

A wide-angle photograph of a lush green field at dawn or dusk. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and casting long shadows. A herd of deer, including several stags with antlers, is scattered across the field. In the background, there is a dense line of trees and a fence. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds.

November
2023

Business Model Impact

The Scottish Deer Centre & Wildlife Park

Sarah Rice

General Manager



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General Manager

- Joined the Scottish Deer Centre team in 2021 and took on the challenging role of the General Manager
- Probably the most hand-on General Manager you could meet! I spend most of my time getting my hands dirty with park improvements, helping with the animals and meeting the general public.
- Having grown up in a rural environment, the Zoo business was a huge draw for me, and I love coming to work every day.
- As you might imagine, this presentation environment is unfamiliar to me, and it is an honor to be presenting here today on behalf of the Scottish Deer Centre



A large stag with impressive, multi-tined antlers is shown in profile, facing left. Its mouth is wide open in a bellowing call. The stag is standing in a field of tall, dry grass. The background is a dense forest of trees with autumn foliage in shades of green, yellow, and brown.

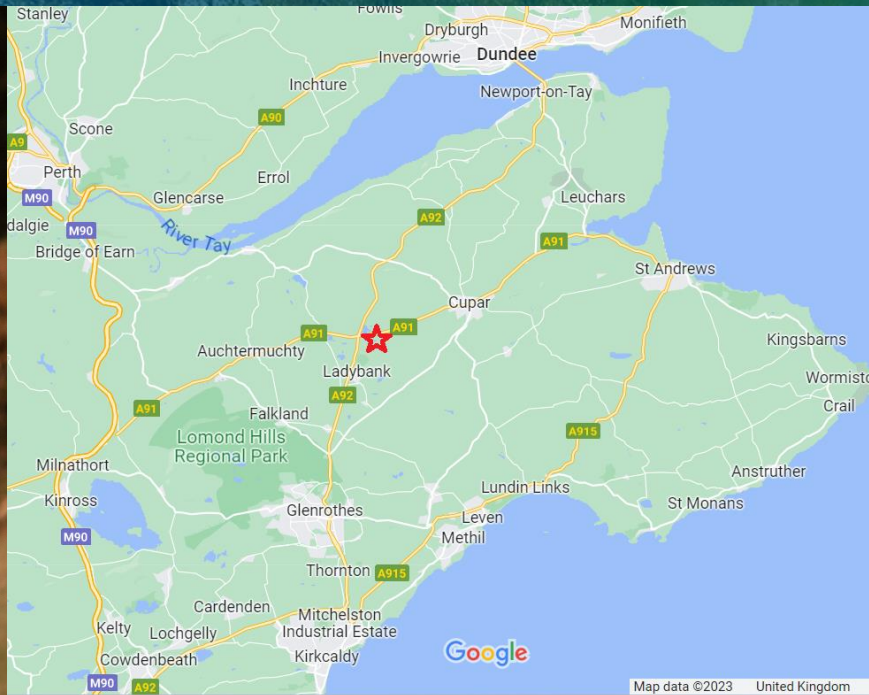
Scottish Deer Centre & Wildlife Park History

1988

About SDC

History, location and value proposition

- The Scottish Deer Centre is based on the outskirts of Cupar in Fife and boasts 55 acres of land
- We first opened in 1988 by farm owners with a pay-at-the-gate model.
- Our site offers our visitors the opportunity to get up close and personal with many breeds of animals such as brown bears, wolfs, birds of prey and, of course, our wonderful 13 species of deer
- The pandemic placed significant pressure on the Scottish Deer Centre and like many other business at the time, due to the economic impact of COVID, the previous owners placed the business into administration in November 2020.





A New Start and Investment

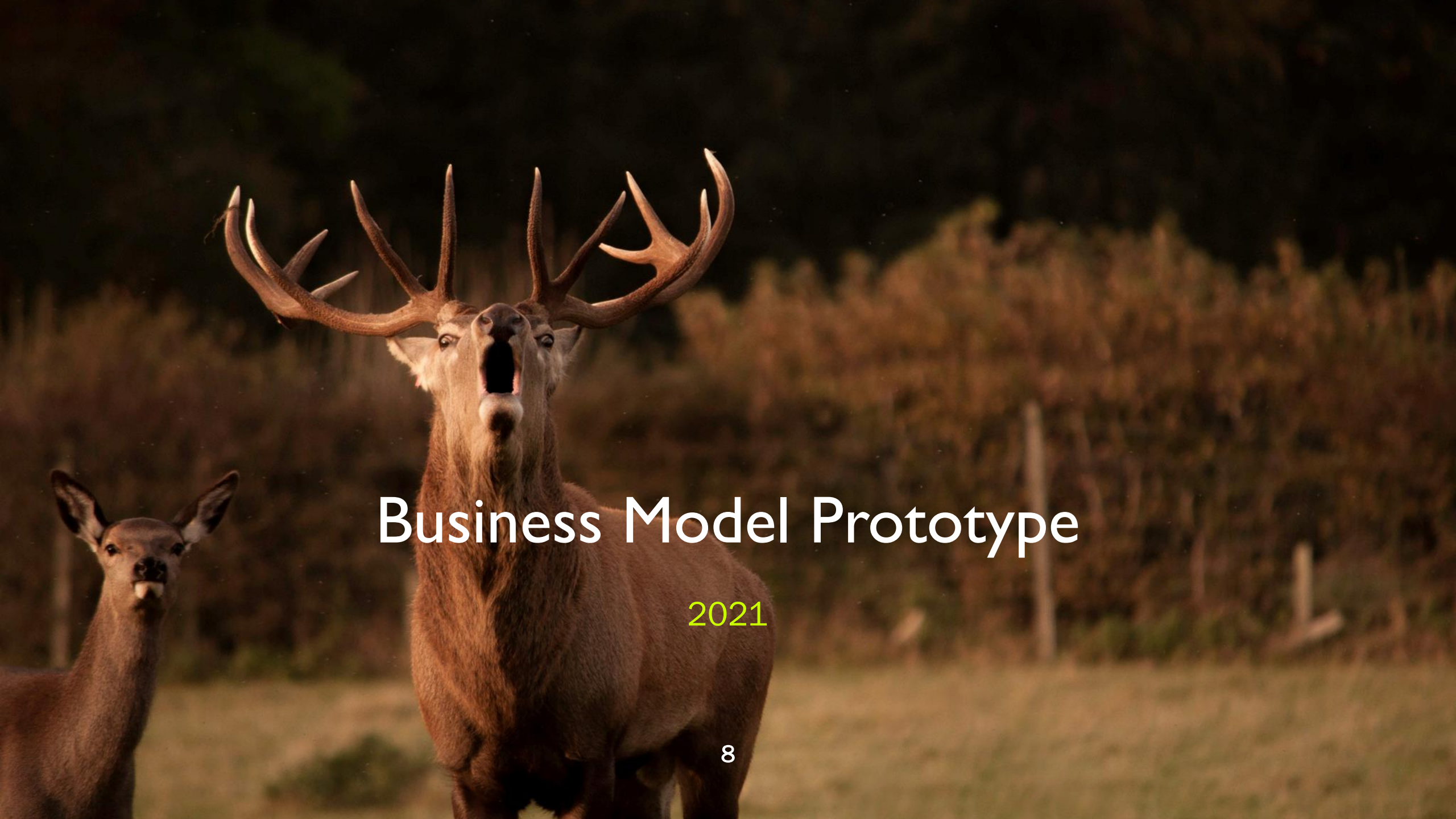
2021

Investment

New owners brings new opportunities

- In May 2021, new owners David Hamilton and Gavin Findlay bought SDC, bringing the business out of administration
- Both owners have young children, a passion for animals and transforming local businesses
- The new owners headhunted me for the General Manager role and committed to transforming the park through investment into new attractions such as the Buccaneer and bouncy pillow, pictured below
- While these investments increased footfall into the park, it was clear that in order to remain sustainable, the parks numbers would need to increase





Business Model Prototype

2021

Radical Business Model

A busy summer following investment and optimism from the new owners!

- SDC has traditionally been a seasonal business. As we moved through to the latter stages of summer 2022, the new owners proposed a change from our pay-at-the-gate business model and move to a pay-as-you-please model
- That's right, a move to potentially completely free entry to the park! Crazy, I hear you say.
- Well, crazy is what we got!



Madness!

People everywhere.

- A typical family entry cost at SDC was £40 for two adults and two children. Reducing this to a potential £0 opened the doors for those families who are less fortunate to visit the park under pay-at-the-gate conditions.
- This placed significant pressure on car parking facilities, staffing and local public transport.
- During the pay-as-you please trial in August 2022, we had more footfall than in the previous three months!



Supporting PAYP

Updates across the park.

- The increase in visitors to the park has made a significant impact on the infrastructure and amenities we have at the park.
- First and foremost, the standard car park was not enough to support our visitors. We then had to redesign our overflow car park to increase standard capacity
- We are in the process of increasing the number of toilets within the site to cater for the number of visitors we now have
- More people = more rubbish = more staff to empty bins!



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© The Scottish Deer Centre Keeper Team (AD), 2017

In Park Purchases

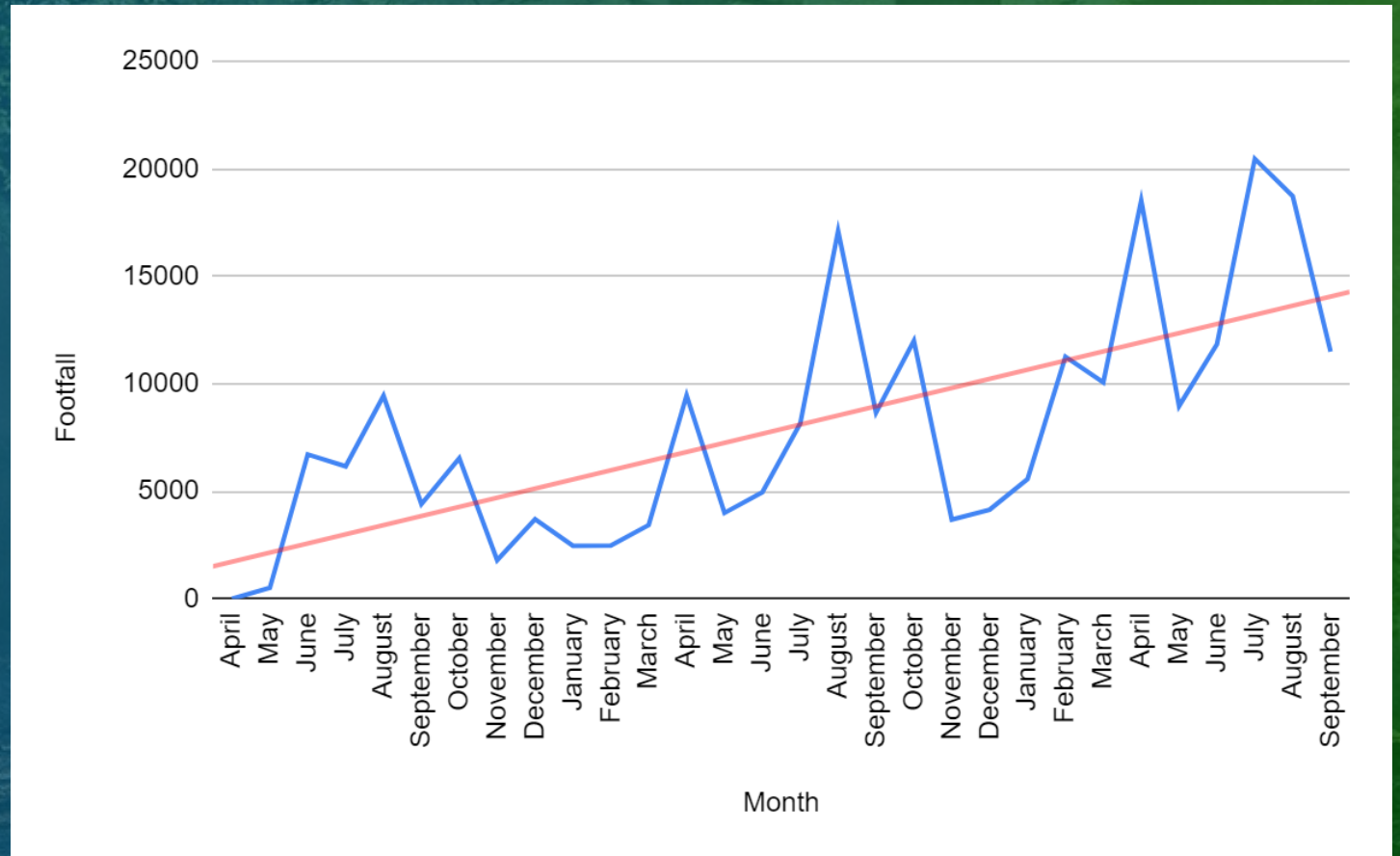
New mindset into in-park purchases

- The owners felt this could be something that we supported longer term if we could compliment the entry conditions with premium events, activities, attractions and catering that would benefit all customers.
- Further investment was made into events such as the Christmas grotto, Easter grotto, Pumpkin Patch and Halloween scare nights to bring new customers to the park.
- New catering options for customers were added to the park to offer a range of snacks and treats through Scooply, the Crepe Shack, the SDC café and Kiosk.
- Customers felt they could spend their money on these premium services when the gate prices were PAYP.



Visitors

- 2023 has seen double the footfall, compared to the same period in the previous year
- Revenue has increased over the same period
- Summer months are proving to be very popular however winter months where the park is usually very quiet are now far busier
- Having only been operational for 2.5 years, we have limited (but optimistic) data



Visitor Feedback

PAYP proving to be popular!

- The feedback from the public into the pay-as-you-please entry was exceptionally positive.
- With the cost of living increasing, many families were unable to take a day out such as coming to SDC. With PAYP in place, this was suddenly possible for all visitors.
- “There is no way we would have been able to visit such an attraction without PAYP, thank you so much” – A Visitor
- “On my single wage I would not be able to bring my children here without PAYP.” A Visitor
- “I am local and able to pop in for a short time without committing to a full ticket price.” A Visitor
- “Glad to see PAYP is working – I am happy to pay the ticket price to support the park.” – A Visitor





The Future of Pay-as-you-please

2024

Into 2024

Pay-as-you-please remains active!

- The value proposition the park is offering is evolving rapidly. The range of optional in-park-purchases and entertainment continues to be invested in and further commitment from the owners.
- Last month, the Scottish Deer Centre acquired a local business that closed its doors – Muddy Boots. This shares similar values to SDC and I'm delighted that our park will benefit from new attractions such as Laser Tag and massive indoor play area that will attract visitors in the wet and cold months.
- We recently celebrated our 12-month anniversary for pay-as-you-please and we are aiming to continue this into 2024 as long as this remains sustainable.



Conclusion

Early days, but looking positive.

- Pay-as-you-please has generated new interest in the park and given access to a new demographic that previously may not have visited the Scottish Deer Center.
- There is a new 'buzz' around the park, especially during summer
- Winter months which were slow are now busy
- We are only working with 12 months of data with PAYP – initial analysis is promising, but we need more time and more data!
- For us, this business model is working well, alongside continued investment into in-park-purchases. I am very positive about the future of SDC and hope to see you all visit soon!

The **Scottish Deer** Centre
& *Wildlife Park*



THANK YOU!

Sarah Rice



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