

## 1. Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill

The [Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced by the Scottish Government on 19 February 2025. It aims to support the protection and restoration of Scotland's natural environment, and to assist the delivery of the Scottish Government's net zero and biodiversity objectives. The Bill has four main Parts:

- Part 1 deals with setting targets in relation to protecting and improving biodiversity.
- Part 2 relates to legislation dealing with environmental impact assessments and habitats.
- Part 3 relates to National Parks.
- Part 4 relates to deer management

Part 4 of the Bill outlines changes to the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 following recommendations of the [Deer Working Group Report](#) and were consulted upon in the Managing Deer for Climate and Nature consultation last summer [which ADMG responded to in detail](#). Although initial proposals for Deer Management Nature Restoration Orders have not been included in the Bill, ADMG still has significant concerns relating to new triggers for intervention– [see Issue 25, SCOPE](#).

Specifically, the Bill sees the addition of a new **Section 6ZB** which allows for intervention in relation to a particular area of land if deer are seen as detrimental by NatureScot to the preservation, protection, restoration, enhancement or improvement of the natural environment or if deer management contributes to a relevant target, strategy or plan relating to the environment, climate change or biodiversity.

These proposals are wide-ranging and all encompassing. They are also subjective and fail to take into account the interests of owners and occupiers of the land. Nature restoration is an admirable objective; however, the burden placed on deer managers is in ADMG's opinion unmerited, especially those deer managers who have already started to deliver for biodiversity and climate change.

It is unclear to us how this will work in practice and whilst you may not expect support and incentives to be referred to within the legislation, there is very little coming out of Scottish

Government to suggest how those who are targeted through this new legislation will be compensated or incentivized to reduce deer down to what might be very low levels over long timescales.

ADMG's core values are collaboration, sustainable deer management and deer welfare, but we feel that the implications of the introduction of this Bill could threaten all three - and in particular, collaboration. We will be working with Scottish Government and NatureScot to better understand and to seek clarity on the situations in which they envisage the regulations being used.

## 2. Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill Consultation – Have Your Say

The Rural Affairs and Islands Committee is seeking views on the Bill. We strongly urge all Deer Management Groups and individual deer managers to respond to the consultation. To access the on-line consultation go to [https://yourviews.parliament.scot/raine/natural-environment-scotland-bill/consult\\_view/](https://yourviews.parliament.scot/raine/natural-environment-scotland-bill/consult_view/).

## 3. Meetings

- The 2025 ADMG AGM was held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March at Kingsmills. A recording of the meeting and a copy of ADMG Chair Tom Turnbull's address is available on the [ADMG website](#).
- ADMG has recently met twice with Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity. We were able to convey our concerns about the Bill and to emphasize the need for adequate incentives for deer management and venison moving forward.
- Tom Turnbull was recently asked to take part in a round table discussion with the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. An [official report](#) of the meeting is available online.
- The Common Ground Forum held a stalker's event at Glen Falloch Estate, near Crianlarich on 13<sup>th</sup> March which was very well attended.

## 4. Scottish Venison Association

A major development is the amalgamation of the trade organisation representing venison producers and processors, wild and farmed, public and private sector, with the quality scheme Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV). This is expected to complete by June 2025 and both will operate under the same banner Scottish Venison Ltd. Inroads also continue to be made on new capacity/infrastructure projects, education, developing opportunities for public sector procurement, and a new Scottish Venison website. ADMG supports Scottish Venison through a £40K annual grant representing the interests of upland wild producers. Processors of all sizes can also support the organisation through subscriptions to an Associate Processor scheme. A full report of Scottish Venison activity in the last 12 months can be found [here](#).

Scottish Venison is once again a sponsor of the Cookery Theatre at the **GWCT Scottish Game Fair from 4 to 6 July at Scone Palace**, Perthshire with Esse Stoves and with a full line-up of chefs demonstrating the versatility of venison and other game.

## 5. ADMG Programme Ahead

There will be a workshop for DMG Chairs on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April** at the Strathdearn Community Hub, Tomatin at 10am – 4pm. ADMG would welcome input and discussion on the Environment Bill at this critical time, and Chairs of Groups (or a representative) are strongly encouraged to attend. Contact Clare Irving to register ([clare.irving@bidwells.co.uk](mailto:clare.irving@bidwells.co.uk)).

## 6. Deer People Fund

Following the success of the first Deer People book, subject to sponsorship funding, Ian MacGillivray and Richard Cooke plan to start work on a second edition this year, not least with a view to adding to the ADMG Deer People Fund. This fund is directed at professional deer managers working in Scotland with an interest in experiencing wildlife management practices outside the UK and has sent the first two young professionals on overseas placements in 2024. A report from Sophie Clarke one of the placements is available in the Spring edition of [Scope](#) magazine.