

ELS DMG Eastern Working Group Report

Spring 2019

Part 2.

Compiled S Fox – D Mosgrove 26/04/2019. Updated 02/05/2019.

Actions to be completed with a date by if needed in green.

ELS Eastern working group members meeting Attendance: -

- Number of attendees.

Estate	Spr 2015	Sum 2015	Win 2015	Sum 2016	Spr 2017	Win 2017	Spr 2018	Win 2018		%
ADMG	1	1			1	1	1		5/8	63
Ardgour *	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	8/8	100
Carnoch *	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8/8	100
Conaglen *	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	8/8	100
FES *	2	2	1	1	1	1		3	7/8	88
Inversanda *			1	1	1				3/8	38
SNH	1		1	1		1	2	1	6/8	75
Property Members *	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5		40
Attended *	4	4	5	5	5	4	3	4		34
% * attendance	80	80	100	100	100	80	60	80		85%

- Working group meetings, telephone and email exchanges between the officers and Eastern working group members take place between the DMG meetings. Ariundle Farm is represented at meetings by Conaglen. Contact has been made between the owners of Inversanda and the Chair with a meeting proposed to include DMG matters.

Habitat Impact Assessments: -

Summary of results to 2018: -

- Conaglen have established 10 Blanket Bog HIA plots. With no other BB results from other properties to date, these are not sufficient to provide statistical robustness. However, we do see that despite other herbivore presence the result conforms to the DMG stated target.
- Carnoch has established 35 Dwarf Shrub Heath plots as a baseline. Whilst some of these are in a neighboring DMG with similar objectives, in practice, they are just over the road and therefore relevant and indicative of the impacts in the wider area. Despite other herbivore presence the result conforms to the DMG stated target.
- Carnoch has re-assessed 19 of the above noted Dwarf Shrub Heath plots on a periodic rotation. (1 plot was lost.) Despite other herbivore presence the result conforms to the DMG stated target.
- Ardgour Estate, Conaglen Estate and Glen Scaddle Estate have all completed further HIA on blanket bog in April 2019 as set out in the DMP and the above figures are to be updated in due course. [Chair, Vice Chair](#)

- Inversanda have committed to 10 HIA BPG plots commencing 2019.
- In total 90 + BPG HIA plots are committed to for 2019 spread across the Eastern Working Group area. All will be monitored on a three-yearly cycle.
- A plan showing the Location of the Habitat Impact Assessment Monitoring Plots will be instructed once all the 2019 survey data has been collected, collated and analysed. [Vice Chair](#).
- Ecologists carried out an extensive survey of Glen Gour during 2018, the results of which are still outstanding. [Ardgour to follow up](#).
- Summary BPG compatible HIA data to be submitted to the DMG to consider with the Population Model update. [All properties by 31/07/2019](#).

Peatland restoration: -

- Conaglen Estate instructed in 2018 its woodland management agent CKD Galbraith to investigate the possibility of achieving funding via the Peatland Action Fund in relation to restoring to peatland an area of historically deforested lodgepole pine plantation which had originally been planted on deep peat in the 1960s. Conaglen was advised that this type of proposal would not be supported by the scheme, so no further actions were taken.
- The Eastern Working Group reviewed the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) article which raises concern over the re-wetting of peatlands and asked SNH to comment on this matter at the April 2019 DMG meeting. The JNCC article states, "*Efforts to restore damaged UK peatlands are increasing with a focus on restoring the natural waterlogged conditions, usually for biodiversity, archaeological and hydrological reasons. However, re-wetting peat produces methane (CH4), which is a considerably more powerful greenhouse gas than CO2, and the short to medium-term effects of restoration on the GHG flux from peatland is poorly understood.*" [SNH 29/04/2019](#)
- The JNCC article supports the view taken by some of the DMG members that completing ill-advised peatland restoration projects may in fact be degrading to the current environmental conditions and worsen the long-term effects of global warming; as opposed to maintaining the current peatland status quo.
- The Eastern Working Group therefore conclude that retention of existing peatland and/or continued restructuring with conifer or native woodland species on historic peatland plantation sites generally contributes more to carbon sequestration and retention, than deforestation and peatland restoration could offer in this Eastern DMG area.
- FLS report for Callop; The deep peat areas to the North and Northwest of Lochan Dubh have been restored post tree harvesting through the Peatland Action Fund. The work has involved excavator flipping of tree stumps and compaction under 2m wide excavator tracks to result in unaerated peat with a high-water table. This will help the bog begin to function again in storing rather than releasing carbon. Ditches have been blocked at 10-15m intervals using peat and peat hags have been restored through reprofiling steep bare peat and translocation of vegetated peat. Glacial knolls with no or shallow peat have not been treated and will be planted with native tree species, including the main knoll with the mature oaks that is classified as Ancient semi-natural woodland.

Designated Sites: -

- The Eastern Sub Group recognises that an increased understanding of the balance between deer populations and the natural heritage is an objective of considerable importance.

Since the 9th DMP Edition was published SNH confirmed;

- The Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI extends to 1,483.62ha within the ELSDMG area and is deemed to be in favourable condition.

- The Doire Donn SSSI designated areas extends to 166.87ha of which 75.15ha are designated woodland features. The woodland feature within the designated area is deemed to be unfavourable declining condition.
- Loch Sheil SSSI, extends to 1,387.89ha of designated features split between the Eastern and Western DM Sub-Groups. An area of 17.30ha of designated woodland features are deemed in unfavourable condition within the Eastern Sub-Group area.
- Since the 9th DMP Edition was published the Eastern Sub Group have been able to confirm;
- Deer management is potentially relevant to woodland features at three of the designated SSSI/SAC sites within this area.
- These three sites have 311.66ha of designated woodland features of which 92.45ha are deemed to be in unfavourable condition.
- The unfavourable woodland sites equate to 0.280% of the Eastern Sub Group's area.
- The unfavourable woodland sites equate to 3.99% of the overall designated area within the Eastern Sub Group.

Designated sites Progress: -

- Conaglen continues to strive to make progress on their Designated Sites being the Doire Donn and the Ardgour Pinewoods. Formal woodland proposals were submitted to FCS for approval in relation to both areas in late 2018 and Conaglen are currently awaiting confirmation if these proposals are acceptable to FCS for grant support.
- SNH Woodland and Wildlife Management Officers L Servant, G Taylor and Woodland Advisor J Hall visited the Conaglen Pinewoods on 12th Feb 2019. This was the first time any of them had been to these woodlands and the impression they gave was that they were pleasantly surprised to find these woods are in much better order than perhaps they had thought they might be. This visit allowed them to see for themselves the success of the 'rotational fencing' principle that Conaglen has implemented since the 1970s to ensure they retain and expand upon the woodland area in the medium to long term.
- It is recognised that the most robust method of protection of designated site interests is often by exclusion of herbivores by deer fencing and that the principle of rotational fencing is suitable to retain existing native woodland cover and improve woodland condition in the medium to long term whilst at the same taking other factors into consideration.
- On 12th Feb 2019 the SNH Woodland and Wildlife Management Officers were also invited to visit the Doire Donne woodland but they have not arranged this visit with the Estate yet.
- Since 12th February 2019, 4 members of the Eastern Sub-Group have instructed Victor Clements to prepare a collaborative woodland expansion application to support a feasibility study and to examine woodland expansion options generally in the area; with the particular focus on improving the condition of the designated woodland site within the Eastern Sub-Group area.
- Following Victor Clements report which is expected imminently individual applications can be made to the SRDP to progress specific schemes.

Native woodlands and woodland cover: -

- Historic afforestation has been implemented well, with consideration given to deer and welfare at the time.
- New proposals are at an early stage of development and consideration will be given as to the effects on distribution, density & etc. on deer and welfare as the proposals develop.
- A request for an HIA analysis spreadsheet for woodland was made to SNH 08/09/2018 and repeated 24/10/2018. [SNH](#).

Standards of Competence - Training – Certification; recent additions: -

- Carnoch - S Fox attained DSC2, Certificate Number 9039.

- Carnoch – S Fox & G Ellis Sit Astride ATV Certificate.
- Carnoch – S Fox & G Ellis Sit Inside ATV Certificate.
- Carnoch – SQWV Approval - Registered Number 139.
- Conaglen – A Davidson attained DSC2, Certificate Number 25056.
- Conaglen – R Maclean, I Laing, D MacKenzie & A Davidson completed an ITC Outdoor First Aid Course on 12/03/19 (Valid for 3yrs).

Public health and wellbeing: -

- DSC1, DSC2 and 'Trained Hunter' status recorded in DMP.
- SQWV registrations recorded in DMP. The membership of SQWV now equates to 82.4% of the land in the DMG area and 81.9% of the 2017/18 cull being processed under the SQWV scheme.
- Deer managers advised (as noted in part 1) via group emails of deer and other diseases etc.
- HFTSH entries for Ardgour, Carnoch, Conaglen, and Glenscaddle. All FES land is open to the public. Information signage and car parking is in place on many of the main access areas.
- Stalkers, managers and staff assist in rescue or help locate lost, injured or unwell walkers or visitors to our area as required.

Non – Native species: -

- There are no reports of non-native deer or feral pigs in the area. Feral goats are present to the South of the A861 public road. There are no recent reports of goats in the ELS Eastern Working group area.

Economic benefits and costs: -

- The ELS DMP identifies significant costs due to FES failing fences. This has been raised on a number of occasions at the meetings and via direct comms with FES officers. This loss of deer through poorly maintained fences is detrimental to the open range sporting interests, whilst at the same time being detrimental to the enclosed woodlands interests.
- Ardgour Estate, in response to concerns raised over deer on a croft at Clovullin in the first instance offered to contribute financially to fence the croft concerned which, with grants available, would have allowed the croft to be fully fenced at no cost to the crofter. Such offer has been refused by the crofter. Despite the crofters refusal however the offer still stands. Ardgour Estate, in accordance with the agreed decision at the DMG November meeting, has increased their culling efforts around this area taking into account the public safety.
- Throughout Scotland the Private Sector or voluntary deer management sector accounts for a national cull around 65,000 deer per year or 70% of the total cull around 95,000 deer. This sustains 745 direct FTE jobs (845 total jobs less 100 FES) and is generally at no cost to the public purse. On the contrary in many cases this activity contributes to the public purse by way of various taxes (E.G. Inland Revenue, National Insurance, VAT, Rates, Non-Domestic Rates, IPT.) and accounts for £38.2m of self-financed expenditure (£41.1m less £4.9m FES). (Source PACEC summary report 2016.)
- State owned forestry FES is responsible for carrying out a major part of Scotland's deer management. This comes at a cost to the public purse. Culls are carried out by highly effective, skilled rangers and contractors who can account for many hundreds of deer each per year. FCS cull around 30,000 deer per year on the National Forestry Estate at a nett cost to the public purse of £4,900,000 (2014/15) equivalent to £163 per deer culled. Just under 18,000 or 60% of which were culled at night and or out of season (2013/14). The FES cull sustains approx. 64 FTE directly employed jobs plus 30 to 35 people on short to medium term contracts. (Source, FCS publication – Deer Management on the National Forest Estate 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2017.)

A recent article in the 'Shooting Times' reports the numbers of deer shot in state owned forestry is increasing with 37,000 culled during 2017/18. Out of season and night shooting is increasing too with 75% of stags shot out of season during 2017/18 and citing the widespread use of thermal imaging devices as increasing the effectiveness of night shooting.

ELS DMG Western Working Group Report

Spring 2019

Part 3.

Compiled S Fox – D Mosgrove 26/04/2019. Updated 02/05/2019.

Actions to be completed with a date by if needed in green.

ELS Western working group members meeting Attendance: -

- Number of attendees.

Estate	Spr 2015	Sum 2015	Win 2015	Sum 2016	Spr 2017	Win 2017	Spr 2018	Win 2018		%
ADMG	1	1			1	1	1		5/8	63
SNH Claiash Moss	1		1	1		1	2	1	6/8	75
FES	2	2	1	1	1	1		3	7/8	88
Resipole Farm	2	3	3	2	2		1	1	7/8	88
Property Members	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		24
Attended/represented	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	3		20
% attendance	100	67	100	100	67	67	67	100		83%

- Working group meetings, telephone and email exchanges between the officers and Western working group members take place between the DMG meetings.
- There have been communications between the DMG Chair and SGRPID who have committed to regular meeting attendance, engagement with the group and HIA. Also communication between the DMG Chair and the NSWG Vice Chair which confirms they are not part of the ELSDMG.

Habitat Impact Assessments: -

- Claiash Moss will be creating 10 BB HIA BPG plots during 2019. [SNH 2019](#).
- RIPD are to carry out 30 Blanket Bog and 30 Dwarf Shrub Heath BPG baseline plots this summer which will be re-assessed on a three-year cycle into the future. (Email 11/04/2019 and phone call 25/04/2019) [R Dunsmore July 2019](#).
- Resipole have been carrying out annual woodland grazing HIA's for 5 years following on from earlier woodland HIA methods. They have established 10 DSH BPG plots this year on a 3-year re-visit cycle.
- Summary BPG compatible HIA data to be submitted to the DMG to consider with the Population Model update. [All properties by 31/07/2019](#).
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Designated Sites

- Within the ELS Western Sub Group Area there are two designated SSSI sites where deer management is potentially relevant to blanket bog or a woodland feature equating to 638.29ha or 5.15% of the Western Sub-Group area.
- Both of the above areas are owned by SNH and it is understood that the Claiash Moss Blanket Bog SSSI is deemed to be in favourable condition. The 70ha forming the previous Ariundle

Oakwood SSSI, which has now been merged with the Sunart SSSI designation is assessed in Mixed Condition, because the wider (5,540ha) Sunart SSSI has one feature (upland oak) which has been assessed to be in non-favourable condition.

- SNH have not confirmed the area of designated woodland features within the 70ha previously designated as the Ariundle Oakwood SSSI, but they have confirmed that with the NSWG and the Ariundle Oakwoods area there is a total of 335.34ha of woodland features which have been deemed to be in unfavourable condition.

Standards of Competence - Training – Certification; recent additions: -

- Resipole Farm – SQWV Approval - Registered Number 138.

Public health and wellbeing: -

- DSC1, DSC2 and 'Trained Hunter' status recorded in DMP.
- SQWV registrations recorded in DMP.
- Deer managers advised (as noted in part 1) via group emails of deer and other diseases etc.
- HFTSH entry for Resipole. All FES land is open to the public. Information signage and car parking is in place on many of the main access areas.
- Stalkers, managers and staff assist in rescue or help locate lost, injured or unwell walkers or visitors to our area as required.

Non – Native species: -

- There has been an unquantified report of sika deer but none have been reported as culled.
- There are no other reports of non-native deer or feral pigs in the area. There are no recent reports of goats in the ELS Western Working Group area.

Economic benefits and costs: -

- The ELS DMP identifies significant costs due to FES failing fences. This has been raised on a number of occasions at the meetings and via direct comms with FES officers. This loss of deer through poorly maintained fences is detrimental to the open range sporting interests, whilst at the same time being detrimental to the enclosed woodlands interests.
- State owned forestry FES already is responsible for carrying out a major part of Scotland's deer management. This comes at a cost to the public purse. Culls are carried out by highly effective, skilled rangers and contractors who can account for many hundreds of deer each per year. FCS cull around 30,000 deer per year on the National Forestry Estate at a nett cost to the public purse of £4,900,000 (2014/15) equivalent to £163 per deer culled. Just under 18,000 or 60% of which were culled at night and or out of season (2013/14). The FES cull sustains approx. 64 FTE directly employed jobs plus 30 to 35 people on short to medium term contracts. (Source, FCS publication – Deer Management on the National Forest Estate 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2017.)
- A recent article in the 'Shooting Times' reports the numbers of deer shot in state owned forestry is increasing with 37,000 culled during 2017/18. Out of season and night shooting is increasing too with 75% of stags shot out of season during 2017/18 and citing the widespread use of thermal imaging devices increasing the effectiveness of night shooting.