

DEER IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES(2)



Aim

To provide information on the process of how government agencies are working together to secure effective management of grazing on designated sites.

Introduction

Individually the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and the Scottish Government Rural Payment and Inspections Directorate (SGRPID) have different grant giving and regulatory powers which they use to promote and ensure sustainable management of grazing animals. Recognising that there are many circumstances where, used together, these powers can deliver more effective solutions on designated sites, the agencies have developed principles for the effective use of incentives and regulation in dealing with adverse impacts to the natural heritage (www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/931/0021957.pdf).

Identifying sites for action

Sites recommended for action are identified through either an SNH-led audit on the state of designated sites (Site Condition Monitoring) or via expression of concern from third parties.

In summary there is a 3 stage process of:

I. Natural heritage site audit

The condition of designated sites is monitored on a 6 year cycle to provide an overview of all sites affected by deer and livestock. Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) results are compiled in to an audit list which records the following:

- ◆ Whether features are in unfavourable condition because of grazing and types of grazers present;
- ◆ Whether deer are a potential contributor to unfavourable condition.

II. Assessing priority

Sets out criteria for prioritisation and includes weightings for:

- ◆ Importance in terms of international obligations;
- ◆ Significance of impacts (in terms of extent or degree);
- ◆ Sites with impacts regarded as critical in terms of timescale requirements.

And when taking action:

- ◆ Cost effectiveness of early action;
- ◆ Positive opportunity.

The main aims of this stage are to:

- ◆ Bring forward those sites in most need of attention;
- ◆ Make the best use of tax payers' monies.

III. Work programming

The work programme details sites where agencies are working jointly to address grazing and trampling impacts. This includes sites where:

- ◆ Action is underway on sites agreed as the highest priority;
- ◆ There is additional monitoring (to provide more information on the nature and scale of impacts);
- ◆ There are positive opportunities for enhancement through voluntary approaches and incentive schemes.

Managing deer on designated sites

The assessment of current impacts provides an early indication that positive or negative changes in habitat condition are likely to occur (see BP Habitat Impact Assessment guides).

If current herbivore impacts are considered to be negative, when assessed against the conservation objectives for the site, then agencies will work with owners/occupiers and look to what mix of incentives or regulation may be appropriate to secure more effective management of grazing.

The process highlighting the incentive and regulatory options open to agencies and land managers is summarised below:

