Isle of Wight Deer - a Position Statement from the British Deer Society, October 2017

The British Deer Society understands that the Isle of Wight Biodiversity Group wishes to designate the Island as a 'deer-free zone'.

Red and Roe deer can be considered indigenous to the Island and, despite periods of absence, both species are continually recorded as swimming to the Island from the mainland. Their presence may therefore be considered to be natural and part of a rich biodiversity. Our ancient woodlands were shaped in the presence of deer, and browsing by deer is an important and beneficial factor in creating diverse woodland structure. As wild deer, these species have a clear entitlement to remain within their natural range and it is manifestly inappropriate to write them out of the Island's natural history. If management is required, then both species are readily managed with human intervention.

Fallow deer have been present on the mainland for centuries and are now considered by many to be a naturalised species. If they too have arrived on the Island by natural means, then their presence must also be recognised and appropriate management techniques employed.

Sika deer have also been recorded as swimming to the Island. Sika were a C19th introduction to the UK and where Red and Sika are present in low numbers the chances of hybridisation are increased. The threat to the purity of native Red deer may have a bearing on the approach to the management of this species, much in line with that of the Scottish government.

It is almost certain that any record of the presence of Chinese Water Deer or Muntjac deer on the Island would be the result of illegal human intervention.

Under UK Law, responsibility for the management of deer lies with individual landowners and there is no legal or moral basis for designating the Island a 'deer-free zone'. The presence of wild deer should be recognised for the many benefits they bring and any future management should be based on a properly conceived management plan using the model of 'best practice'.