in 2006.

We have supported the production of a feasibility study for the processing and marketing of wild venison in Lincolnshire.

Improving communications

Our aim remains to improve communications on all

matters relating to wild deer for the Partnership, landowners, land managers and the public. We are now in the process of developing a Partnership Communication Strategy which will build on the relationships established in the bilateral agreements to ensure a coordinated approach to communications both within the Partnership and with other stakeholders.

The website www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk continues to attract more visitors and the link from the Defra website has provided a significant number of referrals. Our key asset is the availability of a regional and local focus for deer and DI Ltd now has Deer Liaison Officers (DLOs) in the Central, Eastern, South West and South East regions of England and a Deer Officer in Wales. We continue to pursue opportunities to generate enough support for a DLO in the Northern Region. A national conference is planned for 23/24 March 2007 to discuss 'Deer, habitats and impacts'.

Disease Surveillance

This year DI Ltd took on the additional task of assisting Defra in the coordination of national disease surveillance in wild deer. The SW DLO was



appointed in April to develop a role as a focal point for information on disease in wild deer, particularly Bovine tuberculosis (Btb). In addition to the national communication role DI Ltd has assisted Defra and the State Veterinary Service in establishing local sampling in Btb hotspots and training stalkers to ensure that the sampling is rigorous. We started this work in 2005/6 in the SW of England with support from Forest Enterprise and the National Trust. We anticipate this local sampling expanding in the next 2 years both in England and Wales. We are already in negotiation with Partner organisations to ensure that we have the best possible chance of providing a rigorous sampling regime. Our role on behalf of Defra and Welsh Assembly Government is likely to expand both in terms of communication with landowners and stalkers and in facilitating the necessary training for practitioners.

Regional Officers

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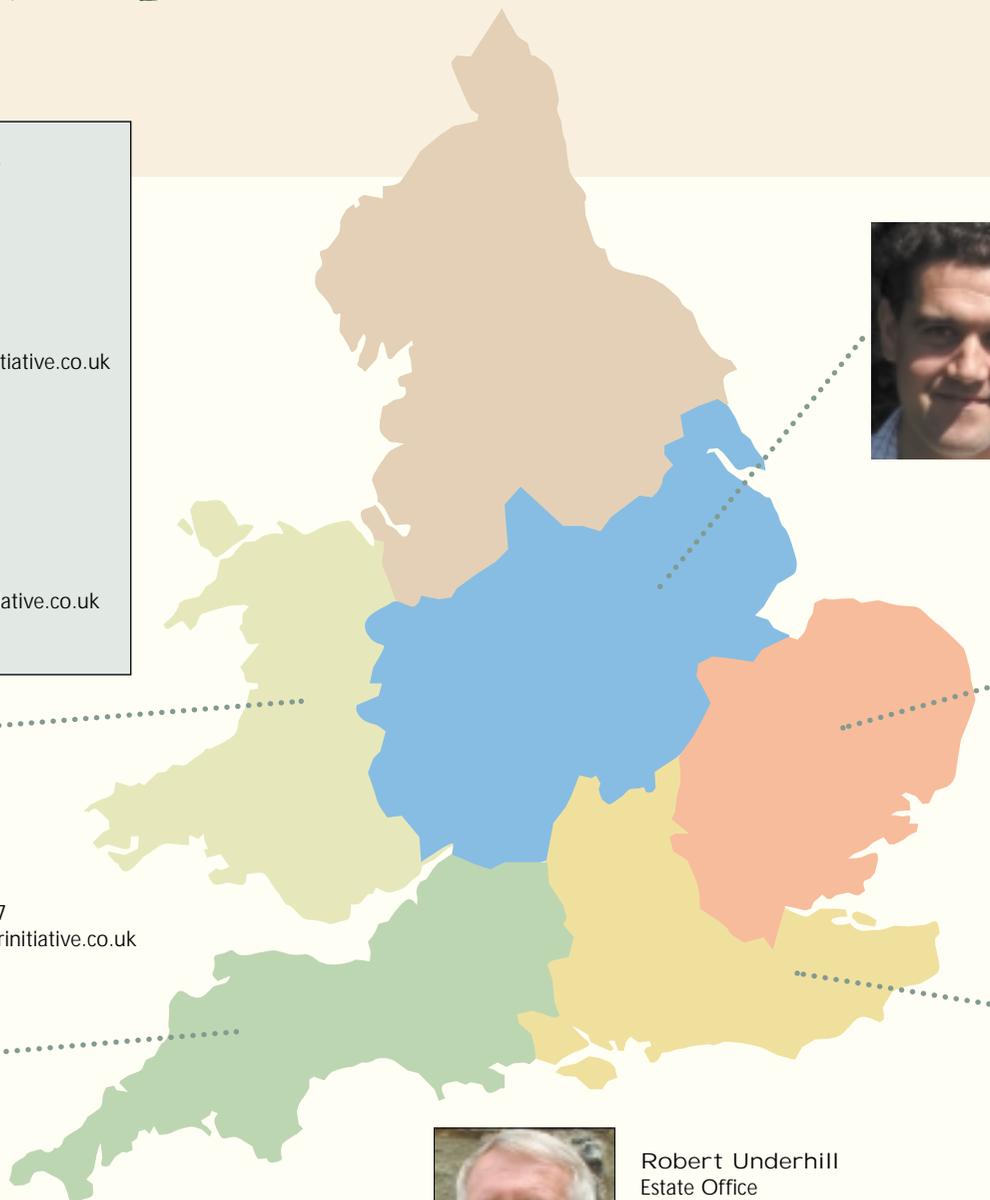
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Promoting public safety on the roads in relation to wild deer

We continued to monitor deer vehicle collisions (DVCs) on behalf of the Highways Agency in England and the Scottish Executive in Scotland during 2005. This work has confirmed the level of DVCs and the final reports on both projects will be published in the summer of 2006. During the present study we have accrued information on over 32,000 DVCs occurring in Britain during the five years from 2001 to the end of 2005. Data gathered during the present study provides far larger samples of DVCs than have been available to any previous studies of the deer collisions issue in Britain. It is clear, however, that even the large annual samples of incidents reported here represent merely a small proportion of all deer road kills or related incidents. We calculate that across the whole of Great Britain the total number of deer related road accidents is likely to lie in the region of 46,000. (+/- 9000).

Our research suggests that the estimated average number of deer-related Personal Injury Accidents (PIAs) in Britain 554; which



Surveillance camera footage

are likely to include around 12 fatal, 86 serious and 456 slight injury accidents. The economic 'value of prevention' of that level of human injury accidents may exceed £40M per annum for Great Britain. In addition, based

on extensive claims data provided by one major insurance company for 1999-2004 we estimate that around 11,000 private vehicles suffer significant damage (i.e. exceeding the commonly quoted insurance claim excess threshold of £250) as a result of DVCs in Britain each year. The cost of this damage is at least £13.9M.



While these estimates consider merely the actual cost of claims and damage to vehicles, they are likely to be substantial underestimates of the total costs arising from damage-only DVCs. A number of incidents involve levels of damage which are below the policy excess or which drivers voluntarily absorb themselves (rather than lose No Claims bonuses). In addition there are often hidden costs such as hire of replacement vehicles, loss of time, and in extreme cases, loss of work opportunities.

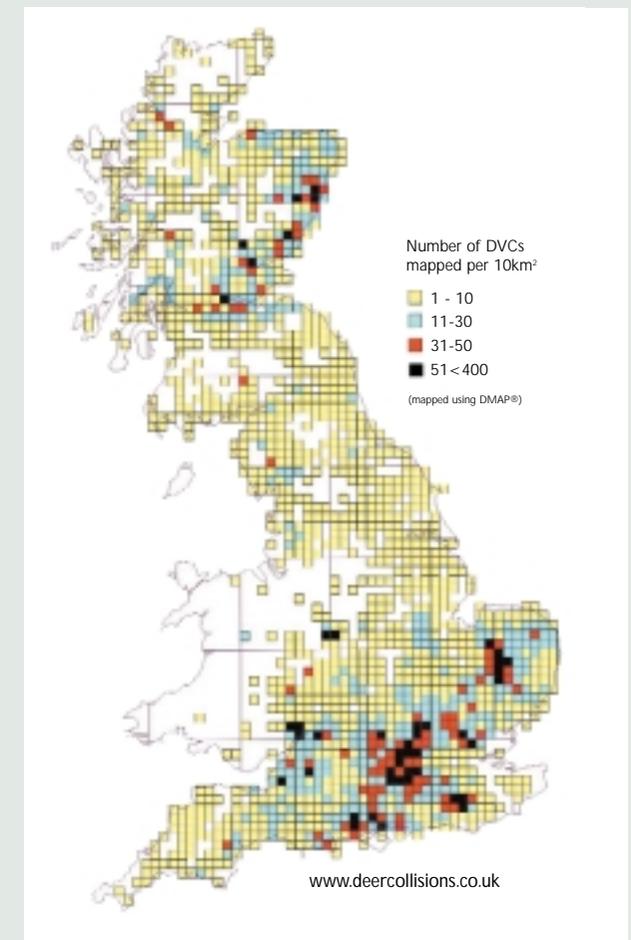
We are convinced that areas of high frequency of DVCs are not simply related in any direct way to deer density. Higher than average levels of DVCs at

the landscape scale are determined not by large deer populations alone, but by the co-location of high deer numbers, high density of roads and high traffic volume. The greatest frequencies of DVCs reported to date are mostly located within those regions of the country where traffic flows are largest.

We have secured funding from HA for this work to extend through to 2008. Although we will continue to collect and analyse data on DVCs, our focus is now shifting towards mitigation measures. A number of new types of mitigation have recently been developed including new types of acoustic reflectors, rumble strips, and novel types of animal or speed activated signage. This year we began a number of practical trials in England to evaluate some of these newer forms of deterrent, including:

- rumble strips
- WEGU-acoustic wildlife warning reflectors
- EUROCONTOR Ecopillars
- Animal and Speed activated digital warning
- usage of new accommodation structures (road and footbridges, and underpasses)

Overview to show relative distribution of Deer-Vehicle Collisions in Britain reported to the project between January 2003 and December 2005 (based on sample of 16,519 reports collated to date with adequate location



The Deer Initiative in Wales

We now have a commitment from both FC(W) and CCW to extend funding through to 2011 and this should allow us the stability to take forward a comprehensive deer management programme in Wales.

Despite a short term reduction in funding for the Deer Initiative in Wales we have continued to devote significant resources to ensure that wild deer in Wales remain a valuable asset.

Advice

We continue to give advice on wild deer issues to both to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and other organisations and we maintain two offices in Wales which are able to respond to enquiries. We also maintain a Welsh language section of our web-site to facilitate access to Welsh speakers.

Research

Deer Impacts

In 2005/6 we completed specific agreed deer impact research in Wales to monitor changes in impacts and populations to inform future policies. The final report on impact research in Wales on private forestry, agriculture and woodland biodiversity is now in preparation and is due to be published in summer 2006. A seminar will then be held in autumn 2006 to review future deer management policy in Wales.

Lower Wye Valley

In 2005/6 DI Ltd was awarded a contract by CCW to produce baseline data on deer population and distribution in the Wye Valley. The information established in this research will enable the production and implementation of a 5 Year Deer Management Strategy across the Wye Valley. This is expected to lead to co-ordinated management of wild deer across the whole of the Lower Wye Valley area. The initial project will be completed by September 2006.

Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW)

BWW is Forestry Commission Wales' (FCW) new management planning and grant-aid scheme. The new scheme will support sustainable woodland management by basing grant-aid upon sound woodland management plans. We are pleased to have been involved in the development of BWW and look forward to continued involvement, and we are particularly pleased that the new scheme is taking account of deer management issues through a process of deer management plans.

Within the BWW scheme the Deer Initiative will continue to provide professional advice and support to woodland owners in areas where deer are an issue. This advice will be free to the owner and will



result in a plan that they can use to manage deer on their land.

This approach will be important for helping to ensure proper management of deer in Welsh woodlands in future and to support this in 2005/6 we carried out four deer awareness and management planning seminars for agent planners involved in BWW.

Powis Castle

The first outcome of this collaboration is that, at the request of FC(W) and local landowners, we have started drawing up a collaborative Deer Management Plan for the fallow herd in the area of Powis Castle. The work involves monitoring both deer populations and impacts and recommending future cull levels. The initial project will be completed by the end of June 2006.

Funding for the Deer Initiative

Funding summary

Income	2005/06	2006/7	2007/8
Defra Family	232,000	182,000	130,000
Wales (FCW/CCW/BBNP)	34,617	30,350	35,000
DVC Project	63,700	37,000	20,000
SSSI Project Fund	–	110,000	106,000
Central Region Project Funding	30,000	32,000	5,000
Eastern Region Project Funding	34,000	14,400	–
Total other funding	34,700	13,000	13,000
Total Income	429,017	418,750	309,000

Expenditure	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8
Staff Costs	108,015	139,757	146,316
RTA Consultancy	45,248	28,800	18,000
Other Consultancy	20,504	8,504	8,004
Office and Admin Costs	29,973	40,784	46,193
Regional Costs	17,000	20,000	2,000
Hotels and Subsistence	6,600	8,400	10,800
Vehicle and Travel Costs	45,240	52,990	55,380
Central Region Project Costs	14,100	8,300	–
Eastern Region Project Costs	14,500	–	–
Wales Region Project Costs	–	6,000	–
FC SSSI Project Costs	–	99,000	95,400
Other Costs	7,200	7,200	7,200
Total Expenditure	308,380	419,735	389,293

The Partnership recognises that the key to future long term funding is to ensure that DI Ltd adds value to the Partnership, that it delivers projects in an efficient and cost effective manner, and that it can demonstrate success in each of the projects that is currently underway. The current programme has received core funding from the Defra family until March 2008. Work continued throughout 2005 at all levels to ensure that key stakeholders and funding bodies recognise the role that DI Ltd is playing in delivering the aim.

We have already had significant success in Wales with a commitment from both FC(W) and CCW to extend funding through to 2011.

A budget summary for our current 3 year period is shown opposite. We have now managed to secure significant funding for individual projects to coordinate the improvement of woodland SSSIs' condition within the Priority Areas. These funds will allow the DI to deploy further resources to support partners, Deer Management Groups and individual landowners to better manage the deer in these areas.

As new projects are identified, we anticipate that additional funding will be included in the budget.

The Deer Initiative Limited

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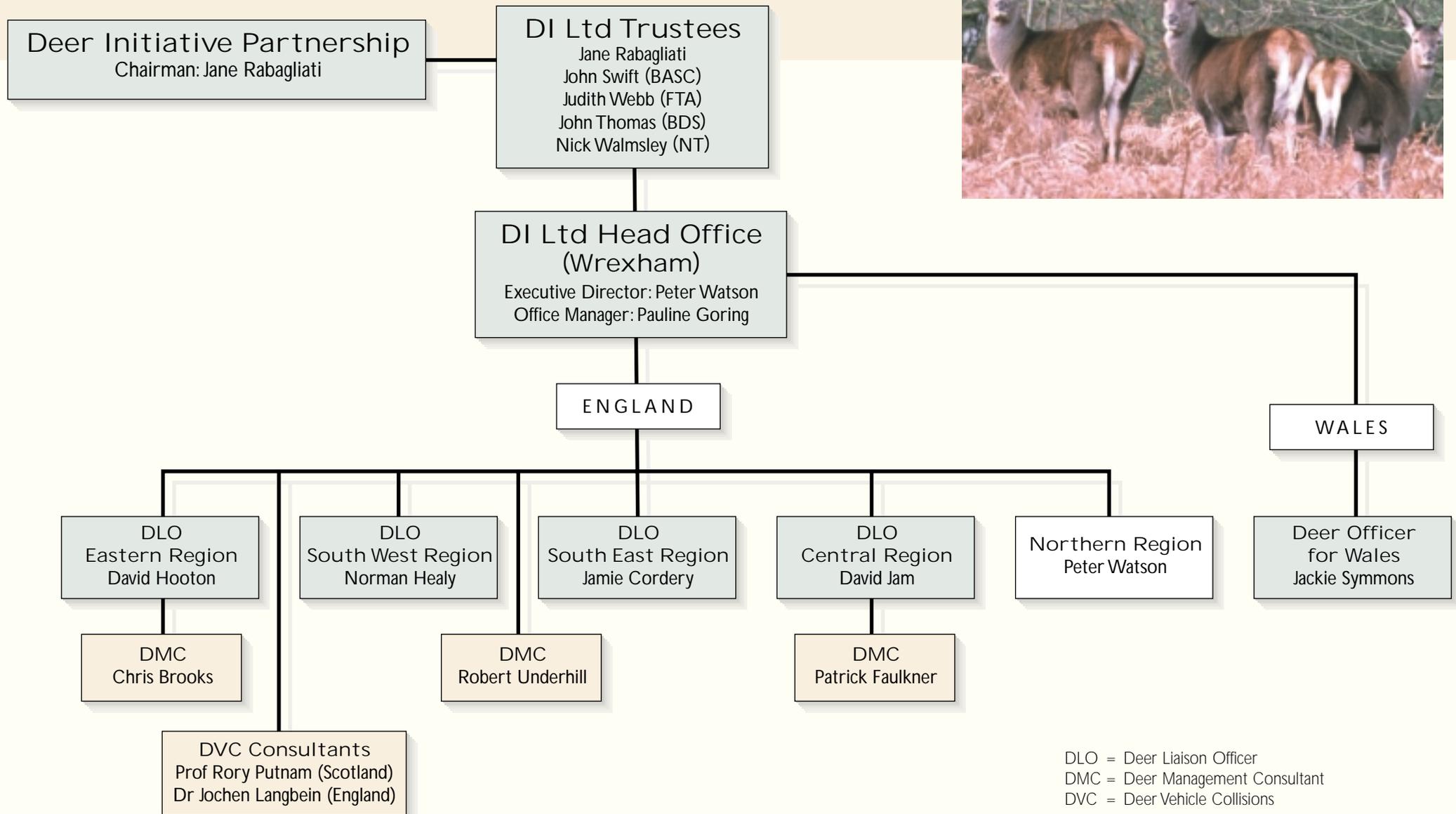
VAT Reg. No: 753 5744 12

Registered Charity No: 1082289

Company Registered in England and Wales

Company Registration No: 3982245

Current organisation



T H E D E E R A C C O R D

Signatories to the Accord have agreed to the fundamental principles stated below and to encourage others likewise to make such a commitment as an integral part of their deer management approach and priorities.

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- **A sustainable and balanced population of wild deer in England.** We will work to ensure that populations of wild deer are in sustainable balance with the natural resources available to feed and shelter them throughout the year.
 - **A humane, responsible and sensitive approach to the management of wild deer.** We will work to prevent deer populations growing to exceed a sustainable balance with the environment and natural resources by planning the delivery of active deer management programmes, which will often include culling. Such management should always be undertaken legally and in a humane, responsible and sensitive manner.
 - **An experienced and knowledgeable capability in deer management.** Achievement of best-practice knowledge and skills is a pre-requisite of deer management. We will encourage and promote the development and delivery of accredited training for all those with deer management remits and interests.
 - **An informed public understanding of wild deer management.** The presence of deer in an area can add greatly to people's enjoyment but deer can also cause various problems. Their management may therefore pose a dilemma. Information needs to be provided to extend the understanding of the general public of the nature, role, contributions and impact of wild deer populations throughout England. In educating the public about wild deer management, the benefits of planned and humanely carried out deer management may be explained. We will work to improve knowledge, and encourage and promote better public understanding as an integral and essential component of deer management.
 - **A partnership approach to reducing the adverse environmental and economic impacts of deer.** The full benefits and objectives of the management of wild deer in England will require the active contribution to a nation-wide deer management programme by all public, private and voluntary organisations associated with wild deer populations. We will achieve this through the provision of financial, in-kind and operational support to The Deer Initiative Partnership and The Deer Initiative Limited (DI Ltd), and a commitment to the Accord objectives and principles.

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PHOTOGRAPHS: B HOLT · J DE BOUNEVIALLE · J LANGBEIN · A COOKE · C SHEDDEN · T BANHAM