

FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND**REVIEW OF APPROACH TO REDUCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DEER ON FORESTRY AND WOODLANDS****Draft report of informal consultation****Background**

Forestry Commission England undertook a review of its approach to reducing the negative impacts of deer on woodlands, prompted by the need to address the trend towards increasing negative impacts and the ending of the current three year agreement for grant aid to the Deer Initiative Ltd in March 2015.

Forestry Commission England attended a Deer Initiative Partnership meeting, and had internal discussions with both Forest Services and Forest Enterprise.

To inform its decision making the Forestry Commission also carried out an informal consultation through an options paper (Annex 2) with key stakeholders in the late summer. This informal consultation was hosted on Citizen Space and the responses received were analysed.

SUMMARY**Analysis**

A total of 89 responses were received from estates, agents, NGOs, government agencies and individuals and then analysed through Citizen Space. In response to questions about the Forestry Commission's aim, assessment criteria and measures of success responses showed:

- The Forestry Commission's aim is widely supported
- The criteria to assess options are widely supported
- The indicators and measures are widely supported though need some refining
- There were good suggestions on improving wording to ensure clarity, accuracy, improving assessment criteria and indicators and measures

Written comments were analysed into themes. Many comments and technical points were made about the state of deer management, species, methodologies etc but were not directly relevant to this review. These comments will be referred to appropriate bodies and individuals for consideration, e.g. Forest Enterprise, DMQ Ltd

What is needed? In response to the options:

- The continuance of national working was preferred
- Increased collaboration was preferred
- Focussing on particular regions or species was not preferred
- Focussing on a major cull was not preferred
- Focussing on market mechanisms was not preferred.

In their comments, respondents added depth and insight to the options (a sample of these is at Annex 1)

- Collaborative work generally is important but there is a strong focus on more local coordination (i.e. locally managed) and delivery of culling activity
- The need to educate and raise awareness of among landowners and the public
- Action needs to be based on monitoring and evaluation of negative impacts
- Better incentives and more resources to support the DI Ltd's work
- Legislation and regulation were tools that should be used e.g. changes to closed seasons and a requirement upon landowners to manage deer.
- Need for a stronger link between incentives and penalties for non-compliance
- Need to use more professional stalkers and raise standards through training and better qualifications

Who should do it? In response to the options:

- Continuing to work through the DI was strongly supported
- Inviting competitive bids was not generally well supported
- Strengthening FS role was supported (comments indicated some confusion between FS and FE roles)

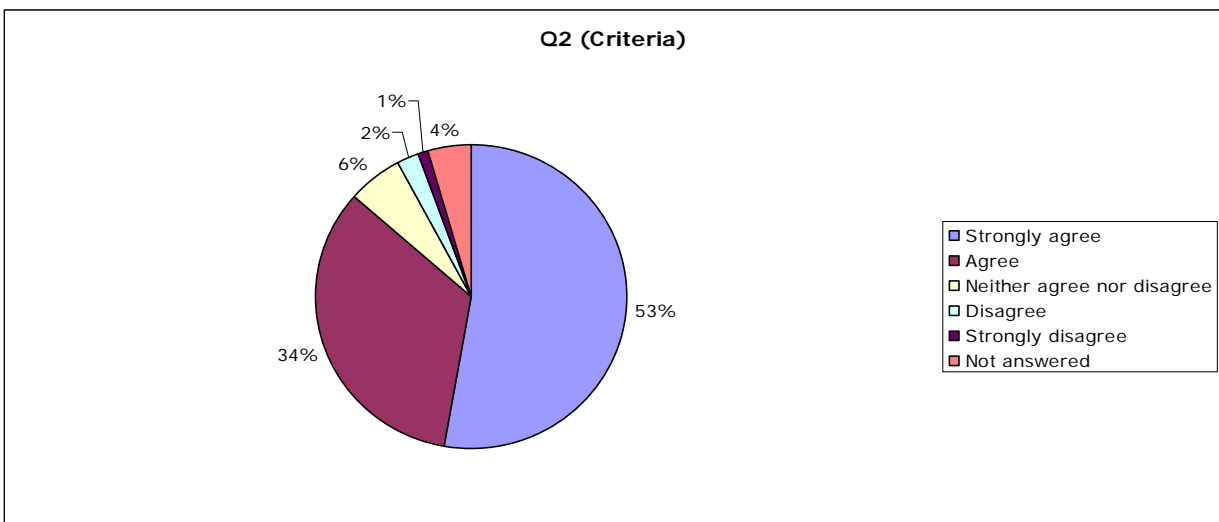
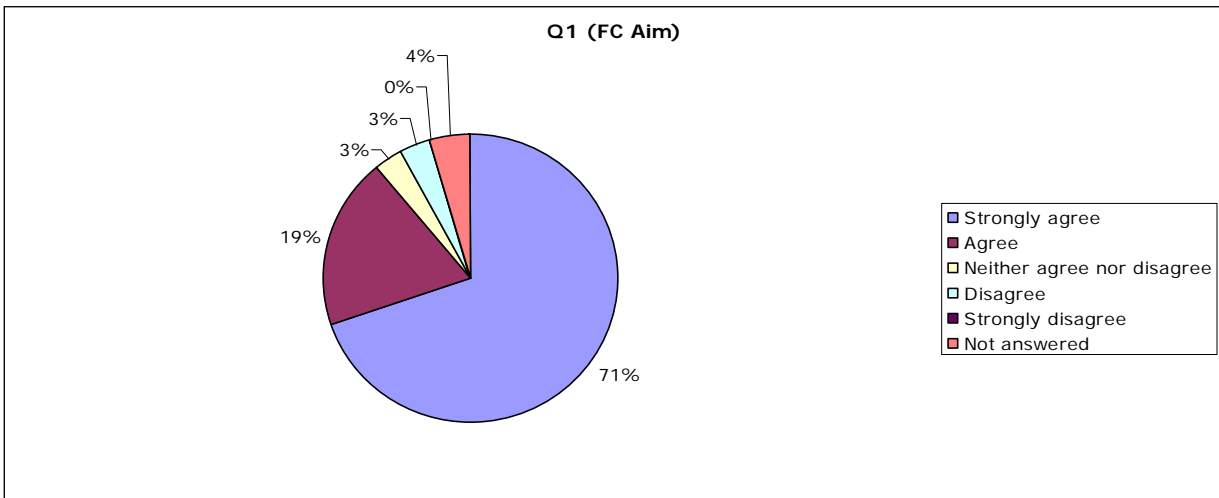
In their comments, respondents added depth and insight to the options.

- The DI Ltd are well established and have strong support. Increased focus on local delivery and results are needed through revised agreements with FS. DI Ltd is thinly spread and needs more resources.
- FE were identified as having a potential delivery role due to their expertise and trusted approach (although not all agreed this). A possible 'off estate service opportunity' was suggested.
- A combined approach by many organisations was favoured by some, with closer working encouraged between them.

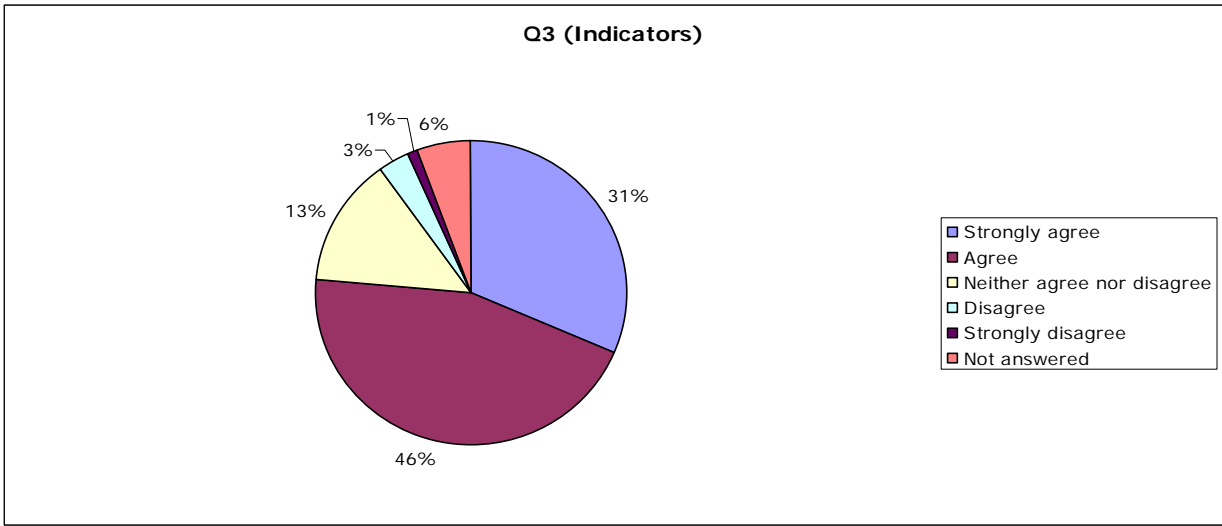
- Some suggested alternative local arrangements, e.g. a coordinated shoot service, paid by results.
- Generally little support for a competitive bidding process.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Q1:	Do you agree this is the right aim for the Forestry Commission in this area of work?	90% agreed ¹
Q2:	Do you agree with these criteria?	87% agreed
Q3:	Do you agree with the indicator and measures of success?	77% agreed

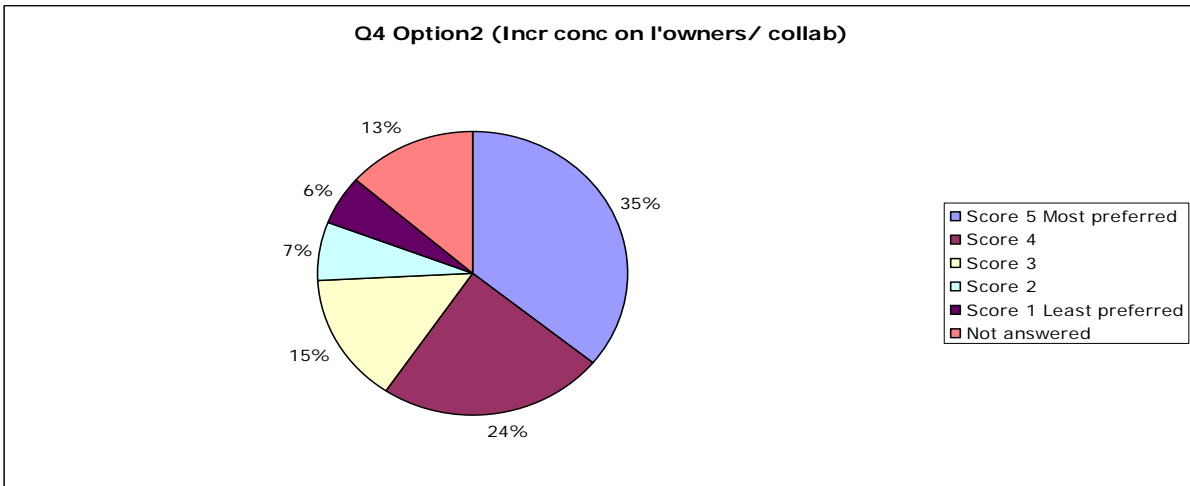
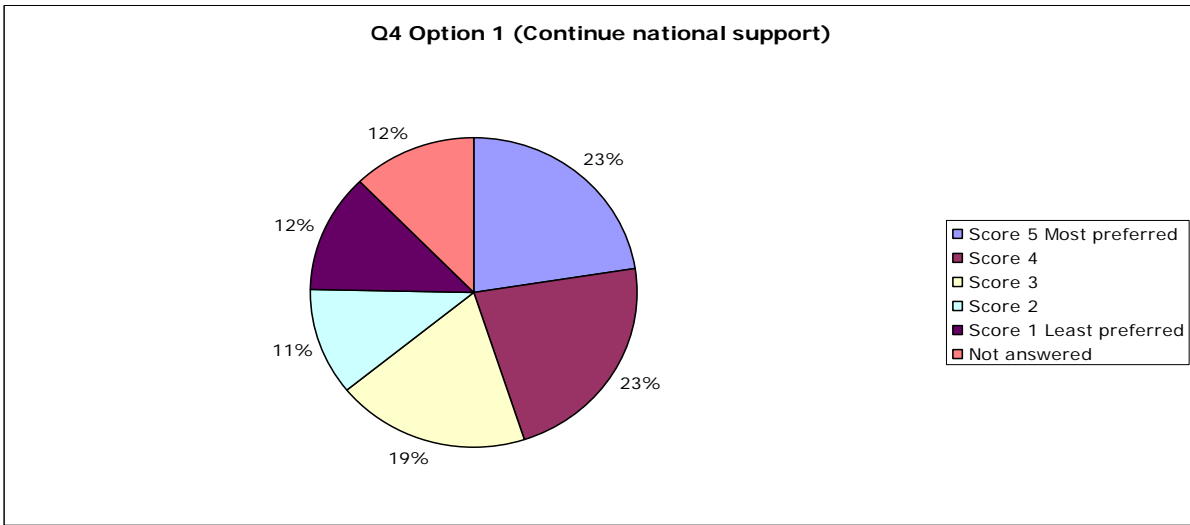


¹ Of those who responded to the question

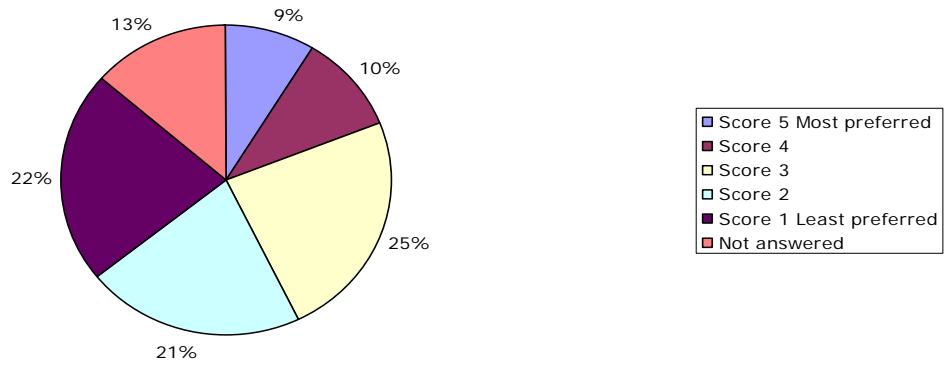


Q4. On what should we focus?

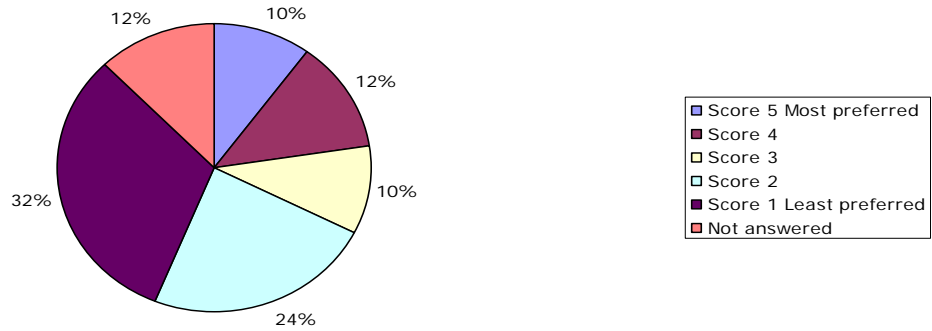
Option 1	Continue national working	46% Preferred
Option 2	Increase concentration on collaboration	59% Preferred
Option 3	Focus more on some species in partic. regions	43% Not preferred
Option 4	Focus on major cull	56% Not preferred
Option 5	Market mechanisms	47% Not preferred



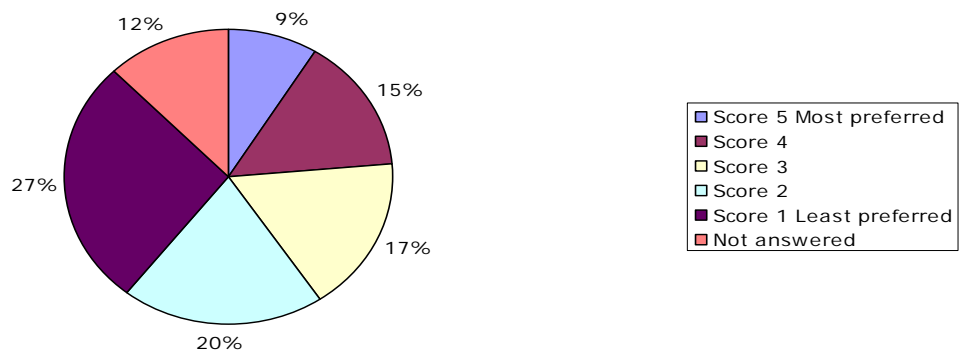
Q4 Option 3 (Target spp & areas)



Q4 Option 4 (Focus on major cull)



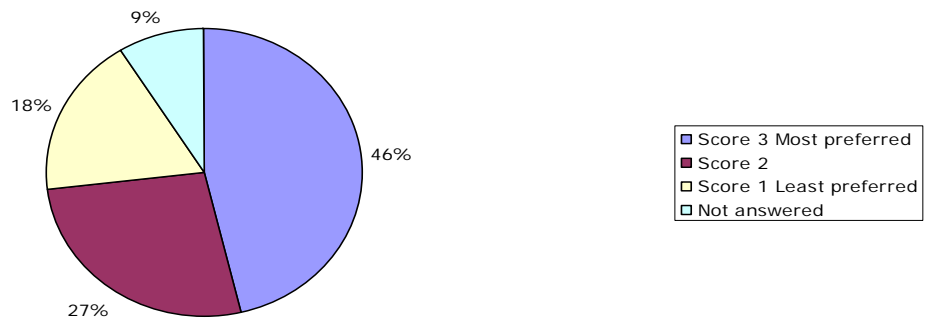
Q4 Option 5 (Stimulate market mechanisms)



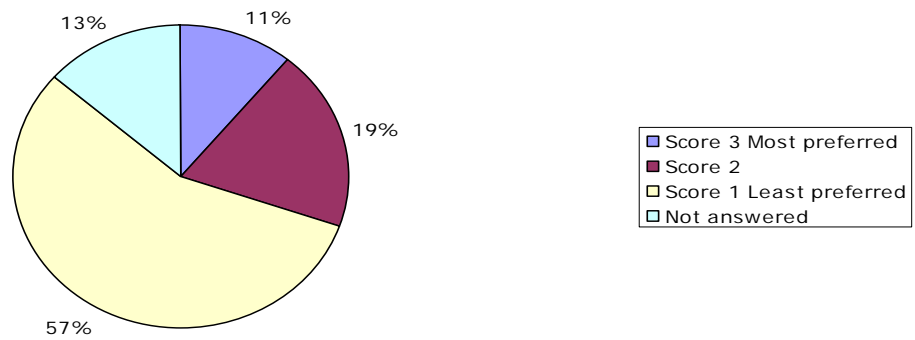
Q5. Who should deliver?

Option 6	Continue through the DI Ltd	46% Preferred
Option 7	Invite competitive bids	57% Not preferred
Option 8	Strengthen FS direct role	38% Preferred

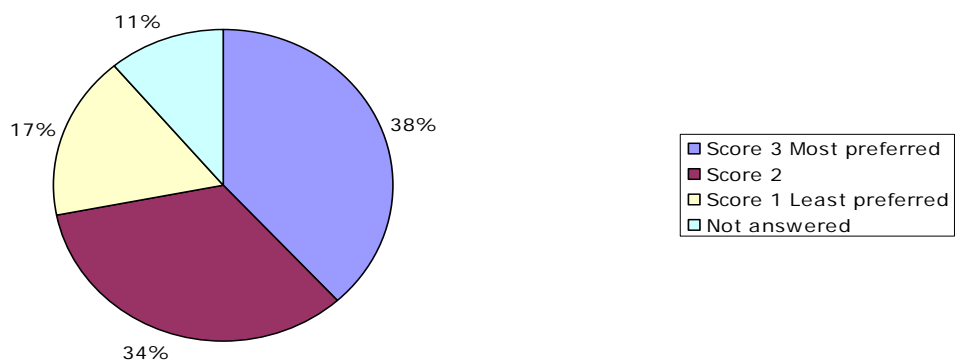
Q5 Option 6 (Continue thru DI Ltd)



Q5 Option 7 (Invite competitive bids)



Q5 Option 8 (Strengthen FS role)



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: EMERGING THEMES

What is needed?

THEME/ TAG	Description	% of all tagged comments ²
Local co-ordination	Local action on the ground (linked to collab) e.g. DMGs and alternatives	31%
General collaboration	e.g. working together/ landowners	28%
Education/Awareness	e.g. of landowners re deer impacts/ solutions	27%
Monitoring / evaluation	Of the effectiveness of management evidenced by reduced negative impacts	24%
Incentives/ resources	More focused grant and resources for collaboration and DI	20%
Legislation/ regulation	e.g. remove close seasons, legal responsibility on owners to manage deer	17%
FE role	FE importance as exemplar	13%
General points	About deer issues	13%
Training/ qualifications	For stalkers	10%
Incentives/ penalties	Incentives linked with penalties for non-delivery e.g. NELMS	9%
Market mechanisms	Venison market	6%
FC specific	Focus on unmanaged woodlands	6%
Research	E.g. predator introductions, topical treatments, alternative methods	3%
Not answered		21%

Who should do it?

THEME	Description	% of all tagged comments
DI	DI continues to lead	25%
FE	FE to take a lead role/ provide service	13%
Combination	FE/FC/ DI others	11%
FS		9%
Others		9%
DI Plus	DI with other support e.g. NGO/ NFU/ CLA	6%
Not answered		53%

² Respondents may mention multiple themes in their comments so percentages do not add to 100

ANNEX 1

SAMPLE OF QUOTES FROM RESPONSES

'Manage the positive and negative impacts of deer on woodlands so that net benefits of deer to society are positive'

Leave all responsibility for deer impact management on private land in private hands.

National bodies such as the DI are great for setting standards in recording populations and culling practice but more local work needs to be done.

My experience of DI has only been a positive one, and they have been instrumental in helping me reduce and control numbers

For the last three years I have had no approach from anyone at the Deer initiative. At our local meetings we all talk about the problems of deer but seem to have to develop a DIY solution.

The Deer Initiative has clearly failed to slow the increase in deer populations. More and more studies and employing people producing reports does not kill a single deer

Small landowner / interested party local groups supported by DI advice and grant aided centrally works really well.

One of the problems with the DI for example is a distrust of the organisation within the stalking community, people feel that the DI are out to get there own stalking or put their people on to the ground.

The DI seems to work well in my experience,

The DI have created a mine of useful information for deer managers, have been an authoritative voice in the media and have given much practical help and funding to ourselves and other woodland managers in the area. The problem is that they are spread too thinly and there needs to be more of them.

In the absence of predators deer management is essential but not all deer populations are damaging and not all deer impacts are adverse.

We are in a grave situation with deer populations higher than they have ever been,

Consideration should be made to making funding either results or trends dependent.

I believe DSC1 is too easily obtained, and gives a false confidence to incompetent so called Stalkersmaybe even a third Certificate to allow competent Stalkers to stalk. I believe there is an accident waiting to happen, especially with deer numbers increasing.

I think that 2 of the biggest problems to wild deer management are the DI and FCE. Stalkers generally do not trust either myself included.

I think we need a standard which lays out how deer stalkers who sign up to the standard will behave. Similar to the ICF for foresters.

The DMO2 has served a purpose but a higher level of training is now required, in order to produce more accomplished deer controllers.

Put forward a motion to pass legislation where woodland owners have a legal duty to manage deer population, as is the case in Austria.

The level of culling needs to reflect the damage being done. Its not all about setting specific numbers of deer but more about reducing the numbers of deer to reduce the level of their impact on the ground. Increasing the number of impact assessments being done will help.

The pressure applied through the grant system is welcome but toothless to my knowledge. I can cite examples of 60-70% losses on planting schemes that have been paid out on and no beating up required.

Educate farmers and landowners where necessary. Most are knowledgeable and well aware of the destruction deer can cause!

We find little ability to obtain marksmen, we have strong contacts with local shoots but no one is interested in shooting deer.

Fund landowners for the cost of culling e.g. acquisition of guns and safe storage facilities

The Forestry Commission sets itself up as the leading Authority on Deer management but however, doesn't practice what it preaches.

DSC is not the be all and end all and the FCs approach that they will only entertain Level 2 is wrong as there are many people who have a vast experience in deer management who are excluded in the FCs view. Evidence of experience and recommendation should exceed the requirements of DSC2

FC [] should concentrate on getting felling licences through quickly and building trust among owners and managers to keep the industry moving and people employed. A partnership approach with specialised, experienced local area contact and focussed management objectives to deliver and coordinate control is the way forward.

I truly believe that the key issue is landowner and stalker attitudes towards deer management. For the greater part neither party is truly focused on delivering control.

There may be other parties that are best placed to deliver targeted local culling because they are known to the land managers and owners. This will depend on the local circumstances.

...not become fixated on one model for landowner collaboration. The main thing is that owners should be encouraged to work towards one objective either collaboratively or more commonly by themselves.

Require the DI to put more focus on reducing deer numbers in areas where they are causing deleterious impacts to woodland and the natural environment.

The Forestry Commission should focus on the recommendations made by the Independent Panel on ForestryBy bringing more woodland into active management, so the profile of deer in the landscape will be more fully recognised

The DI do excellent work but with respect it is questionable for a statutory body to focus investment through a single limited company.