USING **CHOICE EXPERIMENTS** TO INVESTIGATE MANAGER PREFERENCES

AIMS:

- To investigate the relative importance that deer managers attach to changes in deer numbers, deer-related road traffic accidents (RTAs) and deer impacts on conservation.
- To gain information on other factors and deer management goals specific to each study location.
- To examine the attitude of deer managers towards different forms of collaboration in deer management.
- To explore the potential for financial incentives in promoting collaborative frameworks in land management.

METHODS:

We conducted choice experiments and focus groups at a central location in each study region. Participants were asked to choose between various representations of deer populations and their impacts on road traffic accidents and conservation interests using choice cards (figure 1). The factors affecting their choices and their reactions to the situations shown on the cards were then discussed in a group setting. This discussion was also used to examine attitudes towards collaborative management.

	RTAs	Woodland regeneration	Deer population	Tick preferred
Option A				☐
Option B				☐
Status quo				☐

Figure 1. Example of one choice card of a set of eight used to record manager preferences.

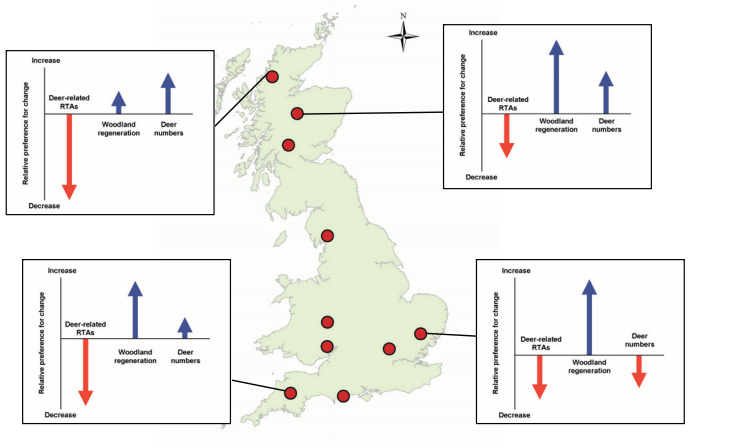

Figure 2. Approximate study site locations and preferences. Arrow graphs show the relative preferences for changes in the different factors for four of the study areas.

RESULTS:

Nationally, participants have a strong aversion to increases in deer-related RTAs, a strong preference for increasing woodland regeneration and a relatively weaker but still significant preference for increasing deer numbers.

There have been regional exceptions to this pattern, including an aversion to increasing deer numbers in Suffolk and a larger preference for increases in deer compared with increases in woodland regeneration in parts of Scotland (figure 2).

The group discussions highlighted a number of additional factors affecting deer and their impacts. Common to most areas was a preference for a reduction in deer-related RTAs via mechanisms such as reducing traffic speeds rather than reducing deer numbers: "You could stop 90% of your [deer-related] road traffic accidents just by having sensible speed limits that are enforced."

COLLABORATION AND INCENTIVES:

While future collaboration in deer management was favoured in most areas, many barriers to this framework were discussed. In particular, mandatory collaboration schemes were largely thought to be impractical or unwanted. A voluntary scheme tailored to specific areas was the preferred option.

A range of possible incentives for collaboration was discussed, and financial incentives were accepted in some areas. Addressing venison prices and marketing was one of the suggested alternative mechanisms for encouraging more effective deer management (figure 3).

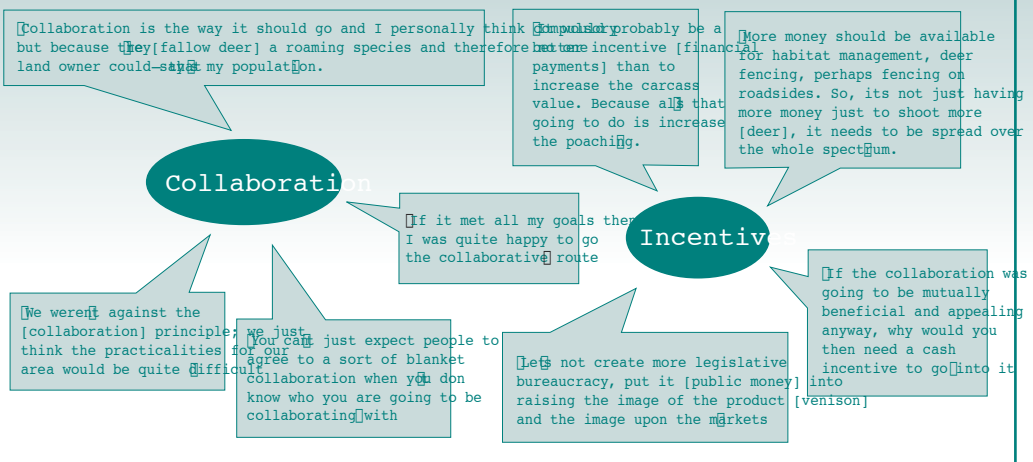

Figure 3. An example of some of the statements given regarding collaboration and incentives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT:

1. Financial incentives are one potential mechanism for promoting a greater degree of collaboration in deer management. However, mandatory collaboration schemes would be viewed as unacceptable by the majority of deer managers.
2. A voluntary approach tailored to local circumstances at specific sites, perhaps supported by financial incentives in some areas, appears to be the preferred mechanism by which to encourage further collaboration in deer management.

For more details, visit www.macaulay.ac.uk/RELU or contact Piran White pclw2@york.ac.uk

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