

**Defra – Deer Management Strategy Consultation.**

**Submitted. 30/08/2022.**

**Consultation questions**

Introductory questions

- 1) What is your correspondence address? Please provide an email address or telephone number unless unable to. If you enter your email address, then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your response.

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- 2) Would you like your response to be confidential?

NO

- 3) What capacity are you responding to the consultation in?

Individual  
Research organisation  
Sector trade body or membership organisation  
Ecologist  
Academic  
Landowner  
Local Authority  
Public body  
Non-governmental organisation  
Farmer  
Other (please state)

- 4) If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us what organisation this?

[Quantock Hills AONB Partnership](#)

- 5) If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, how were your answers to the questions below determined? (For example, consultation of staff or members, senior management team input, individual, or other)

## Consultation with partners and members of the Joint Advisory Committee

### Consultation questions Sustainable management

6) To what extent do you support the introduction of incentives for reducing deer impacts to protect woodland?

- **Strongly Agree**
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

### Improving the laws and regulations on deer.

7) We propose to review and amend existing legislation to allow shooting of male deer during the existing close season. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- **Disagree**
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

Red Deer, the primary deer species of the Quantock Hills, have a high imbalance between male / females (1:6 ratio based on 5-yr average). The Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group recommends a 1:2 ratio. Reduction in stags, which will result from this proposal, will only increase the ratio but will not achieve the aim of reducing overall deer numbers. To reduce deer numbers mechanisms which aim to reduce hind numbers are required.

Red Deer are an important cultural species on the Quantock Hills. They are one of the key draws for visitors and at key times of the year, such as the rut, increase tourism, providing a much needed economic boost during the 'shoulder' months (Quantock Hills Visitor Survey 2018). While we recognise that high deer populations are problematic and agree with the need to reduce them we are concerned that a national approach could have negative impacts on local deer populations such as reduced genetic diversity through increasing the male / female ratios.

8) We propose to review existing legislation to either reduce or remove the licencing process to permit shooting of deer at night to enable appropriate, proportionate, and effective control. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- **Do not know**

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

While we can see the rationale for this proposal there are concerns over impacts on other users of the wider environment. In the fringing farmland of the AONB it can be seen that this proposal will be appropriate, however on areas of Open Access land (which make up 23% of the area of the AONB) there are health & safety and disturbance (including on tranquillity) concerns. A more nuanced approach which takes account of the different land uses and potential risks should be taken where licensing is required on higher risk sites.

9) We propose to review deer legislation to enable landowners and managers to reduce deer damage to woodlands or to other public interests, preventing the further spread of non-native species and preventing serious damage to any form of property as well as to the natural environment and public safety. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

10) We propose to enable occupiers (tenants or owners) of land to control deer, where the deer rights are retained by the landlord or previous owner (and where serious damage is occurring to trees crops or property), particularly where these are publicly funded. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

We believe that mechanisms are required whereby an occupier can request that control of deer takes place where damage is occurring to crops and / or priority habitats, especially on designated sites (e.g. SAC / SSSI).

11) We propose to clarify the legal status of wild deer particularly in relation to enclosed deer in parks or private collections, thereby reducing the likelihood of negative deer welfare or public health issues. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

12) We propose a more statutory approach to landowner responsibilities for deer where they are causing significant negative impacts to neighbouring land where these are impacting upon publicly funded woodlands, biodiversity and public interests. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- **Do not know**

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

#### Minimising the spread and impacts of non-native deer species

13) Which actions would you consider, to allow more effective means of controlling muntjac to prevent them damaging woodlands and biodiversity and expanding their range into areas they are not currently present?

Do not know but supportive of measures to prevent increase of range

#### Deer Health, Welfare and Safety

14) We propose that everyone who culls deer in England has to reach the same standard. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- Strongly Agree
- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

15) What would you consider the most effective means of developing a consistent national approach to responding to deer collisions and deer welfare incidents?

Support for the set up and running of Deer Management Groups in all relevant geographies, who can have a responsibility of collating information on competent dispatch operatives which is available to the local police and highway authorities.

#### Wild Venison Market

16) Do you consider there are presently barriers to the development of a commercially successful wild venison market?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If you answered yes, please explain what these are.

Capital investment required to process venison with relatively low returns, lack of regulatory framework reducing ability to market and add value to product.

17) To what extent do you agree that Government should support development of the wild venison sector?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

#### Developing and improving the Evidence Base

18) To what extent do you support the development of a National Deer Data Dashboard?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

Financial implications of proposed strategy actions.

19) Do you believe any of the proposed actions will have any positive or negative financial implications for the woodland/land management sector?

- **Yes**
- No
- Do not know

If you answered Yes, please explain what the implications are.

The overall drive for reducing deer numbers will have positive financial impacts on woodland and land management production / sectors. We believe further consideration is needed on the detail of some of the proposals to ensure the desired outcome is attained, such as the drive for reduction in male deer without consideration of the need to reduce female deer, especially in species such as Red Deer.

20) Do you believe any of the proposed actions will have any positive or negative financial implications for those involved in deer management?

- Yes
- No
- **Do not know**

If you answered Yes, please explain what the implications are.

21) Do you believe any of the proposed actions will have any positive or negative financial implications for wild venison production?

- **Yes**
- No
- Do not know.

If you answered Yes, please explain what the implications are.

Government support will enable the wild venison market to grow, appropriate regulation and capital grants will enable collaboration between land owners and also the ability to add value to venison through branding and marketing initiatives.