Press release: Motorists urged: Be deer aware

Drivers are today being warned to look out for deer roaming on to the country's roads and posing risks to road users. The warning comes after five deer were found dead at one location on the A35 in Dorset recently.

Figures collated from various studies suggest at least there could be some 400 people injured in deer-related collisions each year, and potentially around 20 people killed.

At this time of year, deer collisions peak as many of the animals cross roads seeking new territories. The highest risk of collisions is between sunset and midnight, and the hours shortly before and after sunrise.

So today The Deer Initiative and Highways England have teamed up to give advice to drivers.

Leonardo Gubert, Senior Ecologist at Highways England, the Government company responsible for motorways and major A roads, said:

> Sadly, the outcome of a collision involving a deer can be much more catastrophic than vehicle damage or injury to the animal.
>
> You may be well-travelled and on a well-known route without a previous sighting, but there may be deer hidden in nearby foliage or woodlands and some species of deer can gather often in large groups; you may have seen one and avoided it but others may follow and unexpectedly dart out into the roadway.
>
> We want everyone travelling on our roads to reach their destination safely and with as many as 1.5 million wild deer living across Britain it is vital for drivers to be aware of their presence, to be extra vigilant, especially at this time of year when deer are on the move, and to follow our advice.

Deer signs are placed at locations where the animals are known to be active and are likely to cross; they help inform drivers of the need to slow down to give more time to react.

The advice to drivers is:

1. When you see deer warning signs or are travelling through a heavily wooded or forested stretch of road, check your speed and stay alert
2. If your headlights are on, use full-beams when you can, but dip them if you see deer as they may 'freeze' on the spot instead of leaving the road
3. If you see a deer, look for another. They often gather in herds and

follow each other as they move through the landscape.
4. Only brake sharply and stop if there is no danger of being hit by following traffic, use your hazard lights. Try to come to a stop as far away from an animal as possible to enable it to leave the roadside without panic. Try not to suddenly swerve to avoid a deer. Hitting oncoming traffic or another obstacle could lead to a more serious collision. 5.If you must stop, use your hazard warning lights

David Jam, Director of The Deer Initiative said:

“The recent spate of accidents is a stark reminder about the dangers of deer on our roads. We urge drivers to check their speed and stay alert especially when they see deer warning signs or are travelling through a heavily wooded or forested stretch of road.”

Recently, Highways England traffic officers removed five dead deer in one day from the central reservation on the A35.

Figures collated from a number of studies suggest that while it is safe to say 40,000 deer are killed in vehicle collisions every year, this figure could be as high as 74,000 across Britain as a whole. Conservative estimates of 400 injuries to motorists and passengers related to these collisions could in fact be nearer 1000 annually.

Accurate records of deer-vehicle collisions are vital as they help build an accurate picture of the roads most at risk of deer collision which can then be assessed, and appropriate measures to tackle the issue can be put in place. Drivers are urged to report any incidents via the Deer Aware website.

Highways England works with partners including the Deer Initiative to identify deer-related collision ‘hotspots’ and to take appropriate measures to reduce the risk, including installing deer proof fencing and constructing larger culverts which provide an alternative route for deer to cross the road.

If you hit a deer while driving, your priorities in this order are:

- keep yourself and anyone with you as safe as you can.
- park your car in the safest place with hazard lights on. Consider using it to also warn other road users.
- call an ambulance if human injuries warrant it.
- call the police.

If you are involved in a deer vehicle collision and require assistance please contact the police. If you need to report a deer vehicle collision or to find out more on safety advice please visit the Deer Aware website.

News story: Better financial reporting for academy trusts

The new academies chart of accounts is DfE's standard for financial data that underpins the academies accounts return and budget forecast returns.

Academy trusts that choose to adopt the standard will benefit from potential automated data transfer from their finance system to ESFA for financial returns relating to the 2019/20 financial year. An additional benefit is that DfE can provide richer and more accurate financial benchmarking information allowing academies to compare their finances with other similar academies with greater confidence.

Lord Agnew, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System said:

"Our better financial reporting programme is a great step forward in our work to improve efficiency in schools. We have recognised that the current system of submitting financial data to the department is time consuming and offers insufficient benefit to academy trusts.

"By having a standard chart of accounts, we create the essential building blocks for the new system as it provides a consistent way of recording financial data for all academy trusts. This will allow us to reduce the burden on trusts through the electronic submission of financial data directly from finance systems and adding greater value to trusts by enabling us to create new financial efficiency tools as well as improve the timeliness and quality of the existing tools."

Adopting the new chart of accounts will require an investment of time and effort from trusts but this will lead to significant future benefits. For example, around 65% of the accounts return comes from data within a trial balance. Being able to have that data pre-populated will be extremely helpful to trusts.

Trusts can view the academies chart of accounts and a guide to adopting the new standard.

Adopting the academies chart of accounts is voluntary.

News story: Dstl shares new open-

source framework initiative

A new open-source software framework designed by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is now available to help improve tracking technology.

Tracking and state estimation is a vital part of Defence research; being better able to track enemy missiles, vehicles or drones is essential for operational effectiveness. However, the algorithms that crunch the data are complex and difficult to compare. This software framework allows the algorithms to be compared, side-by-side, in a “bake-off” against realistic data.

Leading the project across the 5-eyes nations of UK, USA, Australia, NZ and Canada, Dstl has made the project available to anyone wanting to upload and test their tracking algorithms.

The framework, called Stone Soup, is a software architecture which allows code components to be plugged-in in a modular fashion, such as algorithms, sensor models and simulators.

Users can then model a huge number of outcomes, which can be measured on how they improve survivability, safety, or operational effectiveness. This even has non-defence uses: for example tracking systems are a key component in self-driving cars to ensure the car can be aware of and follow all vehicles and people in its vicinity.

Stone Soup will facilitate and encourage other algorithm developers or tracking practitioners to insert their new components, which can then be compared alongside accepted or state-of-the-art algorithms to help the developers and industry / Government laboratories evaluate them against standard data sets. Alternatively industry can insert their own data into the framework and run this against the standard suite of tracking algorithms it contains. One day this could provide better tracking capabilities for a whole range of difficult problems such as following a swarm of fast drones, tracking space-clutter around the International Space Station or understanding the movements of migrant vessels in the Mediterranean.

This is just one example of the multinational collaboration in science and technology which Dstl engages in. The initiative is supported by four other nations’ Defence labs, including Defence Research and Development Canada, which is contributing to its development.

Professor Paul Thomas, a Senior Principal Scientist at Dstl, said:

> We are really excited to be making Stone Soup available to other tracking practitioners giving us the potential to be high-impact in multiple communities. It’s a ‘standard’ platform for tracking algorithm development, and for testing and benchmarking, which will be a huge benefit for the academic and Defence community.

> The framework is in its infancy but the long-term aim is to save lives by having data that can accurately track adversaries, giving commanders in the battlefield full situational awareness.
>
> It's an accelerated learning aid for people who are just coming into this area too. Before this, it could have taken months, even years, to learn the detailed mathematics of tracking. This is a fantastic tool with so many benefits; I hope lots of experts can join us in using and contributing to this framework.

The software is free and is available on Github and some datasets from Dstl are available below. More information can be found here

---

Press release: New local authorities will be created in Northamptonshire

Communities Secretary confirms new local authorities will be created to improve the delivery of services.

Eight existing councils in Northamptonshire are to be abolished and replaced by 2 new councils of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire to improve the delivery of public services across the county.

Announced by Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP today (14 May 2019), the new North Northamptonshire authority will cover the existing districts of Kettering, Corby, East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough. The West Northamptonshire authority will cover the existing districts of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire.

The new authorities will replace the current 2-tier system of local government and will be a significant step towards ensuring residents and

businesses across Northamptonshire can in future have the sustainable high-quality local services they deserve. The new councils will align transport, housing and environment services and improve education and skills provision.

Communities Secretary the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

> I welcome the continued commitment of Northamptonshire's councils and their partners to driving forward the changes to local government in their area which I have confirmed today.
>
> The 2 new authorities of North and West Northamptonshire will usher in a new era for the county, transforming the way services are delivered so every resident can have confidence they will receive the high-quality public services they both expect and deserve.

The Education Secretary is minded, if there are new unitary authorities, to establish a new Children's Trust to deliver children's social care across the county on behalf of the new councils.

The Trust will ensure continuity by centralising children's social care and follows a recommendation from the Children's Commissioner Malcolm Newsam in a report published today. His recommendation is based on Children's Trusts having enabled effective local services for children in need, including in Doncaster, Slough and Birmingham as evidenced through recent inspections.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

> Supporting vulnerable children and families must be the first priority of any government, so they can get the protection they need.
>
> The decision marks an important step for everyone living in Northamptonshire, and by creating a children's trust to deliver children's social care across the 2 new counties, we will be able to provide the continuity and stability that families deserve.

The 2 new authorities will be fully operational from 1 April 2021, with elections taking place in May 2020 to shadow authorities to ensure a smooth transition.

Read the full Written Ministerial statement.

Following an independent inspection of Northamptonshire county council which recommended local government in the county should be reorganised, the Secretary of State invited the Northamptonshire councils to submit proposals for unitary structures to replace the existing 2-tier system.

Seven of the 8 councils submitted a proposal to the Secretary of State for the establishment of 2 new unitary councils in Northamptonshire. The

government then conducted an 8 week consultation with all 8 councils, residents in Northamptonshire and the wider local government sector in November 2018. The consultation received a total of 386 responses.

The proposal for establishing the new councils were assessed against the criteria they are:

- likely to improve local government and the delivery of services across the area of the proposal, giving greater value for money, generating savings, providing stronger strategic and local leadership, and which are more sustainable structures
- command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal
- based on a credible geography, consisting of one or more existing local government areas and having a population that at a minimum is substantially in excess of 300,000

The government's consultation supplemented the consultation exercise undertaken on behalf of the Northamptonshire councils by the independent Opinion Research Services which included face to face workshops, a representative telephone survey of Northamptonshire residents and an open questionnaire.

News story: Dounreay recycling trial opens doors for future possibilities

Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL), a company owned by Cavendish Dounreay Partnership, worked with EDF Cyclife and Low Level Waste Repository Ltd (LLWR) to safely transport 4 large objects, weighing a total of 66 tonnes, to a specialist facility for recycling.

It was part of a feasibility study considering a different low level waste metal treatment route for recycling bulk metal items, rather than disposing of them in the site's low level waste vaults.

The work is being undertaken as part of the National Waste Programme, co-ordinated by LLWR on behalf of Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), which aims to reduce the amount of low level waste material sent for disposal. It builds on similar projects delivered elsewhere in the NDA group, such as at Berkeley in Gloucestershire and Chapelcross in Dumfries.

Dounreay bulk metal recycling trial

The trial, which has been welcomed by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), has confirmed that recycling opportunities could exist for some other waste metal items expected to require management as part of the

site’s closure programme.

Dounreay’s Strategic Programme Director Sam Usher said:

> While this builds on other projects from elsewhere in the industry, it is the result of a significant effort by the team at Dounreay. Working with EDF Cyclife and LLWR, we have used a new route to recycle large items, too big to fit inside standard waste containers, rather than size reducing and disposing of them in vaults. This is a major step forward for the site and has enormous potential for our future decommissioning strategy.

Joe Robinson, Managing Director of Cyclife UK, added:

> Cyclife is delighted to have been able to work closely with Dounreay and LLWR to successfully demonstrate the effectiveness of our treatment routes to support decommissioning. This project increases the options available to Scotland in future decommissioning campaigns.

Once the UK’s centre of fast reactor research, Dounreay is now aiming to be recognised globally for decommissioning excellence. The work is being delivered by DSRL on behalf of NDA.