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Dear Rhona,

Deer Management

I am writing to you on behalf of the LINK Deer Task Force and those organisations that have endorsed this letter below. We thought that it would be helpful to set out our thoughts on a couple of recent issues relating to deer management.

We would like to indicate our strong support for the proposed Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS)/Scottish Natural Heritage action to assist land managers to significantly reduce deer numbers at Caenlochan in the Cairngorms to an agreed density that is consistent with the maintenance and enhancement of the area's natural heritage interest. This area is of international importance for biodiversity and there is strong evidence to indicate damage to the site by high deer numbers. We consider that in this case DCS is taking a responsible and measured approach, working with partners, to fulfill statutory obligations. We believe that DCS should be supported if further external intervention to reduce deer numbers is required

The Caenlochan case highlights to us a wider problem. SNH are working towards ensuring that 80% of special features on our nationally important sites reach favourable condition by 2008 as part of the Scottish Executive's 2005-8 spending review process. We understand that it is very unlikely that this target will be met without a significant increase in financial and human resources devoted to deer control measures at

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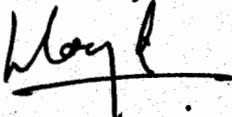


“priority sites”. We are also mindful of the time that is currently required to gather evidence of deer damage and to persuade landowners of the need to take action on deer management. We would welcome the Scottish Executive’s thoughts on how the process of taking action to reduce numbers of deer on the ground in instances of such clearly defined public interest could be streamlined?

Finally, we would like to agree with the DCS’s recommendations to you, following the recent consultation on deer close seasons. We believe that the DCS have undertaken a very thorough review as part of this consultation exercise. In our view, the analysis carried out by DCS in reaching their decision shows that deer close seasons are not now equipped to deliver their original purpose, and that these days a more modern system is required with sufficient flexibility to deliver local cooperation on deer management and improved standards to safeguard deer welfare. These measures will make close seasons un-necessary in the future.

We hope that these comments are helpful and look forward to your thoughts in response to our question about streamlining the “priority sites” process.

Yours sincerely



Lloyd Austin
Chair

Supporting organizations;

RSPB Scotland
Reforestation Scotland
Ramblers Scotland
Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
The John Muir Trust
Scottish Wildlife Trust
National Trust for Scotland
Woodland Trust Scotland
The Cairngorm Trust