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DEER RELATED ROAD ACCIDENTS FOCUS FOR CAIRNGORMS DEER MANAGERS MEETING

Deer managers in the Cairngorms National Park are meeting next week to discuss how they can help to reduce deer related road accidents in the area.

The UK's leading expert on deer related road traffic incidents will be at the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group's meeting at Mar Lodge on Wednesday 7 November. Dr Jochen Langbein of the National Deer-Vehicle Collisions Project will outline to members some of the data that has been collected by the project and the types of measures that can be taken to help reduce the risks of such accidents.

Organised by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), the meeting comes just two weeks after Scottish Natural Heritage issued a warning to drivers to watch out for deer with November considered a peak period for accidents involving deer. Once the clocks go back in October there tends to be an increase in deer feeding at roadside verges just as people are commuting to and from work, resulting in an increase in accidents.

Speaking ahead of Wednesday's meeting **Dr Langbein explained**: "It is difficult to give exact figures for the Cairngorms National Park but we do receive between 40-80 reports of deer related accidents in the Park every year. However, not all are reported, so I would estimate that the actual number of deer related road accidents is more likely to be in the region of 120-180.

"The worst affected areas in the Cairngorms National Park are the A9 between Blair Atholl and Dalwhinnie and from Kincaig to Carr-Bridge along the A9 and on the east side of the Park, on the A93 between Aboyne and Ballater."

He added: "While we may never be able to prevent such accidents completely, there are things that can help to reduce them such as good signage and maintenance of good sight lines for drivers for example clearing high scrub and overgrown trees at roadsides. It is also worth exploring improvements to underpasses or overpasses, where they exist, to make them more suitable routes for deer crossing major roads."

The National Deer-Vehicle Collisions Project is also keen for more people to report deer related road accidents so that the project can continue to build up a clear picture what areas in the National Park may need more attention in terms of reduction measures. Incidents can be reported on the

website, www.deercollisions.co.uk/pages/form.html. The website also contains useful information on what drivers and motorcyclists can do to avoid deer related accidents.

Michael Hone, CDAG chairman said: "Our members are very interested to hear what Dr Langbein has to tell us in terms of the statistics for the Cairngorms National Park. It will be the first time that the figures for Scotland have been distilled down to show us how many incidents occur in the Park. As deer managers we are well aware of the shared role we have to play in helping to reduce the risk of deer related accidents."

Will Boyd-Wallis of the CNPA commented: "It would appear that sections of the A9 and the A93 roads in the Park are hotspots for deer related road accidents but it is worth remembering that many incidents may be going unreported on other roads. This meeting is a valuable opportunity to find out more about what can be done to try to reduce accidents in the future."

Ends.

Notes to newsdesks:

1. If you would like to do any filming/interviews in advance of the meeting on the 7th November please contact the CNPA press office (details below). You are also invited to attend this session of the CDAG meeting at Mar Lodge, Braemar if you wish. The session with Dr Langbein's is scheduled to take place at 1145-1230, after which there will be an opportunity to carry out interviews with Dr Langbein, CDAG chair Michael Hone and a representative from the CNPA. Please can you let the CNPA Press Office know in advance if you plan to attend.

2. The National Deer-Vehicle Collisions in Scotland is undertaken on behalf of Scottish Natural Heritage by the Deer Initiative. For more information on the National Deer-Vehicle Collisions Project please go to www.deercollisions.co.uk/index.html

3. The Cairngorms National Park was established in 2003. It is the UK's largest national park at 4,528sq km. The four aims of the Cairngorms National Park are: to conserve and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage; promote sustainable use of the Park's natural resources; promoting understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park (including recreation); and to promote sustainable economic and social development of local communities.

4. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) was set up to ensure that the unique aspects of the Cairngorms National Park – both the natural environment and the local communities – are cared for, sustained and enhanced for current and future generations to enjoy. The CNPA is designed to be an 'enabling' organisation promoting partnership and giving leadership to all those involved in the Cairngorms.

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