



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

Wildlife Management Survey Feasibility Study

Project 10655



GEORGE STREET
RESEARCH

24 Broughton Street
Edinburgh EH1 3RH (UK)
Tel; +44(0)131 478 7505 Fax; +44(0)131 478 7504
Email; info@george-street-research.co.uk
VAT No: 502 484862

Registered Office:
St Paul's House
Warwick Lane
London EC4P 4BN (UK)
No: 2364135

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Document Title: SNH Wildlife Report
Prepared For: Martin Stubbs-Partridge
Prepared By: George Street Research Ltd
GSR Project Number: 6535
Issue Date: 14th April 2011
Primary Author: David Primrose
Other Author(s): Sue Granville & Ruth Bryan

Further information on this document can be obtained by contacting
David (44 (0)131 478 7545) at George Street Research Ltd.
david@george-street-research.co.uk



CONTENTS

1	Background and Objectives.....	1
2	Methodology and Sample.....	2
3	Main Findings.....	4
3.1	Current Issues.....	4
3.1.1	Priorities for Organisations.....	4
3.1.2	Priorities for Members.....	4
3.1.3	Impact of Economic Climate.....	5
3.2	Drivers of Satisfaction with SNH.....	5
3.2.1	Pre and Post Merger.....	6
3.2.2	Defining the Customers.....	7
3.2.3	Delivery of Service.....	10
3.2.4	Timeliness.....	13
3.2.5	Information.....	14
3.2.6	Professionalism and Staff Attitude.....	15
4	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	17
4.1	Conclusions.....	17
4.1.1	Issues.....	17
4.1.2	Customers.....	17
4.1.3	Post Merger.....	18
4.1.4	Future Survey Implications.....	18
4.2	Main Survey Elements.....	18
4.3	Developing the Survey Methodology.....	19
4.3.1	Online and Self-completion.....	19
4.3.2	Specific Questions.....	20
APPENDIX		
5	Online Forum Responses.....	2
6	Topic Guide.....	9

1 Background and Objectives

*“Merging the responsibilities of the Deer Commission for Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage will combine the strengths and expertise of both organisations and is a key aspect of the Scottish Government’s commitment to public sector reform. Alongside the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, the move will help ensure that Scotland’s wildlife is managed in a sustainable and balanced way for future generations and **enhance relationships with wildlife managers** which are founded on trust and mutual respect”.*

Roseanna Cunningham
Environment Minister
2nd July 2010

Although The Scottish Government have expressed a hope that the merger of Deer Commission Scotland (DCS) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) will help to enhance relationships, it would be fair to say that not all rural stakeholders greeted the move with the same enthusiasm. The Scottish Government’s consultation published in March 2008 revealed that several stakeholders believed that DCS staff members had better working relationships with land managers than did staff from SNH.

George Street Research were appointed in December 2010 to explore the nature of the working relationships by speaking to senior personnel and nominated contacts from a range of organisations that SNH currently work with. Individuals from those organisations were invited to consider the relationship from the perspective of both the organisation and individual members and stakeholders. The intention has been to examine the feasibility of conducting a wider survey with a broader church of customers.

The challenge of this project has been to define who would constitute this broader church of customers. Having identified the bulk of these customers the report picks out the critical factors that drive satisfaction for organisations and individuals classed as customers of SNH’s Wildlife Management Programme.

To identify these critical factors much of the focus has been on identifying who can truly be classed as customers of the organisation and on what basis they can be segmented. It is clear that SNH works at many different levels with many groups of individuals and organisations. Relationships can be as partner, provider and customer and all could conceivably be the same person at one time or another.

Trying to untangle this complexity through segmentation has already been attempted by SNH as part of a CRM project but it is clearly something that will need to continue as the next phase of the wildlife management project progresses.

2 Methodology and Sample

The main part of the project was undertaken by a mix of telephone and face-to-face depth interviews. Individuals asked to take part were very co-operative and, in almost every instance, eager to assist with the study. The response from potential participants reflects a high level of engagement with the topic of customer service and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The list of potential contacts was drawn from a sample provided by SNH. These individuals and organisations were contacted by telephone and in several instances the recruiters were referred to additional contacts. Originally, 25 interviews had been scheduled and in the end 28 were undertaken. This was due to the researchers being further referred to additional individuals who had more experience of dealing with SNH staff members directly. The interviews were undertaken by David Primrose, Sue Granville and Ruth Bryan.

Individual names of research participants remain confidential but we can provide the list of organisations that took part in this feasibility study.

- National Farmers Union Scotland
- Sea Trout Group
- Heather Trust
- British Association For Shooting and Conservation
- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Association of Deer Management Groups
- Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
- Scottish Anglers National Association
- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- British Deer Association
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Scottish Salmon Producers Association
- Woodland Trust
- Central Scotland Forest Trust
- Deer Initiative
- Salmon and Trout Association
- Scottish Hawk Board
- Scottish Association For Country Sports
- Scottish Native Woods
- Bat Conservation Trust
- John Muir Trust
- Confederation of Forest Industries
- Scottish Government Rural Payments Directorate
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Forest Enterprise Scotland

There are many other organisations that SNH deals with and George Street Research did contact many more than those listed above. It was recognised that

some organisations (e.g. SGA, RSPB, BDS, NTS etc.) would have a valuable contribution to make to the project. However, for reasons of the timing of the project and the availability of potential respondents it simply was not possible to speak to people in all of the major organisations that deal with SNH.

The topic guide used for the discussions with stakeholders was developed jointly by George Street Research and SNH. Copies of both topic guides are contained in the Appendix to this report.

Two additional interviews also took place with operational managers within SNH to help the researchers understand more about SNH's role and the types of interactions that officers had with members of the customer groups.

In addition to interviews with key stakeholders and staff, we also used social media to try and build up a quick picture of how SNH are perceived and, in particular, how they are perceived since the merger with DCS. Only one thread really produced any comment and that thread related to stalking. The comments from all relevant online forums are included in the Appendix to this report.

3 Main Findings

3.1 *Current Issues*

At the start of the interviews the respondents were asked what major issues were affecting their organisation, what issues were concerning their members and what the impact was of the current economic situation.

3.1.1 *Priorities for Organisations*

At the time of the interviews The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill was going through the final stages towards being passed by the Parliament on 2nd March 2011. For many of the organisations interviewed this Bill had taken up a lot of their time through a combination of consultation responses, meetings and lobbying activity.

For organisations with interests in field sports the priority was the continued ability of these sports to exist and flourish in tandem with the natural environment. Included in their concerns were issues of access for sportsmen, interaction with the public and the interaction with any other species. Sustainable management of the animals and fish that are hunted was also a clear priority for these organisations. These organisations felt a degree of obligation to, as they saw it, stand up to some aspects of the conservation and environmental lobby. There was a degree to which these organisations had seen their interests attacked for a long time by politicians and the environmental lobby.

For organisations with land management responsibility the main issues were invariably the development and maintenance of their particular land, landscape and habitats. These could be moors, forests, rivers or a mix of cultivated and wild spaces, depending on the specific organisation. Land management organisations with a focus on agriculture and forestry stated that the priority was sustainable economic land use that respected the natural heritage although their emphasis was, understandably, on avoiding any barriers to profitable use of land.

Those with interests in specific species were focused on the protection, growth and maintenance of species numbers as well as specific habitats. Although most organisations recognised the importance of biodiversity, it was particularly marked in this group. This group did not want to see policy or initiatives just confined to specific places or reserves and regional and national biodiversity policies were therefore of great importance.

Almost every organisation viewed the lobbying of government and the influencing of SNH policy, actions and personnel as part of their obligations.

3.1.2 *Priorities for Members*

In many instances the priorities of members mirrored those of organisations. The organisations representing field sports people said that their members simply wanted to have the access to be able to carry out their sports. The continued availability of

animals and fish to hunt through sustainable management was also thought to be a recognisable and understood priority for members.

Organisations with land management responsibility and conservation groups often had members that did not actually “do” much and who simply wanted the organisation to be funded to continue delivering their own goals and objectives.

Organisations representing land managers and utilisation interests felt that their members and stakeholders would say that they wanted to be left alone with minimal interference from The Scottish Government and SNH. They said that their members were extremely wary of what they perceived to be politically motivated policies on land and species management.

3.1.3 Impact of Economic Climate

Organisations which relied on any type of external funding (e.g. from members, other public bodies etc.), which was most of the organisations we spoke to, were worried that they faced rising costs and possibly reduced incomes. Apart from careful budgeting there was not much hard evidence revealed of any big changes planned in the way they ran their operations.

There was a degree of concern that specific land or species initiatives and projects might get cancelled or modified as a result of reduced funding, especially at local levels. However, there was no real concern expressed that the amount of sporting activity was going to be reduced.

3.2 Drivers of Satisfaction with SNH

Like many public sector organisations SNH works with and alongside many partner organisations and individuals. Delivery of ultimate service to natural heritage, the people of Scotland and The Scottish Government is done through a complex mix of relationships, agreements and service provision. There is also a “softer” element to SNH’s service provision in the form of advice, events, demonstrations etc. In this mix it is not always easy to identify specific customers and what constitutes customer service. Evaluating customer satisfaction with service provision is challenging.

However, all of the people that the organisation comes into contact with are in a position to form an opinion about what they are like to work with, what they are like to deal with and what sort of an organisation they actually are. These perceptions, taken together, build up an overall picture of satisfaction with SNH as a whole. The work undertaken so far has certainly helped to describe the state of this “big picture”.

- The first broad conclusions from the interviews with key representatives of the main “customer” groups are that, in the main, individuals dealing with SNH personnel on a regular basis are extremely happy with the level of service and professionalism demonstrated by staff members.
- The second broad conclusion is that most leaders of the organisations do not believe that their members or the people they represent will see themselves

as “customers” of SNH. That is not to say that they are not customers, but what it means is that their interest in, for example, deer, salmon, bats etc, does not make them a customer. They become “customers” when they have some form of transactional relationship with SNH. This transactional relationship could be formal or informal. Most of the senior people taking part in the research believe that they have a professional or partnership relationship with SNH rather than a “customer-type” relationship with the organisation. A working definition of customers that all SNH staff could reasonably buy into would be; “people who interact with SNH”.

- The third broad conclusion, following the merger of SNH and DCS, is that individuals dealing with both organisations have not noticed any difference in the level of service received or provided since the organisations merged. In most instances people described dealing with the same people in the same situations and said that they remained satisfied with the way deer related issues were being dealt with. Working relationships are being maintained and are generally healthy.

3.2.1 Pre and Post Merger

Most of the research participants in this feasibility study said that they had welcomed the merger when it was announced and thought that it had been a logical and sensible step to take.

“It was slightly strange – that Scotland was the only country in Europe, if not the world, that had an agency dedicated to one group of animals”.

“I said, yeah that’s great, because they’re dealing with broadly the same suite of issues – it’s habitat management and protected areas and all sorts of things, and clearly it’s nonsensical having all those administrative staff. So from that point of view I was a supporter”.

Some of the smaller organisations with an interest in deer management said that they thought it was not such a good idea because they had enjoyed working with DCS which was also a small organisation.

“I think the fear was they would be subsumed in a much bigger organisation”.

Where organisations and their members had little involvement with the specifics of deer management they were honest enough to admit that the news of the merger and its subsequent delivery had made little or no impact on them or their members.

Where individuals in deer and land management had expressed some concern in advance of the merger these related to changes in personnel. There was a perception that DCS employees were more hands-on, whereas SNH employees were more scientific and observational. The impression that most people had was that there had been few, if any, changes since the merger. For the majority of the research participants this was regarded as a positive outcome.

“It has had little or no effect in any sense. It’s been a sort of seamless transition as far as we’re concerned”.

The issue of most concern to many of the research participants was not issues of governance and organisation relating to SNH and DCS but was, instead, the progress of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (WANE) Bill through The Scottish Parliament. As the Bill had just passed through Stage 2 on 19th January 2011 it was a very topical issue at the time of the interviews.

“In Scotland, the big issue is probably still what’s left of the WANE Bill, making sure the last one or two things which could be a problem are dealt with before they become a problem”.

Individuals from the country sports communities expressed concern that the original draft of the bill had been weighted against them. However, most expressed satisfaction with the way that amendments had been included which were more sympathetic to country sports and their economic contribution to the rural economy. Although not directly related to their views of SNH, the debate about resource utilisation set alongside conservation interests was an extension of many concerns and hopes for SNH’s role in the management of wildlife.

3.2.2 Defining the Customers

The interviews revealed that neither individuals nor organisations really considered themselves as “customers” of SNH. In many instances organisations saw themselves as partners of SNH in the delivery and management of natural heritage initiatives. In these instances contacts are built up over time and relationships are conducted by meetings, phone calls, e-mails and numerous informal interactions. Where senior people are involved they are generally happy with the level of access and contact they have with senior staff at SNH. It is probably worth stating that many of these good working relationships are founded on personal friendships and a degree of intermingling between partner groups and SNH (e.g. former employees, secondments, board members etc.). In the deer sector this degree of personal knowledge and friendship is even more apparent, although it does appear in other sectors as well.

“I know the lads that worked for the Deer Commission too well”.

Organisations involved in forestry, conservation, resource utilisation and charitable organisations are often jointly involved in management of natural heritage and this often means dialogue, meetings and ultimately agreements over funding and implementation of management agreements. Where this is the case organisations and individuals really don’t define themselves as customers.

“Well, the nitty-gritty of this conversation is that our relationship with SNH is... well, it’s not infinitely flexible clearly, but it’s very flexible. We probably have the complete spectrum of relationships with SNH”.

Nevertheless some of their feedback suggests that issues of “speed of response”, “ease of contact”, and “communication”, which are conventional aspects of customer service, do influence their perceptions of SNH. These customer experiences are hard to measure because they are invariably the result of communications between individuals involved in specific projects.

When probed further it was revealed that “customers” of SNH would be more likely to be self-defined as those people who had experience of a specific transaction or set of transactions with SNH.

“Unless they’re directly involved in some sort of agri-environment measures that involve SNH. And traditionally there has been an awful lot of SNH management agreements with farmers to do certain things in certain ways”.

In this context the types of transactions mentioned in the interviews were:

- Deer management agreements
- SSSI management agreements
- Site management agreements
- Licenses
- Planning – statutory consultation
- Planning application consultations
- Grant applications – funding requests

Other specific services which SNH deliver such as training and the provision of advice were not specifically mentioned in this context. However, logic would dictate that individuals receiving advice, attending events and reading publications are interacting with SNH as recipients and therefore customers.

As the short list of named transactions demonstrates the majority of these formal “customer” interactions relate to agreements with land owners and land managers (including aquaculture businesses) about a specific component of their land use, marine use and animals, birds and fish. In the context of deer, the services provided to customers as defined by SNH are grouped under the headings of Sustainable Land Use, Species Conservation, Public Safety and Deer Welfare, and Policy and Research.

SNH have also defined 16 groups of direct customers that have direct interaction on deer related topics. What is evident from the discussions during the research is that, within those 16 groups, by no means all members will have the same type of relationship with SNH. For example, in the case of farmers it was stated that the majority of farmers would not see themselves as customers of SNH and really would not have any kind of relationship with them, unless they had some form of management agreement. The presence of a SSSI was quoted as being the most likely reason for a management agreement.

In the case of stalkers and people with an interest in shooting it was also stated that the majority of this group would perceive that they have little or no relationship with

SNH and, indeed, they would have had very little relationship with DCS. It would only be the land owner and their representatives that would have had the relationship with DCS and now SNH over the “management” of deer on their land. Stalkers would have a relationship with the owner and their representatives and would therefore have very little relationship with SNH directly.

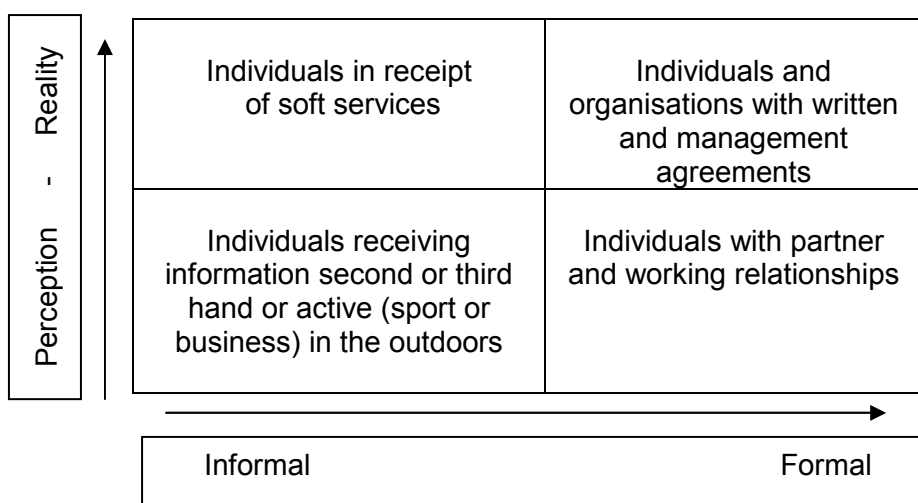
“Your normal shooting guy has probably had no contact with SNH whatsoever, in his life!”

“But the average person who shoots foxes and roe deer on farmland, shoots pheasants and pigeons and rabbits and things like that, they’re pretty much unaware of SNH’s role”.

The interview participants believed that those people who are not considered as land managers and owners (e.g. stalkers, hawkers, fishermen etc.) could not really be considered as customers even though the work and policies of SNH will often have a direct influence on their activities. If they are individuals who use land owned by others it was thought that they would have very little knowledge of, or interaction with, SNH. It was acknowledged that some of these people might have an opinion about SNH and their activities, but that this opinion would be derived from a source other than their specific activities on the land.

“But on a day to day basis – week to week, month to month – the minority and only a minority will have direct dealings with SNH. And it’ll be on a case by case, site-specific, species sort of relationship... and that’s when they’ll become customers in that sense”.

We have attempted to illustrate some of this complexity in the chart below.



The implication of the discussions about what defines customers is that the survey instrument used in the survey of wider customers will need to be able to define people by both type and specific type of interaction. **In all likelihood this will mean that we will need a multi track approach to researching the broader customer**

base. This multi track will be by invitation (for known contacts who have had nominated interactions – both formal and informal) and by opt-in where people will self select to take part, often through a third party. The invitations will also have to include measures of “real customer service” (e.g. speed, accuracy, knowledge etc.) and measures which relate more to the style, tone and nature of service delivery (the perception).

Looking at the elements that comprise customer satisfaction does help translate the responses from stakeholders into more measurable elements.

Elements	Drivers	Weighting	Overall satisfaction with service
The final outcome	Delivery	30%	
The way the service kept its promises			
The way the service handled any problems			
Initial wait	Timeliness	24%	
How long it takes overall			
Number of times had to contact the service			
Accuracy	Information	18%	
Comprehensiveness			
Being kept informed about progress			
Competent staff	Professionalism	16%	
Being treated fairly			
Polite and friendly staff	Staff Attitude	12%	
How sympathetic staff were to your needs			

3.2.3 Delivery of Service

Service delivery, the most important driver of customer satisfaction, manifests itself in many different ways for SNH’s customers and partners. As well as formal agreements and formal relationships there is also a range of “soft” deliverables that SNH provides to a wide range of potential and current customers. These “soft” deliverables could be publications, advice, or events. Although these are classed as “soft” deliverables they should still have objectives and outcomes for both SNH and the recipients and they certainly contribute to overall perceptions of the organisation. “Soft” deliverables should be included in any lists of services provided.

Unlike some other business transactions, final agreements for wildlife management and other aspects of natural heritage management will be arrived at following a process of discussion, negotiation and ultimately agreement. Therefore the onus for delivery is often jointly the responsibility of SNH and a partner. Satisfaction with the final outcome will, invariably, arise from whether the “customer” agrees with the final agreement that has been reached. In all aspects of customer satisfaction it can be hard for recipients to differentiate between outcome and process.

The limited number of responses we received to our posts on the online forums revealed that those people who had applied for a license to do something had received a quick and satisfactory response.

“Only had one dealing with them and received excellent service”.

“I carry out deer management on 200 acres of tree plantation and required a night shooting certificate from SNH and the service from SNH was rapid and accurate”.

It is in the area of “delivery” that SNH’s culture and orientation towards resource utilisation can be assessed. There was some divergence of opinion about SNH’s leadership and orientation. The most discussed area of potential conflict was perceived as being between resource utilisation and conservation. These two elements are not necessarily mutually exclusive and yet, for several customer groups, they are perceived as being conflicting aims.

“I think generally in SNH their aims and vision for wildlife management is pretty good. They want to do the right thing for bio-diversity. Sometimes, in my opinion / our opinion, I think they get distracted because of the government policy”.

Those involved in the deer sector were generally encouraged by what they perceived as an organisation that was either commercially aware or becoming increasingly commercial. There had been a degree of trepidation prior to the merger with DCS but most people in the deer sector said that they had been pleasantly surprised by the organisation’s activities and apparent understanding of the issues faced by the sector. Credit was paid to the organisation’s senior leaders who, it was believed, were encouraging a more customer / client / partner focused approach and perhaps less of a “science for science’s sake” approach.

“I would say there is a cultural change happening, it has certainly happened at the top and we hope, trust that it is filtering down”.

This was resulting in positive final outcomes, positive discussions and successful resolution of any disagreements, especially in the context of deer management. Individuals involved in aquaculture also observed that SNH’s culture appeared to have shifted in recent times and that the organisation was now more sympathetic to resource utilisation interests. At least, it was stated, that they were more prepared to take commercial factors into account when contributing to consultations.

Given that some respondents with resource utilisation interests thought the organisation was becoming more commercially aware, it will not come as any surprise to SNH to learn that some of those whose primary focus is conservation were more worried about this perceived change. Many of the people expressing concern, however, were very aware of what they described as the conflicting demands being placed on SNH. One example of this that was quoted was the campaign to raise awareness of NNRs. While it was thought laudable that the public should be informed about Scotland’s special places, it was also felt that some of these places were vulnerable and therefore attracting visitors to them was certainly not what was in the interest of the wider natural heritage.

Not all aspects of wildlife management were viewed in the same ways. As mentioned the harvesting and management of deer was generally viewed in a positive light and the organisation’s role in the management of aquaculture was also

viewed in an increasingly positive light. However, there was definitely some disquiet expressed for some elements of species management and especially species introduction. The beaver project and the sea eagle project were not approved of by all the participants. Several people expressed doubts about the benefits and even the philosophy that lay behind these projects.

“You have a relatively small band of people who have either worked with or have been involved with SNH for a long time who are on an ego trip, who want – just simply want – to succeed in re-introducing or introducing the beaver, and have not been prepared to listen to any counter opinions”.

In these instances the organisation was often regarded as being quite assertive in approach and unsympathetic to opponents of the plans. Another area of current dispute that was mentioned was the issue of raptor control and especially buzzards. This was one instance where SNH was viewed as being less sympathetic to utilisation interests and more worried about protecting birds and pleasing the “bird lobby”. There was a fear that SNH would rather do nothing than do the wrong thing. There appeared to be a perception that SNH’s scientific approach and analysis lagged quite far behind real time developments and that this approach was detrimental to utilisation interests.

“So the fear of an infraction proceeding appears to be outweighing some common sense attitude towards ‘OK, have they got a realistic concern of land managers here”.

In the issues like the beavers, the sea eagles and the raptors SNH clearly has to try and strike a balance between commerce, science and the national interest, so it is unlikely that every stakeholder could be satisfied with the final outcomes. The only way to address issues where agreement is unlikely is to ensure that all parties at least understand the decision making process. Therefore, opinions about access to explanations will have to be a feature of future surveys.

Concern was expressed from one sector that SNH was almost too eager to please the politicians and purse holders and that this resulted in SNH claiming credit for partnership projects. It was stated that SNH had a very effective communications and PR team and that partner agencies could, at times, feel that their role was not given enough credit. Several motives and reasons were suggested to explain what it was thought SNH were doing. Although it is not strictly part of the customer survey or an aspect of wildlife management it is, nevertheless, interesting to note that some of SNH’s partners feel as if they are in competition with SNH. If there is jealousy and a sense of grievance coming from one sector in particular it may have an impact on their responses in future projects.

“Where did we feature in their annual report?”

However, at a local level, where individuals and representatives from other organisations were dealing with SNH’s own local officers, there was pretty much universal approval of the working relationships that existed. This was resulting in positive outcomes and a sympathetic handling of any problems as they arose.

3.2.4 Timeliness

Most of the 28 people interviewed described being able to contact named individuals within SNH when they needed to discuss anything with them. Many of them enjoyed excellent personal working relationships with both senior and local SNH staff. There did not appear to be any problems in waiting for calls or queries to be returned in the general run of day-to-day operations.

Issues about timeliness were however mentioned in a few specific contexts:

- Funding applications
- License applications
- Planning consultations

In the case of funding applications these could be for very specific projects, but interestingly speed of delivery appeared to be an occasional issue in partnership projects. It was stated that SNH's paperwork and system of securing funding was more information intensive and bureaucratic than the systems used by some other bodies. Individuals understood why many of the questions and processes were asked but simply felt that they had to work too hard to secure the funding and report on the outcomes. Clearly, whether individuals have been working with SNH to secure funding or requesting funding from SNH will need to be one of the questions in future surveys.

“The application process is ... or getting to an agreement is tortuous. Finding things you can then spend it on is as bad, and then there's the proportion requirement which is onerous”.

What a future survey will need to unpick is where the perceived delays, if there are any, happen in the process. Possible options for this include: the application form, responses from SNH, submission to a 3rd party (e.g. Europe) if relevant, decision making, release of funds, monitoring and evaluation processes. These options can be suggested as pre-codes on a future questionnaire.

Individuals described applications for protected species licenses as being a possible source of delay.

“We've encountered a lack of clarity in the process; we've encountered a lack of timeliness in response, and certainly a lack of interest in taking the problem seriously”.

There are two main elements of the license application process. The first of these is the decision making as to whether a licence to cull or control is valid and appropriate. The second of these is the actual time taken to process an approved application. License applications for the control of predatory birds to conserve wild birds were a topic that was discussed by several of the research participants. Delays were mainly attributed to disagreements over the merits of the application rather than the process itself. The concern expressed was that the burden of proof on the applicant was

such that it could take too long or simply be too much of a burden for them which would result in a delay which makes the situation worse than it needs to be. Wild birds is just one area of licensing relating to wildlife management and licenses are also required for a number of actions relating to birds, animals, badgers, seals and habitats. These licenses would form a specific question in future surveys as to whether people had made any of the specific applications.

The development community and individuals involved in the planning system will be surveyed separately but the role of SNH in the planning process was mentioned during this phase of interviews. SNH have to be included in a range of planning consultations and specific commercial developments could be held back if consultation responses are not received in a timely fashion. Further exploration of this issue in relation to aquaculture revealed that it was the whole process that could take a long time and that SNH were usually quite prompt at responding. It was stated that the problems and delays often arose because of errors in submission or incomplete submissions. SNH were credited for taking the initiative recently and running training courses and information sessions to outline what should be included in a submission to help ease progress.

“But what has actually transpired is that SNH have been very good at coming back communicating with us and facilitating meetings”.

Overall, SNH have been attempting to reach out and inform individuals in both the relevant sectors and the planning authorities about how to work with them.

Where SNH are involved in smaller scale projects, and where something like a bat survey is required, their involvement was praised as being professional and easy to work with. There were no complaints from the natural heritage viewpoint about the process of consultation. The views of developers may be very different though and their views will be revealed in a future survey.

3.2.5 Information

The nature of the working relationships that SNH staff members have with individuals and organisations who have regular contact with them meant that most of those who took part in the research claimed that they were happy with the provision of information from SNH.

“And there’s a lot of very good liaison work which is going on just every single working day”.

However, the research participants stated that their membership and wider stakeholder groups would claim to have very little information from SNH. It was speculated that a wider survey of members and stakeholders would reveal that people received very little information from SNH and that they would have very few opinions about the information available. It was anticipated that few of them would have read SNH publications, few of them would have attended SNH events and few of them would have met SNH staff. However, it was also stated that few of them would feel that they had an unmet need for greater information.

“But by and large, land managers – farmers in particular – will go about their business very much subconsciously fulfilling what SNH want to do rather than explicitly fulfilling these policies”.

Part of the reason for a lack of awareness was attributed to the fact that SNH’s role in decision making, management and actions at local and national level is often hidden, because they are not the body or organisation that implements things on the ground. In comparison with SEPA they also do not have an enforcement role.

“But again, I go back to the issue of SNH were never there to enforce anything... and therefore the relationship has been fairly benign, fairly friendly...”.

Even some of the research participants claimed to have very few communications from SNH, unless SNH employees were present at meetings or there were specific problems that needed addressing. Those representatives of organisations where there was no land owning or land managing membership were most likely to say that they had very little interaction. Anglers, for example, had a far greater awareness of local fishery boards than they would have with SNH.

Where the research participants thought there was dissatisfaction, the source of most dissatisfaction with SNH appeared to be disagreements with specific policies rather than dissatisfaction with the timing and availability of information.

Looking to the future surveys it appears that information provision has to be tackled on two levels. There will be information provision as it relates to the progress of a specific application for funding, planning or licenses. This is very specific and will need to be tied in to questions surrounding the specific process.

There is the secondary level of information provision which will need to probe individuals’ exposure to communications about the wildlife strategy and SNH’s wider operations and whether people feel they have an unmet need for additional information.

3.2.6 Professionalism and Staff Attitude

Individuals taking part in the research were very complimentary about SNH’s staff, especially those operating at local levels. The majority were praised for their helpfulness, attitude and knowledge. There was a perception that SNH employees were usually very helpful and positive.

“The guy that we now deal with in SNH, Robbie Kernahan he is head of the wildlife unit, but he has got non-deer people under him as well, and there is also the, I can’t remember who is, she is more on the research side, but again, they are all working together. The signs are positive”.

If there were any small issues about helpfulness and working relationships these were attributed to personalities rather than anything structural. The positive views

about staff were replicated in the few views expressed in the online forums. There was general praise for staff, praise for one officer in particular and a level of satisfaction that the same employees were generally dealing with the same issues as prior to the merger.

“But I know the guys on the teams and in the wild and I speak openly to them... I speak to them, I pick them up and I get it”.

Individuals with involvement in deer management said that they had noticed little or no difference in the level of service they received since the merger between DCS and SNH. Several research participants stated that they thought it was a bit early to tell whether there was going to be any difference, but they certainly had not noticed any to date. This was largely attributed to the fact that they were dealing with the same people and discussing the same issues. The only change they had noticed is that there were different logos on the jackets!

“And there’s no obvious problems with what’s going ahead at the moment, and people are all doing their bit. I would say we haven’t had much contact since the Deer Commission merger took place; but we haven’t actually needed that much. I think – yeah, there’s no problems whatsoever with the level of contact at the moment”.

The professionalism of SNH’s staff was praised and it was widely thought that SNH staff members were qualified and knowledgeable when it came to wildlife management. There was some concern that this professionalism might be diluted following the merger, but that remained a worry without any evidence at this stage. This belief in professionalism was believed to be highly important because so much of the decision making surrounding management agreements involved meetings, discussions and negotiations. Individuals and organisations stated that they wanted to work with SNH and not be dictated to by SNH and therefore a healthy respect from both sides was agreed to be vital to making any progress.

Where there was any complaint or issue relating to being treated fairly it related to the issues previously described about attribution of credit in partnership projects.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 *Conclusions*

4.1.1 Issues

- Organisations' priorities generally reflect their own self interest. This normally involves being allowed to do what they and their members believe to be in their own long term interest. Depending on the perspective of the organisation this could mean less interference from public bodies or it could equally mean more intervention from public bodies.
- Members of organisations with an interest in conservation would like to see more public intervention. Members of organisations with an interest in field sport or agriculture would normally like to see less intervention from any public agencies.
- The main worries for organisations and their members is a reduction in funding to enable the pursuit of their own interests.

4.1.2 Customers

- Individuals dealing with SNH personnel on a regular basis are extremely happy with the level of service and professionalism demonstrated by staff members.
- Most leaders of the organisations do not believe that their members or the people they represent will see themselves as "customers" of SNH. They become "customers" when they have some form of transactional relationship with SNH. This transactional relationship could be formal or informal.
- Formal relationships can be defined by contracts, agreements or by some form of financial deal. These elements are by no means mutually exclusive. These customers of SNH will often have personal contact, conversations and interactions with named SNH employees. It also would include people who attend meetings with SNH personnel and who work alongside SNH to help shape and implement policies.
- Informal relationships will be characterised by reading publications, attending events or seminars and receiving advice. The best working definition of customers would include these two groups as they are "people who interact with SNH"
- There is a third strand of customer who lie outside even these formal and informal relationships and these are the people who live, work and play in Scotland but their knowledge and experience of SNH, unless they have direct contact, is going to be too limited to make measuring their satisfaction a worthwhile exercise.
- Most of the senior people taking part in the research believe that they have a professional or partnership relationship with SNH rather than a "customer-type" relationship with the organisation. However, based on the points above they would actually be in the first group of formal customers.

4.1.3 Post Merger

- Following the merger of SNH and DCS individuals dealing with both organisations have not noticed any difference in the level of service received or provided since the organisations merged. In most instances people described dealing with the same people in the same situations and said that they remained satisfied with the way deer related issues were being dealt with.
- Working relationships are being maintained and are generally healthy.

4.1.4 Future Survey Implications

- The future survey will need to pick up on the four segments of customers (based on the nature of the agreements and the need to differentiate between transactions and perceptions).
- Looking to future surveys there will certainly need to be a focus on those individuals and organisations that have some forms of formal agreement, transaction or interaction with SNH.
- There are a range of formal agreements that land owners and managers could have with SNH and we recommend drawing up a list from the service catalogue and asking individuals how satisfied they were with the final outcome and how SNH handled any problems arising from the process of drawing up the agreement.
- A secondary list of events, publications, seminars etc. will also be required to pick up on the “soft” contacts. Survey instruments will be required which can route customers to the relevant topics where they can reasonably express an opinion.

4.2 Main Survey Elements

The interviews have confirmed what the important components are for customer satisfaction and customer service for people dealing with SNH, and they have revealed how the elements translate into things which can be measured and assessed in relation to Wildlife Management.

SNH Components	Elements	Drivers
Management agreements	The final outcome	Delivery
Licenses		
Applications		
Funding		
Clear link between decisions, policies and precedents	The way the service kept its promises	
Management of meetings / discussions and subsequent resolution of issues	The way the service handled any problems	
Invitations to take part in policy setting	Initial wait	Timeliness
Response to queries		
Customer knows who to contact	How long it takes overall	
Level of bureaucracy		
Demands on time		

Reporting requirements – outcomes		
Quality of initial submission	Number of times had to contact the service	
Response to Queries		
Rationale for decision making		Accuracy
Clarity of explanations re decisions	Comprehensiveness	
Access to information about SNH's operations	Being kept informed about progress	
Knowledge of wildlife matters	Competent staff	Professionalism
Empathy with land managers		
Standards applied equally across sectors and geographies	Being treated fairly	
Joint working and attribution of credit		
Face to face contacts, formal meetings and telephone calls	Polite and friendly staff	Staff Attitude
Empathy with land managers' and wildlife managers' financial position	How sympathetic staff were to your needs	
Empathy with conservation needs		

4.3 Developing the Survey Methodology

The greatest challenge, as stated by the research participants in this feasibility study, is that the majority of people who interact with wildlife such as farmers, stalkers, gamekeepers, fishermen, hawkers and volunteers will have very little to contribute to any sort of survey. It was stated repeatedly that the majority of these individuals would not have any sort of customer / provider relationship with SNH and would therefore not be able to make any useful suggestions or contribution to an evaluation.

Although only those people who had direct involvement with the interactions previously described (and others that are perhaps less frequent or more specialist) would be in any sort of position to comment on SNH's performance, several of the research participants said that they would be prepared to help with the distribution of a survey to members.

It also going to be necessary to be able to classify people by the nature of their most frequent contacts: whether they are strategic (e.g. at senior level) or tactical (at local level). Individuals will have to be given the choice of saying both because, inevitably, some people will deal equally with both matters. By strategic it means that they participate in forums, groups, partnerships, boards etc. alongside SNH as well as speaking to senior personnel on policy issues. By local it means that they have actually had to work with SNH (and formerly DCS) employees to gain funding, set up an agreement, consult on planning or apply for a license.

The requirements of the survey method are that it can be directed at those that SNH deals directly with and communicates with most frequently. At the same time it needs to be available (on an opt-in basis) to members of the wider wildlife community who self-classify themselves as customers and wish to take part.

4.3.1 Online and Self-completion

What we are proposing as a survey methodology for this, and potentially for other groups of SNH customers, is a self-completion approach. This will normally be

delivered in the form of an online survey. We recommend the inclusion of a helpline and a telephone number in case anyone needs paper questionnaires or has any accessibility issues.

The main benefit of self-completion in this context is that it provides respondents with a bit of time to consider their answers. We have found that for many of our target groups the work of SNH is not always top of mind and therefore time to consider responses should improve the quality of the information provided. Online questionnaires also provide SNH with the ability to have some quite complex routing and this helps classify and segment the respondents.

If there are drawbacks to an online approach they are that it provides a self-selecting sample and it requires up to date contact details (especially e-mail addresses) if it is going to work properly. Almost every research survey has some element of self-selection and our experience in this feasibility study suggests that a broad range of opinions will be gathered using this method. Our recent experiences of working with SNH would suggest that contact details for strategic contacts will be very good. Contact details for the tactical contacts will be quite good but they will require the help of some partner organisations to forward on the e-mails and to publish links on their web sites.

4.3.2 Specific Questions

Based on the interviews conducted during the feasibility study there area range of broad questions that we propose as the basis for converting into an online questionnaire:

- Name
- Organisation
- Job title
- Nature of relationship with SNH
 - Strategic v Operational
 - Membership of specific groups / committees / panels
- Which of the following services / agreements have you worked with SNH in agreeing in the last 12 months
 - Funding applications
 - Specifics
 - Management agreements
 - Specifics
 - License applications
 - Specifics
 - Planning applications / consultations
 - Specifics
- Which of the following events have you attended
 - Etc.
- Which of the following publications have you read
 - Etc.

- Which of the following policies and initiatives that have been launched in the last year have you been aware of
 - Etc.
 - Questions about suitability of communications relating to above
- For each of the above
 - Satisfaction with the outcome
 - Satisfaction with appropriateness of timing
 - If problems, where did responsibility lie
 - How could they be improved in future
 - What was involved – meetings, letters, legal documents, e-mails, phone calls
 - Were communications appropriate
 - What went well
 - Were there problems
 - Were there disputes
 - Were they resolved
 - How were they resolved
- Agreement statements re
 - Process
 - Bureaucracy
 - Decision making
 - Policy
- Agreements statements re species introduction (beavers & sea eagles)
- Communications
 - Documents read
 - Web sites
 - Meetings
 - Training / Conferences
- Culture – How would they rate SNH on a sliding scale Resource Utilisation – Conservation

APPENDIX

5 Online Forum Responses

Online forums

The Stalking Directory

<http://www.thestalkingdirectory.co.uk/forum.php>

user name : Kally

password: Kally1

Existing mentions of SNH / Deer Commission:

Says the SNH best practice guide to stalking is very good

Existing thread - DCS become SNH!

original post: Didn't realise it was quite so soon. I should keep up to date a bit more!

replies:

- The merger happened on 1 July. the next couple of years should be.....erm.....interesting!
- Errrrrrm I think you may be correct
- It was started on the first of July and finalised on the first of August. If you ask me there will be some amount of back biting going on until 2014 every one trying to keep their cushy job. BIG WASTE OF MONEY MOST OF IT AND I AM SURE THAT THE W N E B Has opened a lot of eyes to the waste of cash with this organisation and the FC

Our thread "Has anyone had any dealings with the Deer Commission since they merged with SNH? Wondering what people think of their customer service."

<http://www.thestalkingdirectory.co.uk/showthread.php?19167-Deer-Commission-SNH-merger>

Replies:

- 1 - fantastic.
- 2 - Not much at all if their PR agent comes on here unannounced, soliciting comments.
- 3 - No change really.
- 4 - Only had one dealing with them and received excellent service from James Scott
- 5 - I carry out deer management on 200 acres of tree plantation and required a night shooting certificate from SNH and the service from SNH was rapid and accurate
- 6 - +1, James is a topper
- 7 - re - I carry out deer management on 200 acres of tree plantation and required a night shooting certificate from SNH and the service from SNH was rapid and accurate.
- answer - Are you surprised you want to reduce deer numbers [and I don't have a problem with that given the right circumstances] did you really think SNH would stand in your way ?
- 8 - May I ask foxandhound why you needed a night licence on a small plot like 200 acres was there a reason you could not control the deer within the current seasons.?

9 - You also have the hour of darkness before and after daylight, no licence needed there... So does Kally work for SNH? And why ask the question?

10 - All is well in the Highlands (for me) so far. Still dealing with the same folk and have had no problems with out of season and night shooting licences. I'm involved in Forest Plans and woodland creation schemes and whilst a Deer Management plan is required for each, the SNH have responded quickly and efficiently without trying to re-write the script. There is a push for increased culls in SSSI's in unfavourable condition and I suspect it is an agenda that they will see through to the end.

Regards

11 - re - May i ask foxandhound why you needed a night licence on a small plot like 200 acers was there a reason you could not control the deer within the current seasons.?

- answer - probably same as me =deer not resident and only coming in at night! I had excellent and speedy response to my request also

12 - Corky do you know Foxandhound if so i will take that as the answer he was going to give. For your self you do not say if the ground was a small 200 acre plot of a bigger plot. To me most people are quick to get an out of season licence because it makes up for there inabilalty to control the deer in the normal law abiding way. I can understand it with a ranger who has been given more land than he can cope with (Undermaned with to much land). But if joe public needs to do it using a lamp he should not be given the ground as he has to much to cope with. (from 6pointer)

13 - 6 pointer, I don't know these guys or their ground, however, if you have an out of season/night shooting license you are not breaking any laws, perhaps like around me, their ground is hoaching with walkers and dogs, deer come out after dark, damaging the trees or other crops, ie turnips, what should you do leave the deer to it if they aren't showing morning, afternoon or evening

Someone else may come along and shoot them without a license, after you have been turfed out for not killing deer through no fault of your "law-abiding" ways, ones name would also then be mud with the farmer!

It is another tool that you can use if ALL else fails

14 - 6pointer i do not know foxandhound and i am at the other side of the country anyway but my ground is a 500acre oakwood regeneration scheme where i manage the deer (red and roe) sportingly and fair i think , i have been shooting this ground for 12 years and average around 20 deer a year of this bit but this winter i am not seeing the same numbers of red i usually do and yet the oak seedlings have been decimated in some areas and the landowners grant has been withheld , i, ve put in plenty hours and been there at different times and only had limited luck so what am i going to do = if you cant see them you cant shoot them!

15 - Corky i am not going to teach you how to suck eggs but 500 acre is alot harder to mange than 200 and i am sorry if you need an out of season licence for a couple of hundred acres you really need to have a look at your self. I think that to many people do think of the Night licence as a tool to do the job when in fact it should be a last resort. Wolverine i manage deer in the busiest places imaginable the deer 2 years ago were at such a high population that the DCS had it as a number one priority in the central belt area. So much so that the area is now written in there 2009-2010 review. I decided to up the chalange of reducing the deer to acceptable

levels. It has now been done in just 12 months no lamps out of season or any other trick used by people who just aint got what it takes. Why do you think the FC first purchase after the van is a lamp because its the easy option not because they need it . If i were you corky i would get some one to help me and maybe try a few diffrent ways of getting deer. (6pointer)

16 - would agree wi you 6P,as I posted"if ALL else fails"

What can happen if you are stalking an area a lot is that the deer will go nocturnal,or if there is a lot of disturbance.

Night shooting should only be used if you are having difficulty shooting deer that are there(causing damage)and you have stalked them heavily,I feel sometimes it is a lazy way of getting your doe cull.

As I said it is another tool in the arsenal but it shouldn't be used if not necessary.SNH will go out and check prior damage before granting licences,I see exactly where you are coming from6P and I agree it is too easily abused

17 - Hmm first post and no Intro. Please put an intro up. If indeed you do work for either of the two organisations it would be better if you were open and honest about it.

18 - I've got a question.....

How does a topic that was a question about the relationship of the SNH and the deer commission change to a general slagging off of obviously someone (Fox and hound) who you do not have clue of their circumstances?

I have seen this ground and the surrounding area. It is a very popular place and the general public do use it as and when they want.

I also know that Fox and Hound has about forty years stalking under his belt.

Maybe some of the keyboard superstars should PM him and offer their services or advice, I'm sure he would make them more than welcome.

What is going on in this thread is basically verbal bullying and is one of the reasons that a lot of people that I know who read this directory won't pass any info / coments on it.

19 - End of day,it is for each of us to decide how best to manage our own ground,if there is plenty of deer there and damage occurs and you can't shoot them by "law-abiding"ways well the licenses cover that problem.simples.Alan chill man.Note "law-abiding"quoted from 6P,quite legal to shoot under license at night
Alan did you get all those pups away,still waiting for hip scores

20 - thanks for the advice but i regularlry have someone with me stalking on the ground at the same time and believe me i know the ground like the back of my hand and the boys that come with me know it pretty well too,i have no wish to hammer the ground and my objective has always to keep a manageable number of deer and i dont shoot does or hinds out of season,i voluntarily stopped shooting roe for a couple of years when numbers dropped when the red took over when the sheep came off,i probably average 60 to70 deer shot myself on all the ground i shoot and when out with others on there ground i will probably be present to around another 50 or so culled mostly in season so i think i,ve got a fair idea how to go about things and although i dont have to many problems with urban areas some of the ground is extremely rough terrain and one deer may take the rest of the day to be extracted,as ive said on here before if you want to keep your ground where grants,damage etc is involved you have to make use sometimes of some extra help,in an ideal world everything would be in season but as we know its not always an ideal world!

21 - You are so right Corky money talks and deer welfare gose out of the window. Forstry company,s Issue the grants set the damge allowance set the fine levels and funny enough take out the most out of season and night time licences .😁 You ever thought some one is getting took for a ride.

Shooting Community

<http://www.shootingcommunity.co.uk/forum/index.php?sid=384dc559e6233d7d085611f525846e03>

user name : Kally

password: Kally12

No existing mentions / threads

Our thread - Hi - I'm writing a report about quangos and I'd be grateful if anyone could let me know if they've had any experience of how things are working at the SNH / Deer Commission since they merged - particularly customer service / communication - that sort of thing

<http://www.shootingcommunity.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=12&t=9323>

Replies:

The Deer commission for Scotland (DCS) only now exist on headed paper, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have completely absorbed the organisation.

Bat Conservation Trust

http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bat_discussion_forum.html

user name : Dahlia

password: Dahlia1

No existing mentions / threads

Our thread: "Anyone got any experience of SNH's customer service? Just wondering what it's like. Thanks"

<http://dolomedes.co.uk/BCTyabb/YaBB.pl?num=1295615671>

Replies

1 – Who is SNH?

2 – Scottish Natural Heritage

Farming Discussions

<http://farmingdiscussions.proboards.com/index.cgi>

(NB - <http://farmingforum.co.uk/forums/index.php> - UK wide so didn't register)

user name : Dahlia

password: Dahlia1

No existing mentions / threads

Our thread: "Anyone got any experience of SNH's customer service? Just wondering what it's like. Thanks"

<http://farmingdiscussions.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=general&action=display&thread=2404>

Replies:

1 - Being slightly slow witted today, I have googled SNH and come up with a variety of answers, one being Senior Housing Properties Trust otherwise known as the SNH or another possible Scottish Natural Heritage. I am presuming you are referring to the later **(this is from the forum administrator)**

2 - I've just moved from Scotland where I was crofting for over 20 years. In general I have a very poor opinion of quangoes such as SNH and avoid them - however you might get a more balanced opinion from our 'mother ship' at <http://www.farmingforum.co.uk/> [link is in the General section of this forum's front page.] or you could read Ian Mitchell's Isles of the West - well worth it for his insightfulness

Read more:

<http://farmingdiscussions.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=general&action=display&thread=2404#ixzz1C2Ckoz00>

Fishing the Fly Forum

<http://www.fishingthefly.co.uk/forum/>

user name : Dahlia

password: Dahlia1

NOT APPROVED YET

No existing mentions / threads

Scotland from the Roadside

<http://www.ourscotland.co.uk/phpBB/index.php>

user name : Dahlia

password: Dahlia1

NO APPROVED YET

No existing mentions / threads

Site down 24th / 25th / 26th

Scottish Badgers Talk

<http://www.scottishbadgers.org.uk/talk/index.php>

user name : Dahlia

password: Dahlia1

No existing mentions / threads

Have not posted

Scottish Hills

<http://www.scottishhills.com/html/modules.php?name=Forums>

user name : Kally

password: Kally1

No existing mentions / threads

Our thread: "Anyone got any experience of SNH's customer service? Just wondering what it's like. Thanks"

<http://www.scottishhills.com/html/modules.php?name=Forums&file=viewtopic&t=9988>

Replies:

Tooth and claw

<http://www.toothandclaw.org.uk/index.asp>

user name : Kally

password: Kally1

not posting thread on this one

Existing thread - Pressures on management of red deer

original post: It strikes me that Scotland's red deer herd is under increasing pressure from a variety of land uses. I'd be interested to hear peoples views on the matter, for example;

What is your opinion on the pressures that landowners are under to control deer numbers to a level deemed as suitable by government agencies, environmental charities, etc? Do people think that there is an issue?

Why do you think deer numbers have risen?

How do we maintain a balance between the economic and environmental advantages that a sporting estate can provide to the local area and the need to maintain and in some cases, improve, natural heritage as per European and Scottish law? For example, should estates be made to reduce deer numbers to unsustainable levels (unsustainable in terms of it not being able to viably let the stalking) in order to protect a designated feature?

What do people think about landowners trying to regenerate woodland without the use of deer fences? What do you think about so called "strategic fences" used to keep deer on/away from certain areas?

What do you think about the idea that is becoming increasingly popular - that to have a viable grouse population, deer numbers have to be decreased to a point where they are hardly existent on the estate?

I look forward to receiving some comments on this topic

replies: I think a number of landowners, and groups of landowners who work together to develop deer management strategies for their area, have issues with the Gov't department which indiscriminately culls deer.

What can you say about a Gov't which changes the law specifically so its own dept can cull - rather than manage - deer more effectively? Not an awful lot of best practice involved there...

6 Topic Guide

Introduction / Background

- Introduction to the project and recap on the aims and objectives, i.e. *we are starting the process of gathering customer perceptions about satisfaction with SNH and about service levels following the merger with DCS; the plan is to conduct a full survey with land managers and people who manage wildlife in Scotland in the future. Before doing that we want to speak to industry representatives to gather a sense of the issues of the day to help frame the future survey.*
- **Remind respondent of confidentiality and MRS Code of Conduct;**
- Please could you tell me a little bit more about your organisation and your role; sector and operations, **number of members**, role within the organisation
- What would you say are the main priorities of your organisation at the moment and how are you managing these;
- What would you say are the main priorities of your members at the moment and how are you working with them on these;
- How, if at all, have recent economic circumstances affected members and their needs;

Looking Back – A Sense of Perspective

- Looking back, can you recall what your organisation's reaction was to the news that DCS and SNH were going to merge?
 - What lay behind that reaction
 - Was it a unanimous views or was there a variety of views (expand)
 - What sort of reaction, conversation, consultation did you have with members around the time of the announcement?
 - What were their fears, hopes, expectations?
 - PROMPT – how were DCS and SNH perceived comparatively in terms of customer service?

As of Now

(please note that I will be asking some questions about your own opinions and that of the organisation and I will also be asking some questions about what your members and the people you represent think)

- What interactions do **you and your organisation** have with Scottish Natural Heritage now?
 - Number of meetings?
 - Who with
 - Where
 - When
 - What about?
 - Publications?
 - Web site?
 - E-mails

- What sort of topics are you most interested in or concerned with in relation to interactions with SNH? (*PROBE IF NOT MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY*)
 - Sustainable land use
 - Reducing deer damage to forestry / agriculture
 - Designated sites
 - Deer management advice and/or solutions on designated sites
 - Authorisations of deer control activity & deer control
 - Advice re SRDP & other funding
 - *PROBE for other specific funding if mentioned*
 - **Probe for involvement on Deer Management Groups and Panels**
 - Species conservation
 - Deer impacts on other species (biodiversity)
 - Minimising spread of non-native deer species
 - Public safety & deer welfare
 - Stalking best practice guidance & events
 - Assessment of stalker competence
 - Responsible public access
 - Deer road traffic
 - Monitor of disease outbreaks
 - Hygiene in venison production
 - Deer related outdoor recreational activity
 - Policy & Research
 - Climate change, deer and changing environment
 - Deer related tourism
 - Increase of venison consumption
 - Wider public sector policies
 - Review of annual SRDP priorities
- What “services” provided now by SNH and formerly by DCS would your members recognise as being services if we were to ask them about “Customer Service”
- How would describe **your organisation’s** satisfaction with the levels of service being delivered by SNH?
 - Is it
 - Better than expected?
 - Worse than expected?
 - As expected?
 - PROBE FOR DETAILS ON ALL
- What interactions do **your members (the people you represent)** have with Scottish Natural Heritage now?
 - Number of meetings?
 - Who with
 - Where
 - When
 - What about?
 - Publications?
 - Web site?
 - E-mails

- What sort of topics are **they** most interested in or concerned with in relation to interactions with SNH? (*PROBE IF NOT MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY*)
 - Sustainable land use
 - Reducing deer damage to forestry / agriculture
 - Designated sites
 - Deer management advice and/or solutions on designated sites
 - Authorisations of deer control activity & deer control
 - Advice re SRDP & other funding
 - *PROBE for other specific funding if mentioned*
 - Species conservation
 - Deer impacts on other species (biodiversity)
 - Minimising spread of non native deer species
 - Public safety & deer welfare
 - Stalking best practice guidance & events
 - Assessment of stalker competence
 - Responsible public access
 - Deer road traffic
 - Monitor of disease outbreaks
 - Hygiene in venison production
 - Deer related outdoor recreational activity
 - Policy & Research
 - Climate change, deer and changing environment
 - Deer related tourism
 - Increase of venison consumption
 - Wider public sector policies
 - Review of annual SRDP priorities

- How would describe **your members'** satisfaction with the levels of service being delivered by SNH?
 - Is it
 - Better than expected?
 - Worse than expected?
 - As expected?
 - PROBE FOR DETAILS ON ALL

Measuring Customer Satisfaction

- Speed of delivery is a typical component of good customer service.
 - In what parts of SNH's relationship or dealings with you and your members is speed of delivery important?

- Provision of information is also a typical component of good customer service
 - What elements within SNH's dealings with you and your members demand information provision?
 - When?
 - In what format?

- How do people find the experience of dealing with SNH when it comes to requests for information, answers to queries etc.
 - Does the organisation manage to get it right first time?
 - Is that realistic objective?

- Does the level of service meet, exceed or fall below expectations?
- Do responses contain the level of detail etc that is demanded?
- Is SNH's communication (verbal and written) clear and easy to understand, plain English etc?
- Staff professionalism and attitude are also key components of customer satisfaction?
 - Where and when do you and your members have to deal with staff from SNH and formerly DCS?
 - What do you think you and they would recognise as being good professional service?
 - What do you and your members appreciate when dealing with staff from organisations like SNH
 - Are there other organisations whose staff members are particularly good or bad?
 - Probe for reasons why
- Is your organisation (and are you) happy with the current channels of communication with staff
 - Is most of your contact with local area staff or centrally based staff?
 - Is that appropriate?
 - What would work best?
 - How different are your communication needs from those of your members?

Looking Forward

- How could service be improved in future?
- Where SNH's efforts to improve customer service should be focussed?
- Are there other organisations offering you "great" customer service that SNH could learn from?
- Thinking back to the services provided to you by SNH which ones are the most important to you and your members?
- Should SNH find cost effective ways of measuring your service satisfaction and pro-actively report this to you. If so, how, and how often?

Approach

- For the next phase of this project SNH want to reach out to members and a wider group of stakeholders; based on your knowledge of the sector, how would you advise SNH to approach your members?
- What will be the best way of getting these people to take part in a survey?
 - Method – phone, e-mail, postal
 - Events
 - Publicity
- Where will SNH be able to access contact details to ensure that all stakeholders, managers, members and interested parties are included?

- What are likely to be the barriers to success for a future research project?
- What are going to be the areas of most concern?