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The Welsh Government's  
Action Plan for wild deer  
management in Wales  
2011 - 2016

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## Wild deer management in Wales action plan 2011 – 2016

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## Minister's Foreword

In February 2011 we launched Wild Deer Management in Wales which set out our aims for the management of wild deer in the Welsh countryside. I am now pleased to present the first 5-year action plan for delivering the objectives of this strategy.

Deer are a valued element of the biodiversity of Wales and we want this to continue. However, as changes in land management practices have encouraged deer populations to spread and increase, in some parts of Wales this has resulted in deer having negative impacts on some of our agricultural crops, woodlands and other habitats.

As we want the management of land in Wales to be undertaken in a more integrated way, the sustainable management of deer is a factor that needs to be part of this approach. Where the active management of wild deer is required we aim to ensure that it is safe, humane and effective.

The strategy stresses the importance of a co-ordinated approach to management at a landscape scale involving private landowners, public bodies and non-governmental organisations. Only by working in partnership can many of the actions be delivered and I am pleased to see this reflected in the involvement (through the Deer Initiative Partnership in Wales) of a wide range of groups and organisations who have worked together to produce this plan. The continued buy-in and action from interested parties will be essential to take this plan forward.

The challenge now, through the actions in this plan, is to deliver the aims of Wild Deer Management in Wales so we can achieve our vision that 'Wales benefits from its wild deer population in balance with the natural, social and economic environment'.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Griffiths".

**John Griffiths AM,  
Welsh Government, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development**

# 1. Introduction

This action plan sets out the activities to be undertaken over the next 5 years to deliver the aims and objectives of the Welsh Government's Wild deer management in Wales strategy. The strategy, which was published in February 2011, takes a long-term view of the management of wild deer and this action plan identifies what needs to happen in the short term or to begin happening and continue over a longer period. The plan identifies who is responsible for taking the lead for each action to help deliver the long term outcomes, but recognises that it will require co-ordinated action by a number of organisations if we are to achieve our vision that 'Wales benefits from its wild deer population in balance with the natural, social and economic environment.'

The actions in the plan are framed around the outcomes identified in the strategy and uses its 'Agenda for Action' as a basis to build on the deer management activities and partnerships that already exist in Wales.

The outcomes identified in the strategy are:

- Raise awareness of deer and their impacts, both positive and negative
- Manage the impacts of deer
- Where possible reduce the impacts of non-native deer species
- Ensure that deer management is delivered in a responsible, competent and ethical manner
- Make venison from wild deer management more widely available to local markets
- Minimise the number and severity of deer-vehicle collisions
- Monitor animal health and disease issues in wild deer and address where appropriate
- Minimise illegal activities related to wild deer in Wales

The delivery of the actions will require a collaborative approach as none of them can be achieved through the efforts of a single individual, group or organisation. We will actively promote and facilitate opportunities for this to happen and for stakeholders to become involved in the implementation of this plan.

## 2. Delivering the actions

The Deer Initiative Partnership in Wales (**Appendix 1**) will be key to facilitating the collaboration required to deliver the actions.

The management of deer by landowners, public bodies and non-governmental organisations will be achieved through working together at a landscape scale. Through this approach we aim to uphold the value of wild deer as part of our natural heritage, and ensure that where their active management is required, it is sustainable as well as safe, humane and effective.

Awareness-raising is seen as a key aim of this action plan. This can be achieved in a number of ways to a variety of audiences using a range of methods and communicators. Again this will require collaboration to enable that the messages to be delivered are delivered appropriately to the different audiences. What is important is that the same information is communicated in the relevant format for our many different stakeholders.

## 3. Guiding principles - our approach to wild deer management

The delivery of the actions is underpinned by the following guiding principles:

**Valuing wild deer** – Management of wild deer should reflect the values we place on them. They are valued by many people as part of our natural heritage, by others for recreational stalking and venison. Native species in particular can fulfil important ecological roles and make positive contributions to biodiversity. At the same time these positive values need to be balanced against the considerable negative impacts deer can have on agriculture, forestry and the wider environment.

**Partnership** - The lead responsibility for deer management lies with landowners and land managers, whether owners or tenants. As wild deer regularly cross man-made boundaries co-operation at a landscape scale is crucial.

We (and our agencies) help to support landowners, land managers and others through an agreed framework for sustainable wild deer management which is set out in the strategy.

We remain committed to a partnership approach for the co-ordination, delivery and review of this framework for wild deer management. We believe this is best achieved through a broad range of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders working together.

**Sustainable management** - We are committed to the sustainable management of all wildlife and natural resources, including wild deer, managing them in balance with their environmental, economic and social impacts.

**Protecting deer welfare** – We endorse the need to ensure high standards of welfare for wild deer, in particular through the use of trained and competent people in deer management and the application of best practice. Deer welfare is threatened by deer-vehicle collisions which can create a public safety hazard. It is also threatened by illegal activities such as poaching, and where deer populations reach higher densities there is an increased risk of adverse impacts on deer health.

**Evidence-based policy** - Sustainable deer management relies on sound scientific evidence, and it is important to continue to develop and challenge the evidence base so that deer management can improve and achieve its objectives.

**Building on existing mechanisms** – We do not intend to 'reinvent the wheel' as much work has already been done by individuals and organisations. Partnerships currently exist that can be built on and strengthened. We will continue this approach making best use of available resources.

## 4. Other Welsh Government strategies and policies which the *Wild deer management in Wales* action plan will help deliver.

### **Woodlands for Wales (2009)**

Woodlands for Wales sets out the 50 year plan for woodlands and trees. Many of the objectives of this strategy will be more difficult to deliver unless the negative impacts of deer are properly addressed.

The creation of new woodland is a key objective and this will be compromised if the potential negative impacts of wild deer are not controlled. We also want our woodlands to be more structurally and species diverse and it is recognised that an increasing deer population will need to be addressed if this is to be achieved.

Native wild deer are a part of our rich biodiversity and where managed sustainably can add value to existing woodlands, including ancient woodlands. However the biodiversity of woodlands may be threatened if deer densities become too high. They can bring about vegetation changes which can also be detrimental not only to trees and woodland flora but also to associated vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. Without appropriate management, deer populations will cause long-term changes on the composition and habitat value of our woodlands.

Woodland products contribute to the Welsh economy and the impacts of deer can have financial implications such as the additional costs of tree protection, putting right damage caused to young trees and also the loss of future timber revenue.

This Action plan will deliver directly towards the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1 More woodlands and trees are managed sustainably
- Outcome 2 Woodland ecosystems are healthy and resilient
- Outcome 4 Woodland cover in Wales increases
- Outcome 16 Woodland management achieves high standards of environmental stewardship
- Outcome 17 Woodlands and trees of special conservation value are in favourable management
- Outcome 18 Woodland biodiversity is supported and native woodland is in favourable management

### **Environment Strategy for Wales (2006)**

The Environment Strategy for Wales recognises the importance of our environment and sets out how we will tackle the challenges facing it over the next 20 years. It provides the framework within which to achieve an environment which is clean, healthy, biologically diverse and valued by the people of Wales.

The distinctive Welsh environment is one of our most valuable assets. It is important in its own right and for the range of vital services it provides for us. To build a sustainable future for Wales we need to manage the pressures we place on our environment more effectively and to address new challenges like climate change.

Wild deer have an impact on the environment in a number of ways some of which can affect on the aims of the Environment Strategy – particularly those relating to the strategic theme:

**Distinctive biodiversity, landscapes and seascapes** – this covers biodiversity, the marine environment, landscapes and seascapes and their historic component

The sustainable management of wild deer in Wales will contribute directly towards delivering 3 of the 39 outcomes of the Environment Strategy which are:

- Outcome 19 The loss of biodiversity has been halted and we can see a definite recovery in the number, range and genetic diversity of wildlife, including those species that need very specific conditions to survive.

Outcome 20 The wider environment is more favourable to biodiversity through appropriate management, reduced habitat fragmentation and increased extent and interconnectivity of habitats.

Outcome 21 Sites of international, Welsh and local importance are in favourable condition to support the species and habitats for which they have been identified.

### **Food for Wales, Food from Wales 2010:2020 - A Food Strategy for Wales**

Food for Wales Food from Wales is founded on principles of sustainable development, which include economic, social and environmental aspects of the production and consumption of food. It accepts that Government cannot deliver this alone, and that industry and other stakeholders have a key role in its delivery.

The Strategy takes into consideration cross-cutting issues such as health, food culture and education, food security, environmental sustainability, and community development to provide the basis for an integrated approach to food policy in Wales.

Such an integrated approach is also intended:

- To build resilience in the food system
- To encourage a stronger food economy in Wales
- To enhance the capabilities and capacities of food businesses to compete effectively both at home and abroad.

Actions in this plan will support and encourage ways to add value to wild venison following Best Practice and adherence to Hygiene Regulations

### **In delivering the actions in this plan other WG policies and strategies are relevant and include:**

Farming, Food & Countryside – Building a Secure Future’ (2009) outlines the Welsh Government’s Rural Affairs policy direction through to 2020.

Local Sourcing Action Plan - ‘Food and Drink for Wales’ (2009)

The Strategic Action Plan for the Welsh Red Meat Industry (2009)

## 5. Monitoring

The actions will be monitored annually and a progress report published. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated after 5 years in 2016

## 6. How the Action Plan is set out

The Action Plan is in the form of a table which shows:

**Outcomes** we want to achieve which are set-out in the *Wild deer management in Wales* strategy

**Actions** that will contribute towards delivering the outcomes

**Lead organisations** involved in delivering the action who have a co-ordinating role. They will also have an active role in driving forward the actions which will involve other groups and organisations working in partnership to deliver them.

**Progress at December 2011** summarises the progress made, if any, for each action. This will be updated annually.



## 7. Action plan - table of actions and lead organisations

The proposed lead organisations identified for each action will be supported by many other organisations who will work in partnership. The Deer Initiative Partnership organisations are key to delivering a number of the actions in this plan. They will play a major role in supporting the lead organisations.

### **Outcome 1 Raise awareness of deer and their impacts, both positive and negative.**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
<p>1.1 Develop a communications plan with input from all relevant stakeholders. To promote key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are the deer? – which species are found in Wales where they are and what do they contribute to the environment.</li> <li>• Why manage deer? – the benefits of sustainable management of deer in Wales</li> <li>• How to manage deer – the promotion of Best Practice and endorsement of standards and ethical management</li> <li>• The importance of monitoring the presence and impacts of deer and how to contribute to this</li> <li>• The importance of minimising illegal activities related to wild deer – to encourage reporting and more informed policing</li> </ul>	FCW	To be published by 30 June 2012. It will be reviewed periodically and updated annually	Initial development was undertaken at the stakeholder meeting 3 Oct 2011
1.2 Implement the communications plan	DIP Wales organisations, supported by DI Ltd.	Ongoing	

## Outcome 2 Manage the impact of deer

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
2.1 Develop a protocol for collating data from the most cost effective sources to monitor deer presence in Wales	CCW	To be completed by Dec 2011	This currently being developed by DI Ltd as part of their grant from CCW
2.2 Implement the protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection of data</li> <li>• Collation and interpretation of data</li> </ul>	DIP Wales organisations CCW	Ongoing from 2012	
2.3 Identify priority geographical areas where impacts are of particular concern and collaborative management needs to be supported	CCW	Priority areas to be identified by March 2012 and management ongoing	Currently being developed by DI Ltd as part of their grant from CCW
2.4 Further develop a more collaborative approach to the management of deer in Wales at a local and landscape scale to reduce the negative impacts – especially in those priority areas identified in 2.3.	WG via FCW	Ongoing	Rate of progress will be dependent on resources available. Currently delivered by DI Ltd – funded by FCW
2.5 Monitor developments in alternative control methods and consider their application in Wales.	WG (SF-SEED)	Ongoing	
2.6 Subject to EC approval provide grants to land owners / managers through Glastir to support the management of deer in Wales.	WG (BETS-FDD)	From 2013	

**Outcome 3 Where possible reduce the impacts of non-native deer species**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
3.1 Develop species specific action plans for sika and muntjac deer in Wales.	WBP-INNS group	Sika plan to be completed by March 2012. Muntjac plan to be completed by end of 2012	Currently being developed.
3.2 Implement the species specific action plans	WG (SF-NAMU)	Ongoing from the completion of the plans	
3.3 Produce a report on the risks of new populations of non-native deer species in Wales, with recommendations on addressing identified risks.	WBP-INNS	By Dec 2012	



**Outcome 4 Ensure that deer management is delivered in a responsible, competent and ethical manner.**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
4.1 Deer management on WG Woodland Estate, MoD Estate and National Nature Reserves is undertaken in a responsible, competent and ethical manner in line with Best Practice Guidance and to the DSC standard.	FCW, MoD, CCW	Ongoing	
4.2 Encourage the private sector, voluntary bodies and other public body land owners / managers to manage wild deer in line with Best Practice Guidance and to the DSC standard.	WG (SF-SEED) and DI Ltd	Ongoing	
4.3 Endorse the National Occupational Standards and the Deer Stalking Certificate (DSC) as the benchmark for stalker training.	WG	Completed	Endorsed in section 2.4.1 of the Wild deer management in Wales strategy (2011)
4.4 Continue to review and develop Best Practice in consultation with the industry	DI Best Practice working group	Ongoing	



**Outcome 5 Venison from wild deer management is made more widely available to local markets.**

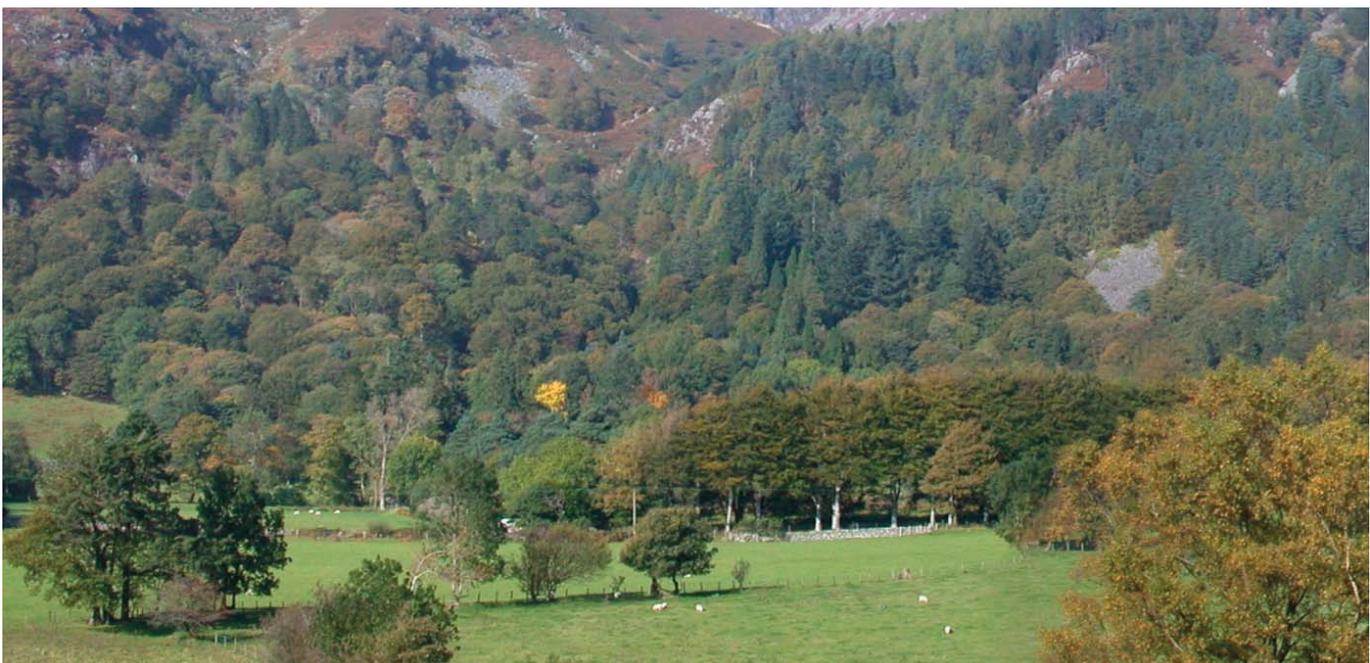
Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
5.1 Improve retailer and public awareness of Welsh wild venison	DI Ltd	Ongoing	
5.2 Encourage the use of Best Practice Guidance and adherence to the Hygiene Regulations relating to the supply of wild game	FSA, DI Ltd	Ongoing	
5.3 Continue to support and encourage ways to add value to Welsh wild venison.	WG ( BETS-FFMD)	Ongoing	

**Outcome 6 Minimise the number and severity of deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs) in Wales.**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
6.1 Encourage the use of the Deer Aware website for reporting incidents.	DI Ltd	Ongoing	
6.2 Evaluate the number of DVCs in Wales.	WG (LGC)	March 2012	
6.3 Implement a targeted approach to deal with any problems identified in 6.2.	WG (LGC)	From June 2012	
6.4 Develop a consistent approach to responding to DVCs in Wales	WG (LGC)	Sept 2012	

**Outcome 7 Monitor animal health and disease issues in wild deer and address where appropriate**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
7.1 Where appropriate support monitoring and research into bovine TB in wild deer.	WG (SF-OCVO)	Ongoing	
7.2 In line with the Hygiene Regulations relating to the supply of wild game ensure suspected cases of notifiable diseases are reported which involve deer from the Welsh Government Woodland Estate, MoD Estate and National Nature Reserves	FCW, MoD, CCW	Ongoing	
7.3 In line with Hygiene Regulations relating to the supply of wild game, encourage the reporting of suspected cases of notifiable diseases which involve deer from other land not included in 7.2	DI Ltd	Ongoing	



**Outcome 8 Minimise illegal activities related to wild deer in Wales.**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
8.1 Encourage reporting of incidents of deer related crime, with particular emphasis on reporting the illegal and unlawful use of firearms	WBP Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group	Ongoing	
8.2 Produce an annual report identifying wildlife crime related to deer in Wales.	WBP Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group	Annual	This will be a section in the annual report the WCEG produces
8.3 Identify deer poaching as a wildlife crime priority in Wales.	WBP Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group	Ongoing	Poaching of deer (and also hare and fish) has been identified as one of the UK wildlife crime priorities.
8.4 Encourage reporting of the illegal taking, transport and release of wild deer in Wales	WBP Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group	Ongoing	
8.5 Respond to the evidence of deer related crime in Wales in an appropriate manner	WBP Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group	Ongoing	

**Outcome 9 Monitoring and review**

Action	Lead Organisation	Timing	Progress at December 2011
9.1 Monitor, review and report on progress against the action plan.	FCW	Dec 2012	
9.2 Undertake a comprehensive review of the strategy and action plan every 5 years	FCW	By Feb 2016	

# Appendix 1

## Deer Initiative Partnership in Wales

The Deer Initiative is a broad partnership of public, private and voluntary sector organisations dedicated to ensuring the achievement and maintenance of a sustainable and healthy population of wild deer in England and Wales. The Deer Initiative Partnership in Wales is supported by its executive arm, Deer Initiative Ltd.

Deer Initiative partners in Wales are:

**Association of Chief Police Officers**  
**British Association for Shooting and Conservation**  
**British Deer Society**  
**ConFor**  
**Country Land and Business Association**  
**Countryside Alliance**  
**Countryside Council for Wales**  
**Forestry Commission Wales**  
**Forest Research**  
**Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust**  
**Ministry of Defence**  
**National Farmers' Union Wales**  
**National Gamekeepers' Organisation**  
**National Trust**  
**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**  
**Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts**  
**St Hubert Club of Great Britain**  
**Union of Countryside Workers.**  
**Veterinary Deer Society**  
**Woodland Trust**

## Appendix 2 - Glossary and abbreviations

<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variety of ecosystems and living organisms (species), including genetic variations between species.
<b>Best Practice</b>	Recognised standards for deer management in Wales as defined in the published Best Practice Guides (BPG) which can be downloaded free of charge from: <a href="http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk/best_practice/">http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk/best_practice/</a>
<b>Deer Stalking Certificate DSC</b>	An industry standard for the training and competence assessment of deer stalkers. DSC 1 includes identification, a written examination and shooting test; DSC 2 includes shooting three deer and preparing them for the food chain in the presence of an assessor.  More information available at: <a href="http://www.dmq.org.uk">http://www.dmq.org.uk</a>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	In relation to deer, persons or organisations with an interest in deer and deer management or land where deer are present
<b>Stalking</b>	The process of selecting and culling wild deer
<b>Sustainable Management of Deer</b>	The management of wild deer now and in the future that is in balance with social, economic and ecological functions of the Welsh countryside. Management should be undertaken in a collaborative way following best practice.
<b>Venison</b>	Meat prepared from the carcass of a deer.
<b>Woodlands for Wales</b>	The Welsh Government's strategy for woodlands and trees available free of charge from:  <a href="http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/EnglishWfWstrategy.pdf/\$FILE/EnglishWfWstrategy.pdf">http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/EnglishWfWstrategy.pdf/\$FILE/EnglishWfWstrategy.pdf</a>

## Appendix 2 - Glossary and abbreviations continued

<b>CCW</b>	Countryside Council for Wales
<b>DIP</b>	Deer Initiative Partnership - a broad partnership of public, private and voluntary sector organisations dedicated to the achievement and maintenance of a sustainable and healthy population of wild deer in England and Wales.
<b>DI Ltd</b>	Deer Initiative Ltd - a charitable company limited by guarantee, supporting the DIP and providing a co-ordination point for communication and advice on deer to Government and other partners.
<b>FCW</b>	Forestry Commission Wales
<b>FSA</b>	Food Standards Agency
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>WBP-INNS</b>	Wales Biodiversity Partnership – Invasive Non-Native Species Group
<b>WG</b>	<b>Welsh Government</b>
<b>BETS</b>	Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science
<b>FDD</b>	Farm Development Division
<b>FFMDD</b>	Food, Fish and Market Development Division
<b>LGC</b>	Local Government and Communities
<b>NAMU</b>	Sustainable Futures - Nature, Access and Marine Unit
<b>NEAT</b>	Natural Environment and Agriculture Team
<b>OCVO</b>	Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer
<b>SEED</b>	Sustainability & Environmental Evidence Division
<b>SF</b>	Sustainable Futures

## Further information

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