Dear Graeme

ECCLR Committee Draft Budget 2018-19 - follow on information

Following on from the ECCLR Committee session on 12 December, the Committee have requested further information of the costs related to Section 7 and Section 8 agreements and also further information on the effectiveness of Section 7 agreements.

Please find this additional information below.

Control Agreements and Schemes

As presented in the 2016 SNH Deer Review, estimated SNH annual spend across all the suite of Section 7 Control Agreements was on average £250,000 per annum. Due to the way this work is recorded, it is not possible to disaggregate costs on individual agreements.

In the eight Control Agreements which were extant during the 2016 review (Fannich Hills, Mar Lodge, Caenlochan, Bein Dearg, Breadalbane, Inverpolly, Kinveachy) and which were in place during the period 2011 – 16, £321,716 was spent on counts and £237,613 on habitat Impact assessments.

Since then, three of these agreements (Mar Lodge, Breadalbane and Kinveachy) have now satisfactorily concluded. Deer populations and impacts have reduced in these areas and deer management planning and delivery is now aligned with the relevant Deer Management Group plans. SNH continues to monitor delivery of actions within the relevant plans.

The five remaining agreements (at Bein Dearg, Ben Wyvis, Fannich Hills, Inverpolly and Caenlochan), have been reviewed through the relevant steering groups with cull targets and populations agreed. SNH has provided direct support within the Bein Dearg Section 7 area in 2017 and 2018 to cull deer in the remotest areas of the control area. SNH continues to work with the Assynt Peninsula Sub Group of the West Sutherland DMG to develop a Deer
Management Plan which balances environmental, economic and social needs. The increased profile of these areas of work and efforts to focus on delivery of agreed targets has seen progress made in these areas. SNH continues to monitor delivery and have been clear we will use the full suite of powers available, which will include Section 8 Control Schemes if required.

SNH role in intervention and regulation goes wider than the use of Section 7 agreements and use of Section 8 control schemes – this is set out in Chapter 5, Page 21 of the Deer Code in terms of involvement, intervention and regulation. We have rebalanced and prioritised our work to focus on the existing suite of section 7 agreements, the poorer performing Deer Management Groups as assessed at the 2016 review and in developing approaches to lowland Deer Management. We have worked closely with ADMG, LDNS and Environment Link in developing this approach.

Our projected deer service and the associated projects amounts to some 3000 staff days and £500,000 for 2017-18, which equates to an increase in staff resource (500days) with cash spend comparable with 2016-17.

Some additional details on what we have used the £170,000 of recycled SRDP (ECAF) available in FY 2017-18 are provided below:

- Continuing the grant provisions from FYs 2015/16 and 2016/17 in supporting Deer Management Plans
- Providing support of £1800 to each DMG to facilitate delivery of Habitat Impact Assessments across DMG areas.
- Supporting development of The SWARD Project (Database for deer management and habitat impact assessment data) – Reviewing development needs
- Support for ADMG Chairs and Secretaries event held at Birnam
- Supporting review and development of a number of Best Practice guides – in conjunction with increased core funding for the project officer post.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely

Francesca Osowska
Chief Executive