

**EAST LOCH SHIEL
DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP**

**DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2018 to 2023 PERIOD

26th September 2018

9th Edition

Compiled by:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group (ELSDMG); has a formal constitution (Appendix 1) and its members meet a minimum of twice annually to discuss all matters relating to the management of deer and their range. The ELSDMG subscribes to the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG).
- 1.2 This Deer Management Plan (DMP) has been privately funded and developed by the members of the ELSDMG. This 9th Edition of the DMP relates to the period from 2018 until 2023 and due to the substantial updating of the DMP, which has been undertaken in 2018, it replaces the 8th Edition which had originally been prepared for the period 2016 until 2021. This 9th Edition of the DMP has formally been endorsed by the members of the Deer Management Group (DMG). The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and can be updated if required to take account of any changing circumstances with the group area. A formal review of the overall document will take place at no later than December 2023.
- 1.3 This “DMP - Background Information Document” provides information about the structure and running of the DMG, count and cull information, designated sites, and all other deer management issues that affect the Group.
- 1.4 A separate document “DMP – Action Plan / Working Document” has also been prepared and will be regularly updated to reflect current group issues, ongoing activities and plans.
- 1.5 The ELSDMG extends to 46,233ha; the DMG area is bounded by Loch Eil to the north, Loch Linnhe to the east. To the south, by the A861 from Clovullin to Strontian and then Loch Sunart and to the west, by Loch Shiel and then the sea. A plan has been included at Appendix 2 which shows the Property Boundaries, the Sub-Group Boundaries and the overall extent of the DMG area.
- 1.6 The ELSDMG has 9 subscribing members extending to 21 properties and receives good participation at all meetings.
 - 1.6.1 6 properties extending to 28,621ha or 61.9% of the group area regard deer as a primary management objective. The majority of these members also have some agricultural interests, although the numbers of agricultural livestock are now modest in the group area compared to 50 years ago.
 - 1.6.2 12 members extending to 12,459ha or 27.0% of the area of the group view forestry or conservation as their primary land use objective. These include national public bodies, such as FCS and SNH, along with private woodland owners.
 - 1.6.3 3 properties extending to 5,153ha or 11.1% of the group area regard agricultural interests as a primary management objective, and each also regard sporting interests as their secondary objective.
- 1.7 The members of ELSDMG agreed in principle in August 2018 to the sub-division of the DMG into two sub-groups, see Appendix 2, plan showing “Property & Sub-Group Boundaries within the ELSDMG” which highlights the boundaries of the two sub-groups. As such responsibility for preparation of this DMP has also been

divided between the two sub-groups respectively. The membership details of each sub-group are detailed in Section 7.

1.7.1 The 'Western Sub-Group' will relate to the land which lies to the West and South West of the DMG area and equates to 14,054ha.

1.7.2 The 'Eastern Sub-Group' will relate to the land which lies to the East and North of the DMG area and equates to 32,179ha.

1.8 The intention behind this sub-division of the DMG is to ensure that both sub-groups produce their own required sections of an overall DMP which will satisfy both the SNH 'Benchmark' and the 'Public Interest' requirements and be viewed together to provide an overall ELSDMP.

2.0 Code of Practice on Deer Management

The Code of Practice on Deer Management is recognised by ELSDMG and the terms of the Code will be delivered through the DMG Plan. Compliance with the code will be evaluated by the members and when necessary discussed at an appropriate DMG meeting.

A copy of the Code of Practice can be accessed at;

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/managing-wildlife/managing-deer/code-practice-deer-management>

3.0 Wild Deer Best Practice (WDBP) Guidelines

ELSDMG members recognise the Wild Deer Best Practice (WDBP) Guidelines and confirm that all deer management should be carried out in accordance with the best practice principles. Compliance with the WDBP Guidelines will be evaluated by the members and when necessary discussed at an appropriate DMG meeting.

The Best Practice Guide can be accessed at

<https://www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk/>

4.0 ADMG Principles of Collaboration

The Principles of Collaboration as devised by the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) are recognised by the ELSDMG for reaching a consensus on deer management matters and in working together in a neighbourly and collaborative manner which recognises and respects the equal legitimacy of all deer management objectives which comply with the Code.

The Principles of Collaboration are:

- Acknowledge what we have in common – a shared commitment to a sustainable and economically viable Scottish countryside.
- Make a commitment to work together to achieve and maintain that.
- Accept that we have a diversity of management objectives and respect each other's objectives.
- Undertake to communicate openly with all relevant parties.
- Commit to negotiate and, where necessary, to compromise in order to accommodate the reasonable land management requirements of neighbours.
- Where there are areas of disagreement we undertake to work together to resolve them. Collaboration is essential to meet the standards set by the Code of Practice for Deer Management.

5.0 Purpose of Plan

The main purpose of this DMP is:

- To promote collaborative discussions and draw together views from all relevant parties interested in the management of deer within the DMG area and to lay-out an agreed statement of shared views of the members of the DMG focusing on the management of the wild deer within the DMGs area.
- To produce a DMP that compiles all available information and statistics for both members and the general public to identify if the proposed objectives are being achieved.
- To deliver the requirements of both the “Public Interest” and “Benchmarks” as detailed in the SNH requirement criteria for DMPs.
- To agree upon actions to identify and deliver public interest benefits throughout the DMG area.
- To review the principal objectives of the deer management group and to ensure that actions to deliver those shared objectives are progressed and monitored.
- To clarifying contact information and to confirm how communications with the ELSDMG can be received and addressed.

6.0 Review of Plan

It is currently proposed that SNH will complete a full review of ELSDMG’s DMP in April/May 2019; against their 'Benchmark' and the 'Public Interest' criteria and as such the DMG is working towards completion of an updated edition of DMP in relation to this date.

Following the April/May 2019 SNH review the DMP will be reviewed on an annual basis and sent to the members of the ELSDMG for approval before each Winter DMG meeting.

It is likely that some parts of the plan, such as the audit and targets, will require annual updating, while parts such as the Policy Statement may remain unchanged for longer.

Any necessary changes and updating to the plan will be made by a member nominated by the ELSDMG, currently the Vice Chairman, unless otherwise agreed by the DMG.

When changes have been made, revised copies of the plan will be made available to all members of the ELSDMG and circulated for public comment to the stakeholders if the changes made are deemed by the members of ELSDMG to be sufficient to require external review.

7.0 Group Members

The ELSDMG extends to a total area of 46,233ha.

7.1a The properties within the Eastern Sub-Group of the DMG area are:

Deer Forest/Property	Owner/Tenant(s)	Area Size (ha)	Primary Objective
Achaphubuil & Camusnagaul Woodlands	Treslaig & Achaphubuil Crofter's Woodland Trust Sporting Rights Owned by - Broadland Properties Ltd	64	Amenity Forestry
Achnalea Plantation	C Boyd	60	Forestry
Ardgour Estate Including: Salachan Farm Keil Farm	R Maclean of Ardgour	4,534	Sporting
	Glen Gour Sporting Lease Sporting Tenant – Broadland Properties Ltd	Inc Above	Sporting
Ariundle Farm	W MacPherson Represented at DMG meetings by Broadland Properties Ltd	1,220	Agricultural
Conaglen Estate	Broadland Properties Ltd	15,201	Sporting
Drimnatorran Farm	R MacIntosh	815	Sporting
Druim Laith (North Carnoch) Including: Glen Tarbert Plantation	S Fox	1,488	Sporting
Forestry Enterprise Scotland			
Doire Mhor (Callop), Drumfern and North Loch Shiel Woods	J Jackson Approx 161 Ha Fenced in East Sporting Rights Held by - Broadland Properties Ltd	731	Forestry
Glen Hurich	J Jackson Open Hill in Northwest Sporting Tenant of Partial Area - Broadland Properties Ltd	1,300	Forestry
Glenscaddle Estate	E Maclean of Ardgour Sporting Tenant - Broadland Properties Ltd	4,893	Sporting
Inversanda Estate (North)	Mr & Mrs Colburne	1,690	Sporting
South Garvan Woodland	R Nicholson Sporting Rights Owned by - Broadland Properties Ltd	183	Forestry
Total		32,179	

7.1b The properties within the Western Sub-Group of the DMG area are:

Deer Forest/Property	Owner/Tenant(s)	Area Size (ha)	Primary Objective
Forestry Enterprise Scotland			
Achnanellan & Pollock Woodland & Hill	J Jackson Sporting Tenant - J MacDonald	1,239	Forestry
Ardery Woodlands X 3 & South Resipole Woodland (Part of SOWOG)	J Jackson	320	Forestry
Drimnatorran Woodland & Carnoch Woodland	J Jackson	950	Forestry
Glen Hurich	J Jackson Ex. 1,300Ha Open Hill Sporting Tenant of Partial Area - Broadland Properties Ltd	6,160	Forestry
Strontian Village & Longrigg Woodland	J Jackson	100	Forestry
Resipole Farm (Part of SOWOG)	P Sinclair	1,387	Sporting & Agriculture
Resipole Woodland	Agent: M Harris Sporting Tenant - J MacDonald	714	Forestry
Scottish Natural Heritage			
Ariundle NNR	SNH (Torlundy) - R Kilpatrick Culling Tenant - FES	70	Environmental /Amenity
Claish Moss	SNH (Torlundy) - R Kilpatrick Sporting Tenant - J MacDonald	568	Environmental /Amenity
Sunart Estate Including: Anaheilt Township Ardery Farm Ariundle Township Ranachan Farm Scotstown Township	SGRPID - Ewen MacPherson Sporting Tenant - J MacDonald Crofting Tenure Farm Tenant - J Campbell Crofting Tenure Farm Tenant - D Berardelli Crofting Tenure	2,546	Sporting Agricultural Agricultural Agricultural Agricultural
Sunart Oak Woodland Owners Group Below SGRPID Deer Fence Including: Ardery Croft No.1 - (Bun Allt Eachain) Ardery Croft No.2 Ardery Farm - J Campbell Ardery Woodland – FES Ranachan Farm - DBerardelli	Multiple small Private and Scot Gov. ownerships. Private Owners represented at DMG meetings by P Sinclair	Inc Above	Forestry
Total		14,054	

7.2 Membership Overview

The following section gives a brief overview of the essential management information relating to each of the group members.

7.2.1 Achaphubuil & Camusnagaul Woodlands

Located in the north east the Achaphubuil and Camusnagaul Crofters Woodlands are fenced off from the main deer range and are effectively two self-contained native woodlands which have been extensively utilised for agricultural livestock shelter by the Crofting Township of Achaphubuil.

7.2.2 Achnalea Plantation

Historically a mature commercial plantation, Achnalea is completely deer fenced. Significant felling took place in 2017, with further underway in 2018.

7.2.3 Ardgour Estate

Including; I) Salachan Farm, II) Keil Farm & III) Clovullin Township.

Deer management is the primary land use objective for Ardgour Estate. There is also significant fenced woodland operation as well as let property and holiday accommodation on the Estate. Salachan farm is held in hand with a small number of sheep on in-bye fields, but this is very much a secondary consideration.

Keil Farm is a let Agricultural Unit with in the region of 750 ewes and 30 cattle grazed extensively. The Sporting Tenant liaises regularly with the Farm Tenant and there are no conflicts noted between the sporting and agricultural practices.

Historically the relationship between the Clovullin Crofting Township and the Landlord and Sporting Tenant has always been good, however, since 2017 one crofter in the township has re-fenced his croft to capture and cull deer and since then the DMG have been liaising with the Crofter, SNH and Community Council to find a resolution to this matter.

7.2.4 Ariundle Farm

Agriculture land use has historically been the primary objective along with deer stalking interests as the secondary objective. No stalker is employed, but stalking and the sale of venison has always been utilised to bring an additional income stream to the farm and deer presence is considered to be income generating.

7.2.5 Conaglen Estate

Conaglen Estate is the largest land holding in the DMG. Conaglen employs a significant number of local staff (30+ part & fulltime) and it expands its stalking range via taking leasehold interests in Ardgour and Glenscaddle Estates.

Deer management is the principal land use objective along with farming of around 60 highland cattle which are utilised to improve the glen grazings and break up bracken etc. Historically Conaglen removed all of its 3,000 ewes and followers to achieve a larger and more productive deer herd.

To address some historical crofting and deer management issues of conflict Conaglen worked with its Crofting Townships to create a network of linked deer fences extending to about 18 KM, which the Estate now maintain. These fences prevent deer access on to all of the in-bye crofts and large areas of the Common Grazings. The fences also prevent deer

from accessing large areas of the public road, as such also address public road safety issues.

Woodland restoration and expansion are also of considerable importance and since 1959 Conaglen has practiced a system of rotational native woodland fencing and restoration projects of the Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI/SAC. Considerable areas of native and commercial woodland have been established in the past 60 years and this is a continuous process; with the longer term aim to diversify habitats in the various glens to provide improved woodland sites along with long term shelter and improved grazings for deer.

To improve condition Conaglen also provides stag feeding deer during the winter periods with the use of silage, concentrated deer cobs and via supplementary mineral blocks licks.

7.2.6 Drimnatorran Farm

Historically, Drimnatorran was a hill sheep farm but all of the stock has been cleared and stalking/deer control is now the only income stream. The presence of wild deer is therefore considered to be income generating.

7.2.7 Druim Laith (North Carnoch)

The sheep stock on the higher ground of Druim Laith was removed in 1996 to leave deer management as the principle objective with, woodlands, renewable energy and wildlife & conservation as the other main management objectives with limited agricultural grazing on the lower ground.

Substantial fenced woodland regeneration schemes were successfully implemented in 1996/97 to create areas suitable for future deer and livestock shelter. Deer management on the property is carried out by the owner and the welcome presence of deer contributes to fulfilling the management objectives.

7.2.8 Forestry Enterprise Scotland (FCS), managed by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES)

FCS's primary management objectives are to expand and protect Scotland's forests and increase their value to society and the environment. Forest protection is therefore the most significant deer management consideration.

FCS are the second largest landowner within ELSDMG, managing 10,800 ha equating to 23.4% of the DMG area. FES have by far completed the largest annual overall deer cull in recent years being 42.2% of the overall DMG's five-year average cull.

The FCS areas, as managed by FES are dominated by significant coniferous plantations and a significant amount of felling and restocking as taken place in recent years throughout the DMG area.

7.2.9 Inversanda Estate (North)

Inversanda maintains approximately 150 ewes which are grazed on in-bye and low hill land, but they do not graze the main hill land. Deer Management and Agriculture are the primary management objectives.

7.2.10 Resipole Farm

Historically, Resipole Farm was a significant hill sheep farm, but the sheep stock has been removed to improve the ground available to deer and to promote restoration of the woodland habitat.

No stalker is employed, but deer control and stalking and the sale of the resultant venison have always been utilised to bring an additional income stream to the farm. Deer fenced native woodland enclosures have been developed over the years and significant use is made of a small herd of hill cattle in various Agricultural Management Plans to allow limited planned grazing in areas of the Sunart Oakwoods SSSI.

7.2.11 Resipole Woodland

The Resipole Woodland area is completely deer fenced, and management priorities are commercial woodland creation. Incursions of deer occasionally occur, and a number of red deer are culled within the area, along with a number of roe deer per year.

7.2.12 Scottish Natural Heritage

Two locations, including; I) Ariundle NNR & II) Claish Moss

SNH's Ariundle NNR location is managed by FES as part of their Drimnatorran Woodland.

The Claish Moss is fenced from the main deer range and no significant deer access is suggested.

7.2.13 South Garvan Woodland

Until 2015/16 the South Garvan Woodlands were a mature commercial woodland block established in the 1960s and as such open to deer movements and utilised as shelter.

Significant felling took place in 2016/17 and the woodland was fenced from the main deer range in August 2017. A cull was completed to remove the internal deer presence to allow replanting in spring 2018. The block and fence condition will now be closely monitored to limit any potential for deer incursions.

7.2.14 Sunart Estate owned by SGRPID

Let Agricultural Units including; I) Anaheilt Township, II) Ardery Farm, III) Ariundle Township, IV) Ranachan Hill, V) Scotstown Township.

The hill stalking and deer culling is let to a sporting tenant.

7.2.15 Sunart Oak Woodland Owners Group (SOWOG)

Including; I) Ranachan Farm, II) Ardery Farm & III) FCS Ardery Woodlands

A number of small properties along the side of Loch Sunart which form the SOWOG have traditionally not engaged with ELSDMG since the areas were originally fenced from the group. These properties include FES woodlands along with owner occupied crofts and small woodland units.

8.0 Current and Historic Red Deer Population

8.1 Deer Counts and Densities

Accurate deer counting forms the basis of population modelling. Due to remoteness aerial counts are considered by the members of the ELSDMG as the only effective method of counting our open hill range to produce accurate count results. The last open hill aerial count was undertaken in 2016 and members have agreed that an open range helicopter count should take place approximately on a 5-yearly basis.

8.1.1 March 2016 Aerial Deer Count

	Area (Ha)	Km ²	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Density (deer/km ²)
Eastern Sub-Group	32,179	321.79	1,027	1,867	549	3,443	10.7
Western Sub-Group	14,054	14.054	100*	217*	61*	378*	2.7
			(* Animals Counted on Hill Only)				
Total	46,223	462.23	1,127	2,084	610	3,821	8.3

The above count figures only take into account animals counted on open hill during the aerial count and do not make any allowance or assumptions for woodland deer numbers.

The Deer Density observed on the Open Range during the count lie towards the lower end of SNH's medium rated category of 8-15 deer/km² for anticipated densities in Scotland.

8.1.2 Sex Ratios & Calving Success 2016 Count

The March 2016 figures show 1 stag to 1.85 hinds.

The March 2016 figures show a 29.3% calving success rate in the open range.

8.2 External Migration and Immigration of Deer from/to ELSDMG area

It is believed that relatively few deer move into or from the DMG area, simply due to the physical geography of the group being bound by Lochs and Hill and where natural physical barriers to movements do not exist there is the existence of considerable deer fencing between the DMG and neighbours.

8.3 Internal Deer Migration between Properties within the DMG

It is understood by the DMG members that the Red Deer population moves on a seasonal basis freely between the properties within the DMG. The Proprietors and Stalkers are also fully aware of the additional induced population movements which are caused by particularly harsh weather patterns.

Some of FES woodlands are not securely fenced at present and the FES culls, have increased considerably over the past 10 years. This migration from Open Range into non-securely fenced woodland blocks and resultant increased culling is the primary area of concern for the members of the DMG who utilise the Open Hill Range for Sporting Culls. This migration is also a primary concern of FES, as it means that additional deer access their woodlands, but the fence between the properties is not a march fence but rather located between 0.5km & 1km on the FES side of the march.

The Eastern Sub-Group members have suggested that fences should be maintained and replaced as necessary prior to culling commencing within the DMG area, but FES have highlighted budgetary constraints as being a major issue with this policy for them.

8.4 Woodland Deer Counts and Densities

Some members of the ELSDMG, such as Conaglen Estate, have instructed woodland surveys to assess the long-term status of their woodlands. As a Sporting Estate, Conaglen is much more concerned to ensure, via rotational fencing, the long-term future expansion of their woodlands which allows some area to re-generate whilst utilising the remaining areas as valuable winter shelter for the Deer Herd.

FES confirmed from their most recent deer population assessment based upon dung counting which was completed in Winter 2009, that they calculated a population density of 7.5 deer/km² in the Glen Hurich Forest; along with an estimated recruitment rate of 45%.

When projected over the areas which were not counted during the Aerial Count in 2016, being the FES managed woodlands including SNH's Ariundle Woodland along with Claiash Moss, South Garvan and the Resipole Woodlands extending to 11,035ha this equates to in the region of 828 deer within the 11,035ha of enclosed woodlands within the ELSDMG area.

Based upon the 1 stag to 1.81 hind ratio, as established during the 2016 Open Range 2016 Count, along with an estimated recruitment rate for the woodland region of 45%; this would suggest figures of 228 Stags, 414 Hinds and 186 Calves.

8.4.1 Total ELSDMG Deer Population Inc Estimate for Woodland Animals

	Area (Ha)	Km ²	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Density (deer/km ²)
March 2016 Aerial Count			1,127	2,084	610	3,821	-
FES 2009 Estimate			228	414	186	828	-
Total	46,223	462.23	1,355	2,498	796	4,649	10.1

The above table combines the data collected during the 2016 Aerial Count on the Open Range along with the most up to date data provided by FES from 2009 in relation to the deer densities within their enclosed woodlands. The combined deer density for the whole DMG including both Open Range and Enclosed woodlands at March 2016 was therefore thought to be 10.1 deer/km².

8.5 Previous Group Deer Counts

Year	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total
Feb 1980	900	1,622	616	3,138
Feb 1986	722	1,723	700	3,145
1995	818	1,685	661	3,163
2002	1,063	1,619	552	3,238
March 2010*	1,004	1,822	700	3,526

(* Inc March 2009 West End Count.)

8.5.1 Population Trends

The data from the previous five counts between 1980 and 2010 provide an average historic baseline number of 3,242 deer during this 30-year period. The 2016 counts show an increase of 579 animals in the DMG area (or increase in accuracy of counting methods) above the historic baseline average.

8.6 Mortality and Recruitment Information

Natural mortality rates are monitored by the stalkers and land managers each spring. The DMG members consider that the DMG area is not afflicted with unusually heavy deer mortality rates. Mortality figures observed will be recorded by each individual property and will be discussed at the DMG's annual Summer Meeting. The observed natural mortality rate will annually be used to update the DMG's Population Model

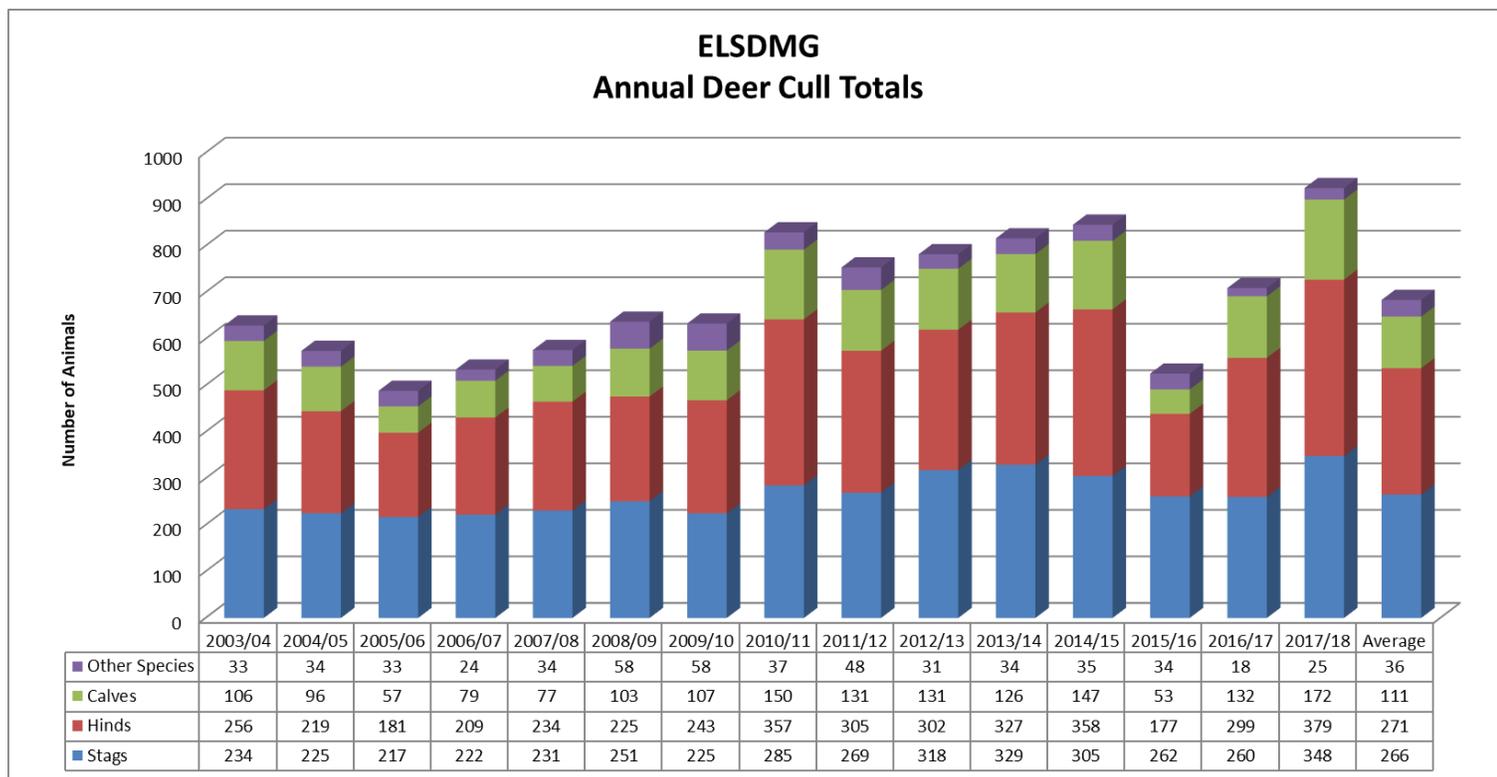
Sampling of groups of hinds will take place in the late spring/summer on each property to be used to determine an average recruitment percentage figure for the DMG. This average recruitment figure for the DMG will be discussed at the DMG's annual Summer Meeting and will annually be used to update the DMG's Population Model.

8.7 Historical Annual Cull Information

Season	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Red Deer Cull	Other Species
2003/04	234	256	106	596	33
2004/05	225	219	96	540	34
2005/06	217	181	57	455	33
2006/07	222	209	79	510	24
2007/08	231	234	77	542	34
2008/09	251	225	103	579	58
2009/10	225	243	107	575	58
2010/11	285	357	150	792	37
2011/12	269	305	131	705	48
2012/13	318	302	131	751	31
2013/14	329	327	126	782	34
2014/15	305	358	147	811	35
2015/16	259	178	53	491	34
2016/17	259	297	132	692	18
2017/18	348	379	172	900	25
Total Cull	3,983	4,071	1,668	9,721	535
15 Year Average Cull	266	271	111	648	36

Analysis of 2017/18 Cull Figures Verses DMG Average

The 2017/18 Red Deed Cull was 38.9% higher than the DMG's 15-year average cull.

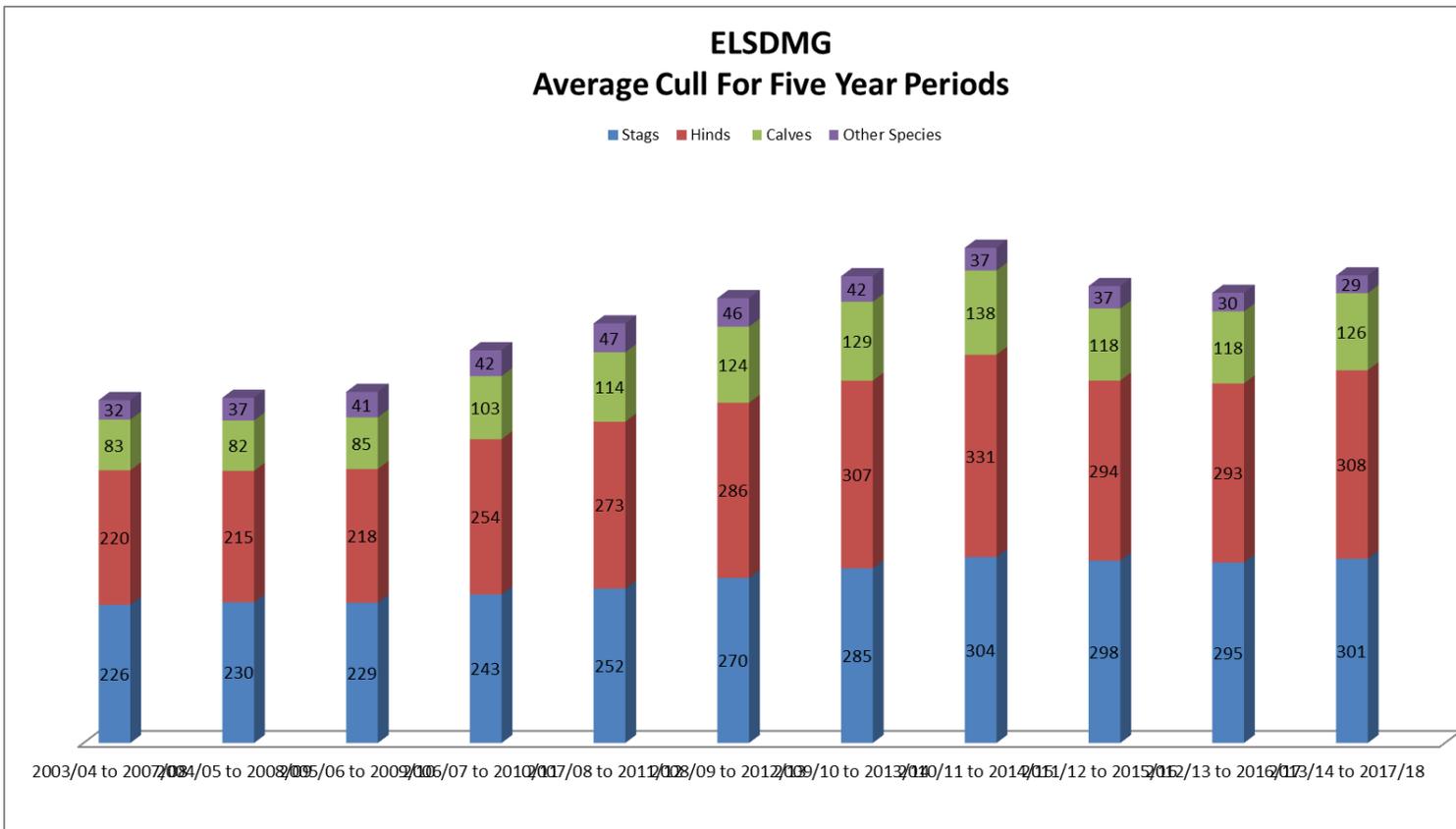


8.8 DMG Average Culls for 5 Year Periods

Average Cull for 5 Year Periods	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Cull	Cumulative % Cull Increase	Others
2003/04 to 2007/08	226	220	83	529		32
2004/05 to 2008/09	230	215	82	527	0%	37
2005/06 to 2009/10	229	218	85	532	1%	41
2006/07 to 2010/11	243	254	103	600	13%	42
2007/08 to 2011/12	252	273	114	639	21%	47
2008/09 to 2012/13	270	286	124	680	29%	46
2009/10 to 2013/14	285	307	129	721	36%	42
2010/11 to 2014/15	304	331	138	772	46%	37
2011/12 to 2015/16	298	294	118	710	34%	36
2012/13 to 2016/17	295	293	118	705	33%	30
2013/14 to 2017/18	301	308	126	735	39%	29
15 Year Average Cull	266	271	111	648		36

Analysis of 5 Year Average Cull Figures for Period 2013/14 to 2017/18

The 5-year Red deer Average Cull for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 was 13.5% higher than the overall 15-year average ELSDMG cull.



8.9a 2012/13 to 2014/15 Deer Culls by individual Property

Year Property/Member	2012/2013					2013/2014					2014/2015				
	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Other	Total	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Other	Total	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Other	Total
Achnanellan (FC)	11	12	2	0	25	12	13	0	0	25	12.0	11.0	0.0	0.0	23
Arderly (FC)	2	1	0	1	4	3	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0
Ardgour Estate	2	17	7	0	26	1	20	9	0	30	1	23	8	0	32
Ardgour - 4 Clovullin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ardgour/Glen Gour Lease (BPL)	12	0	0	0	12	10	0	0	0	10	10	0	0	0	10
Ariundle (B MacPherson)	17	19	0	0	36	17	19	0	0	36	9	14	0	0	23
Clash Moss (SNH)	6	9	5	0	20	9	11	5	0	25	5	10	0	0	15
Conaglen	52	78	37	0	167	40	100	40	1	181	45	111	38	1	195
Drimnatorran Woods (FC)	8	17	8	7	40	17	12	5	3	37	18	20	7	13	58
Drimnatorran Farm (R. MacIntosh)	11	12	0	1	24	7.5	6.2	0.7	1.7	16.0	7.4	6.0	0.5	1.6	15.4
Drumfern and Doire Mhor (FC)	14	5	4	0	23	2	0	0	2	4	3	1	0	0	4
Glenscaddle Estate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glenscaddle Lease (BPL)	24	27	14	0	65	26	37	13	0	76	26	29	10	1	66
Glen Hurich (FC)	122	76	46	19	263	143	79	39	24	285	131	104	72	18	325
Inversanda	7	8.6	3.2	0.0	18.9	4.0	7.0	2.0	0.0	13.0	8.0	6.0	2.0	0.0	16.0
Druim Laith (North Carnoch)	10	2	0	1	13	8	4	3	1	16	7	1	1	0	9
Ranachan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resipole Farm (P Sinclair)	9	7	1	0	17	14	7	4	0	25	8	8	3	0	19
Resipole Woodlands (M Harris Contact)	3	1	0	0	4	8	0	0	0	8	5	1	1	0	7
South Garvan Woodlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strontian Village (FC)	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunart Estate (SGRPID) (JMacD)	8	10	4	0	22	8	12	5	0	25	10	13	5	0	28
Sunart Oakwoods (Owners Group)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group Totals	318	301.6	131.2	31	781.9	329.5	327.2	125.7	33.7	816	305.4	358.0	147.5	34.6	845.4

(Note: Any line with decimal place is based on average figures)

8.9b 2015/16 to 2017/18 Deer Culls by individual Property

Year Property/Member	2015/2016					2016/2017					2017/2018				
	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Other	Total	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Other	Total	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Other	Total
Achnanellan (FC)	11	15	1	0	25	8	2	2	0	12	19	5	3		27
Ardera (FC)	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	4
Ardgour Estate	2	8	6	0	26	2	23	9	0	34	1	18	8	0	27
Ardgour - 4 Clovullin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	6	2	0	29
Ardgour/Glen Gour Lease (BPL)	10	0	0	0	12	12	0	0	0	12	10	0	0	0	10
Ariundle (B MacPherson)	14.8	17.0	0.0	0.0	36	15.0	17.4	0.0	0.0	32	14.6	17.3	0.0	0.0	32
Claish Moss (SNH)	5	5	1	0	20	6	9	4	0	19	5	3	1	0	9
Conaglen	34	33	7	1	167	41	103	59	0	203	39	91	47	6	183
Drimnatorran Woods (FC)	15	8	2	10	40	17	7	4	6	34	25	12	5	9	51
Drimnatorran Farm (R. MacIntosh)	8.9	7.2	0.6	1.9	24	8.4	7.4	0.5	1.5	18	8.6	7.8	0.4	1.6	18
Drumfern and Doire Mhor (FC)	5	4	1	3	23	14	6	4	2	26	9	6	3	5	23
Glenscaddle Estate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glenscaddle Lease (BPL)	22	9	1	2	65	25	38	18	0	81	24	29	14	0	67
Glen Hurich (FC)	97	50	24	16	263	71	51	19	7	148	125	119	63	0	307
Inversanda	6	4	2	0	18.9	4	4	2	0	10	10	10	4	0	24
Druim Laith (North Carnoch)	5	1	2	0	13	8	3	3	0	14	7	3	2	0	12
Ranachan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resipole Farm (P Sinclair)	9	6	2	0	17	13	13	4	0	30	15	11	5	0	31
Resipole Woodlands (M Harris Contact)	4.4	1.6	0.8	0.0	4	3	3	2	1	9	4	0	0	0	4
South Garvan Woodlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	15	0	45
Strontian Village (FC)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunart Estate (SGRPID) (JMacD)	10	9	3	0	22	10	10	2	0	22	10	11	0	0	21
Sunart Oakwoods (Owners Group)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group Totals	259	178	53	34	524	259	297	132	18	706	348	379	172	25	924

(Note: Any line with decimal place is based on average figures)

9.0 The ELSDMG's Deer Range and Land Classification and Use Information

9.1 Topography

In the peninsula area covered by the East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group, Ardgour and Sunart have distinctive identities comprising rugged interior mountains contrasting with the wooded and sheltered shorelines of sea and freshwater Lochs. The glens contain both native and commercial woodlands in balance with open space. There are many partly isolated peaks and ridges. The actions of glaciation and precipitation, together with the presence of geological faults, have combined to form deep valleys and steep-sided mountains.

9.2 Climate

The general climate of Ardgour and Sunart is oceanic with small temperature variation throughout the year. A more in-depth climate description can be gained with the use of Forestry Commission ESC (Ecological Site Classification) data, online guidance and bulletin 124.

9.3 Soil Types

The parent material is derived from schists, gneisses, granulites and quartzite principally of the Moine Series on the whole felpathic, but there is a mass of intrusive gabbrodiorite above the pinewood in Cona Glen extending into Glen Scaddle and there are thin bands of limestone and other ultrabasic rocks along the periphery of this intrusion.

Peat is extensive, and the soils tend to be wet and acidic. The soils are predominantly peaty podzols, peat and peaty gleys as associated with moist boreal and Atlantic Heather moor, blanket and upland bog and flying bent grassland. There are pockets of brown forest soils nearer the shorelines within the crofting landscape and alluvium along the glen bottoms.

Stevens & Carlisle (The Native Pinewoods of Scotland) noted that within the pinewoods the soils are sandy, but the drainage is poor and shallow peat covers even the knolls.

9.4 Land Cover Type and Vegetation

The land capability for agriculture for the greater part of the area is classified as 6.2 and is characterised by moderate quality herbage such as white and flying bent grasslands, rush pastures and herb rich moorlands or mosaics of high and low grazing values. Large areas are classified as 6.3, which is land capable for use as rough grazing and is dominated by plant communities with low grazing values, particularly heather moor, bog heather moor and blanket moor. On the high regions, land is of very limited agricultural value due mainly to severe wetness, extremely stony land and very steep gradients. Unvegetated soils and screes are extensive in the higher regions and vegetation is severely influenced by short growing seasons.

A plan has provided by SNH has been included at Appendix 3 which shows the recorded "Land Cover Scotland 1988" (LCS 1988) findings for all land within the ELSDMG area. The below table has been compiled from the data available in the LCS 1988's legend.

Land Cover Type	Area (Hectares)	Percentage of Total Area	Percentage of Total Area
Broadleaved Woodland	1,319	3.5%	Total land area in woodland related use 24.4%
Mixed Woodland	711	1.9%	
Coniferous Plantation	3,408	9.0%	
Woodland Recently Felled	284	0.7%	
Open Canopy Young Plantation	2,924	7.7%	
Recently Ploughed Land Mainly for Woodland Planting	594	1.6%	
Heather Moor	18,978		50.0%
Montane Vegetation	3,328		8.8%
Blanket Bog/Peatland	1,274		3.4%
Corse Grassland	892		2.3%
Improved Grassland	685		1.8%
Smooth Grassland	1,685		4.4%
Other – Inc Water, Cliffs Etc	1,879		4.9%
Total	37,961		100.0%

In 1988 the LCS project record that there was a significant 9,940Ha or 24.3% of the overall area of the ELSDMG devoted to forestry practices in either the form of Commercial or Native woodlands. With 9.3% of this land in 1988 either being young open canopy plantation or have been recently prepared for planting. It was therefore quite evident that new planting was becoming a considerable objective within the ELSDMG area by the late 1980s.

9.5 Agricultural Land Use

9.5.1 Historical Livestock Numbers

As in other parts of the Highlands, the importance of agriculture to the local rural economy has declined significantly in recent years. The DMG members will discuss any deer impact on agricultural land with Tenants and Crofters as necessary and will report any concerns which have been raised at a DMG meeting. Concerns will be discussed and a resolution of how members intend to address these matters will be agreed upon. For clarity it is confirmed that at the time of publishing the DMP, that only one concern is an individual croft in Clovullin which has been brought to the attention of the DMG. In this location the DMG have agreed upon a course of action to object to the issuing of a night licence to cull deer on the grounds of public safety and also to try to convince the tenant that the best course of action to prevent deer access to the croft would be to finish fencing the area via grants, personal expense and some input from the landlord.

The removal of agricultural livestock has been very much used as a tool by members of the ELSDMG to both offer improved woodland habitats by removing in particular sheep grazing pressures from woodlands and woodland fringes but also to improve the quality and quantity of available grazings to the Red Deer population within the DMG area.

Table showing:

Summer Late 1960's Verse Summer 2016 livestock numbers within the ELSDMG area

	Ewes/ Hoggs	Breeding Cows	Ewes/ Hoggs	Breeding Cows
Property/Member	Late 1960's		Summer 2016	
Ardgour Estate (in-hand)				
Aryhoulan	2,670	0	0	0
Sallachan	1,003	0	150	0
Ardgour Crofts & Farms				
Clovullin	0	35	0	35
Keil Farm	800	6	700	25
Ariundle Glen – (MacPherson)	620	5	0	40
Conaglen (in-hand)	2,400	200	0	62
Conaglen (crofting & let land)				
Treslaig	116	29	75	0
Achaphubuil	100	0	75	3
Blaich	640	80	200	25
Duiskey/Garvan	336	28	100	15
Drimnatorran	540	0	0	0
Inversanda	625	0	180	0
Druim Laith (North Carnoch)	360	10	0	0
Polloch - Three Farms	3,600	60	0	0
Resipole	600	40	0	12
Strontian, Monument Park - C Wright	240	0	0	0
Sunart Estate				
Anaheilt Township	0	75	0	40
Scotstown Township	0	59	0	20
Total	14,650	627	1,480	277
Livestock units	2,197.5	627	222	277

The figures above do not take account of the practices of holding non-breeding stock for fattening nor do they take account of other followers and young stock which would have been held on the properties. So, the numbers late 1960's numbers detailed will be significantly understated.

9.5.2 Comparison of Historical and Current Livestock Numbers

The approximate reduction in Agricultural Livestock numbers in the DMG area from their peak numbers in the 1960's/1970's to today's numbers are in the region of:

-13,170 Ewes and Hoggs and -350 Breeding Cows

In some locations these reductions relate to land now transferred into forestry use, but in other locations previously farmed hill land is now being grazed significantly less.

Based upon SGRPID's Livestock Units (LU's) calculation methodology of applying 0.15 LUs per Ewe/Hogg and 1.0 LU per cow, it can be calculated that reductions in agricultural livestock equates to a reduction of 2,325.50 Livestock Units (LU's) since the 1960's/70's.

9.5.3 Consideration of SGRPID Farmed Deer Policy in Relation to Livestock Numbers

SGRPID's policy for assessing farmed deer numbers apply the undernoted LUs:

- A Stag (+27 Months) - 0.4 LU's
- A breeding hind (+27 Months) - 0.30 LU's
- A juvenile (6 to 27 months) - 0.20 LU's

Hence the most recent deer count information from March 2016 would suggest the entire counted deer population of the ELSDMG equates to:

- 1,127 Stags X 0.40 = 450.8 LU's
- 2,084 Hinds X 0.30 = 625.2 LU's
- 610 Calves X 0.20 = 122.0 LU's

This is a total Wild Deer population of 1,198.00 LU's at March 2016.

9.5.4 Comparison of Historical Livestock Numbers Verses Current Deer Numbers

The March 2016 count results therefore confirmed an increase of 579 beasts (17.9% of the average population counted between 1980 and 2010) which equates to an additional 200.00 LU's (20.0% of the average LU's) in comparison to the previous 30-year period's data.

This increase is more than offset by the reduction in agricultural livestock since the 1960's/70's which has seen sheep and cattle numbers drop in the DMG area by circa 2,325.50 LU's during this period; i.e. 13,170 ewes and 350 cows.

Currently based upon the 2016 Deer Count and the 2016 livestock information provided by members that the total livestock and wild deer units on the entire deer range is 1,697.00 LUs. This compares with the required SGRPID's BPS minimum requirement of 1,756.90 LUs on the 35,138ha of open range.

Based on the above information and the Scottish Government's regulations for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) it could be considered that the overall deer range of the ELSDMG is currently under-stocked and therefore there is potential for under grazing.

It should also be considered that the SGRPID requirement for 0.05 LU's per Hecate should be interrupted to be an additional 0.05 LU's per ha, i.e. in addition to all wild deer which are already on the habitat, as wild deer were considered present when SGRPID set their requirements. Therefore, if calculated on this basis the ELSDMG could potentially introduce 8,386 Ewes on the hill ground to meet SGRPID's BPS livestock and grazing density requirements.

9.6 Native Woodland and Commercial Forestry Land Use

There are extensive plantations in particular on the Northern and South Western boundaries of the DMG area and their interaction with the open hill deer range is of considerable importance. Large pockets of native woodlands, in particular associated with watercourses, exist within most of these commercial woodlands. The existing commercial plantings in the DMG are comprised of Sitka Spruce, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir, Larches and other minor conifers.

9.6.1 The following members of ELSDMG are UKWAS accredited:

- Conaglen Estate (Native and Commercial Woodlands)
- Forest Enterprise Scotland
- Druim Laith (North Carnoch) (Glen Tarbert Commercial Woodlands)

9.6.2 The following members of ELSDMG have Long Term Forest or Land Management Plans:

- Ardgour Estate (Commercial Woodlands)
- Conaglen Estate (Native and Commercial Woodlands)
- Forestry Enterprise Scotland -- Drumfern, Doire Mhor & North Loch Shiel Woods
- Forestry Enterprise Scotland – Glen Hurich
- Druim Laith (North Carnoch) (New planting and LTFP currently under review)
- Resipole Farm
- South Garvan (Commercial Woodlands)

Each individual member of the ELSDMG who have independently approved LTFP's will have their own Long Term Aims and Management Objectives for their woodlands; for some members these will include the undernoted considerations:

- Consolidation of areas of commercial forestry.
- Increase biodiversity within Commercial and Native Woodland situations.
- Expansion of Native Woodland Cover.
- Enhance sporting value of woodlands.

These aims will be achieved through integration of the following management objectives:

- To increase the quality and extent of native woodland habitat through new woodland creation and through encouraging natural regeneration and riparian planting within existing woodlands; thereby providing forest habitat networks within the woodlands and beyond.
- To protect the integrity of the existing native woodland habitat through where possible, grant aided, removal of non-natives species, in particular *Rhododendron ponticum*.
- To enhance landscape features through the restructuring of existing plantations and through the careful design of new woodlands.
- To maintain a healthy sporting deer population, ensuring that adequate shelter remains available throughout the programme of restructuring and to ensure that the resulting restructuring will provide tangible benefits for sporting interests over the medium and long term.
- To manage the commercial woodlands areas as commercial forests to provide a long term sustainable local forestry sector in the region.
- To improve the internal and external boundaries and age classes of commercial woodlands through appropriate redesign and felling phasing, in balance with sporting, practical fencing, stability and other objectives.

A copy of the Conaglen Estate LTFP “Concept Plan” has been added as Appendix 4a and a copy of the Conaglen Estate LTFP “Potential New Planting Plan” has been added as Appendix 4b.

9.6.3 Current Woodland Composition and Area:

Table below Detailing: ELSDMG's woodland area composition:

Property/Member	Hectares					
	Total Commercial Woodland Area	Total Native Woodland Area	Total Open Ground with Woodlands	New Woodland or Restock Enclosed 2013 to 2018	Woodland Opened Since 2013	Considered Woodland Expansion in next 20 Years
Achaphubuil & Camusnagaul Woods	0	64	0	0	0	0
Achnalea Plantation	60	0	0	0	0	0
Achnanellan Woodland (FC)	720	107	412			
Ardery Woodland (FC)	0	320	0			
Ardgour Estate	144	100	327	144	0	150
Ariundle Farm	0			0	0	0
Ariundle NNR	0	70	0	0	0	0
Claish Moss (SNH)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conaglen Estate	1,232	883	250	249 (Part Meall Mor, Part Callop, Achaphubuil, Glenscaddle Restock & Duisky Restock)	260 (Part Meall Mor, Stronchreggan, Part Callop, Conaglen & Doire na Muice)	400 (North Garvan, Doire Donn, Conaglen Pinewoods, Conaglen Policies, Duisky Expansion, Blaich & Stronchreggan.)
Drimnatorran Farm	0			0	0	0
Drimnatorran Woodland (FC)	585	0	365			
Druim Laith / North Carnoch	68	448	0	0	0	50
Drumfern, Doire Mhor & North Loch Shiel Woodland (FC)	429	95	207	120 (Drumfern Restock)	0	0
Glenscaddle Estate	0	327	411	0	738	150
Glen Hurich (FC)	4,476	1,684	1,300			
Inversanda Estate						
Resipole Farm	0	226 (Inc OG)	-	105		
Resipole Woodlands	474	107	133	0	0	0
South Garvan Woodlands	177	0	6	183 (Fenced for Restocking)	0	0
Strontian Village (FC)	0	100	0	0		0
Sunart Estate						
Sunart Oak Woodlands Owners Group				0		
Total Woodland Area	8,365	4,531	3,411	801	998	750
	Total – 16,307					

The National Forest Inventory Plan, included at Appendix 5, confirms that a total of 11,140ha of woodland existed within the ELS DMG range at the time of survey, being completed in 2013-14. However, the data provided by SNH requires further scrutiny because the “Land Cover Scotland 1988 Plan” (see section 9.4) which was also provided by SNH suggests 9,940Ha of land was devoted to forestry practices in 1988, in either the form of Commercial or Native woodlands.

The plan showing “Woodland Creation Schemes within the ELSDMG area” (included as Appendix 6), also provided by SNH confirms a further 7,068Ha of woodland was created since 1991, as detailed below.

Period	Scheme Name	Area Reported Created by SNH
1991-92	WGS 1 Scheme Boundary	167ha
1992-93	WGS 2 Scheme Boundary	3,148ha
1995-04	WGS 3 Scheme Boundary	2,320ha
2005-06	SFGS Scheme Boundary	1,349ha
2007-13	SRDP Woodland Creation	84ha *

* (considerable information appears to be missing from the SNH plan as members are aware that this figure underrepresents the amount of woodland created during this period).

Therefore the total current woodland coverage within ELSDMG as reported by SNH is somewhere between 11,140ha and 17,008ha. The group members would suggest a figure of 16,307ha including planned open spaces within woodlands is approximately correct.

This woodland area of 16,307ha equates to 35.3% of the total 46,233ha of the overall ELSDMG area, a significantly high proportion of woodland for a DMG than the national average of 18.5%.

As such ELSDMG can confirm as a group that in this location we have already exceeded the Scottish Government’s target of delivering an average 25% average Woodland Cover by 2020. Considerable woodland expansion as detailed above and still on-going highlights that the ELSDMG members have been committed to delivering woodland expansion within the ELDDMG area for the past 50+ years.

Proposed new planting schemes and commercial restocking of timber will be discussed at ELSDMG meetings and the influence that they may have on deer management within the ELSDMG area.

9.6.4 FCS Woodland and Deer Management

Within FES woodlands inside the ELSDMG area, deer are managed in an attempt to reduce negative impacts on their habitat and to allow natural regeneration of woodland areas with minimal fencing.

Culls have increased considerably on FES managed land in recent years and this culling is likely to be maintained whilst restock planting continues. FES has also reported very high reproductive rates in the woodland deer population throughout the area, estimated at 45%. FES deer culling in the ELSDMG area proceeds annually on the basis that male deer of all species are shot throughout the entire year, while females are not shot between the 1st April and the 30th September.

Effective Deer Utilisation (EDU) is assessed using pellet group counts. This work is completed for FES under contracts by consultants. The last assessment for the Glen Hurich woodland was conducted in 2009/10. The results are then modelled and together with impact surveys help to inform cull setting.

The FES target is for less than 10% leader browsing and they currently report that browsing is above this across the area with their 2016 survey showing 18.6% damage.

9.6.5 Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites

The "Native Woodland Survey of Scotland" (NWSS) data for "Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites" as present by SNH (Plan included at Appendix 7), was analysed by the DMG; because the DMG members were aware that there were some erroneous figures in the NWSS data. In some locations secure deer fenced enclosures were in place at the time of the survey to exclude deer and livestock from areas but the results mistakenly suggest that these areas were found with "Very High Herbivore Pressures". In other locations Deer Fences were in place to prevent deer accessing areas of Common Grazings, so in these locations all grazing pressure therefore came from agricultural livestock rather than deer.

The NWSS data was corrected for following locations:

- i) Securely fenced native regeneration enclosures existed at the time of the survey at Callop, Corrlaraich (X3), Blaich, Stronchreggan, Ardour Pinewoods (X2) and Chamaidh Leith.
- ii) The herbivore browsing pressure in the following locations related to agricultural livestock only, as these locations have been fenced out of the deer range. Blaich, Duisky & Garvan in-bye Crofts and a portion of the Common Grazings; along with the Achaphubuil and Treslaig Crofters Woodlands.

The below tables details the corrected figures in relation to herbivore pressure on Native Woodland sites in the ELSDMG area, excluding securely fenced areas at the time of the survey and areas which can only have been grazed by agricultural livestock.

Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites	Original Suggested Area	Erroneous I.e. No Grazing Present	Agricultural Grazing Only Possible	Corrected Total Area	Percentage
Low	336ha			336ha	9.9%
Medium	1,471ha			1,471ha	43.5%
High	453ha		-4.23*	449ha	13.3%
Very high	1,591ha	-191.52*	-271.49*	1,128ha	33.3%
TOTAL	3,941.2ha			3,384ha	

(* Conaglen & Resipole Farm Figures)

The grazing levels above show that in the ELSDMG native woodland areas 46.6% of the woodland has High or Very High herbivore impact levels.

ELSDMG are currently working on a project to correlate the NWSS data on "Herbivore Grazing Pressures" with the NWSS data in relation to both "Canopy Cover" and the presence of "Established Natural Regeneration" within the DMG's designated native woodland sites; to agree upon locations where it may be required for members to offer further fencing protection to allow woodland improvement under the rotational fencing system when considering the lifecycles of the woodlands in question.

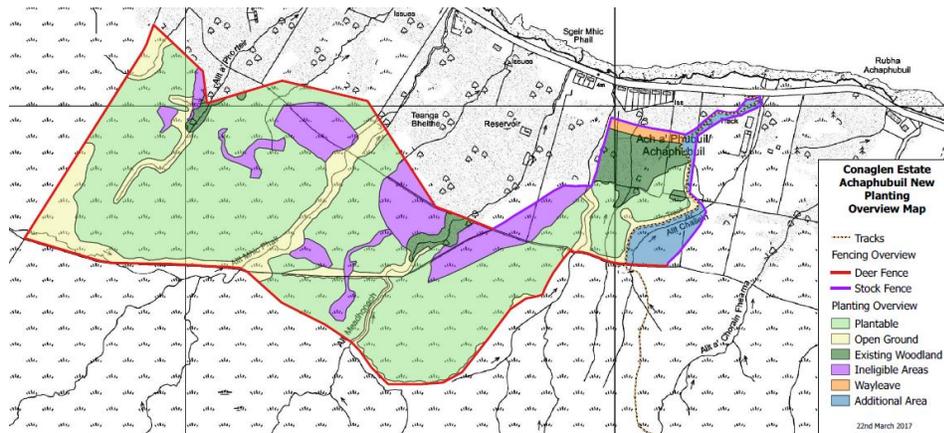
9.6.5.1 Future Requirements to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites

In order to reduce the impact of grazing on native woodland areas ELSDMG encourage all members to;

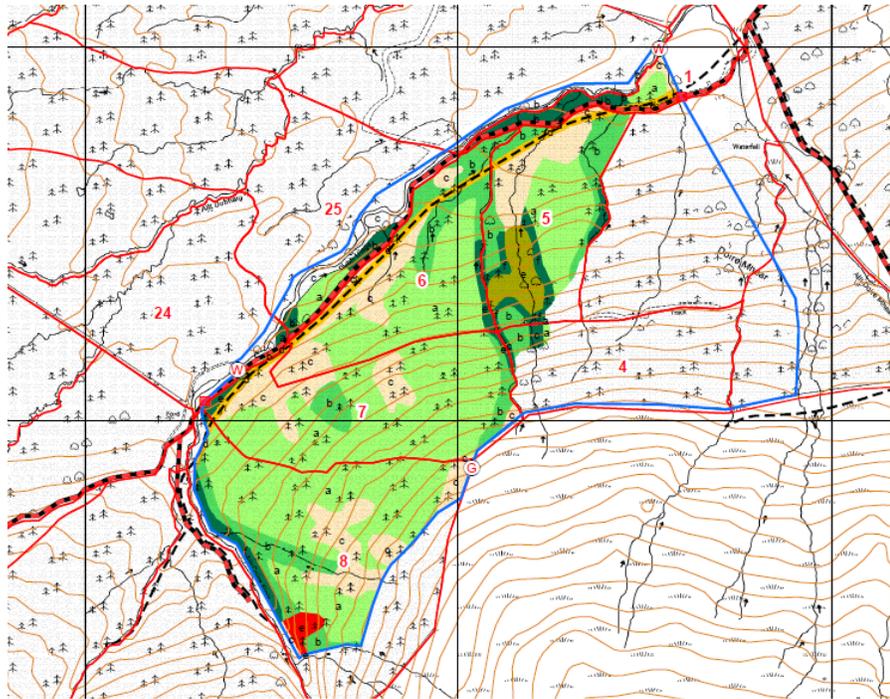
- i) make concerted efforts to ensure that internal immigration is minimised into native woodland locations from the open hill range via instigating suitable fence maintenance and replacement regimes.
- ii) ensure that they are making sufficient culling effort in order to reduce grazing pressures on native woodland locations within securely fenced woodlands.
- iii) investigate methods of counting deer in woodland, as a significant volume of these native woodland areas which have been assessed with High or Very High herbivore impact levels lie within the greater areas of commercial woodlands (particularly FCS/FES) within the ELSDMG area.

9.6.5.2 Actions taken since NWSS to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites;

- i) Conaglen Estate have fenced the undernoted areas, which were all deemed in the NWSS to have been subject to Very High or High Grazing Pressures, for natural regeneration or woodland planting/restocking;
 - i.i) 59.59ha at Achaphubuil (shown below) has been securely fenced and planted with native woodland or left for natural regeneration between 2014 and 2017; and also the crofting tenants sheep flock has been removed to from this native woodland expansion area. The remainder of the land at Achaphubuil forms part of a croft tenancy so will remain subject very high herbivore impacts.



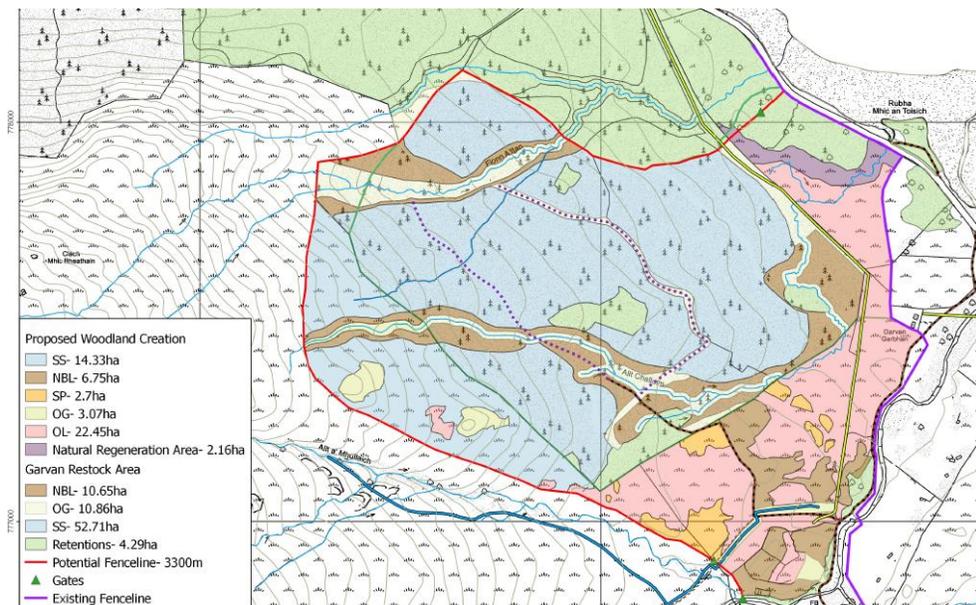
- i.ii) 131.24ha has been fenced in 2015, in the middle of Duisky (shown below) for restocking and natural regeneration, as such the herbivore impact has been removed from this area.



9.6.5.3 Actions Proposed to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites;

i) **North Garvan**

Conaglen Estate have applied to restock its woodland area at North Garvan (shown below) extending to 78.51ha and to enlarge this area via new planting and natural regeneration by a further 51.46ha. All of this area was previously grazed by both Agricultural Livestock and Deer and is shown on the NWSS as subject to either High or Very High Grazing impacts.



9.6.5.3

ii) **The Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI/SAC (Eastern Sub-Group Area)**

Unfortunately, the Ardgour Pinewoods like those throughout the rest of Scotland have been historically much reduced in size from once extensive post glacial Caledonian pinewoods to their present-day fragments at Glen Gour, Glen Cona, Stronchreggan, Corrlarich, Cona River, Chamaidh Leith and the Loch Shiel.

“The native Caledonian pinewoods of Scotland, dominated by Scots pine (Pinus sylvestris L.), constituted a small remnant of a much larger forest, possibly covering 1.5 million ha. The total area of the pinewoods today is now estimated to have been reduced to about 1% of this value, approximately 16,000ha” (Forestry Commission, 1994).

“The decline of the forest has mainly been the result of hundreds of years of deforestation by man and a change in climatic conditions, such as increased precipitation” (Dickson, 1992; Bennett, 1994).

Enhancing the management and expanding the biodiversity of these native Ardgour Pinewoods is an important consideration for the members of the DMG and in particular for Conaglen Estate. Since Conaglen was purchased in 1959 the current owners have been practicing a system of rotational native woodland fencing and restoration projects of the Ardgour Pinewoods to allow sections of the woodland to rejuvenate and trees to become established beyond browsing heights.

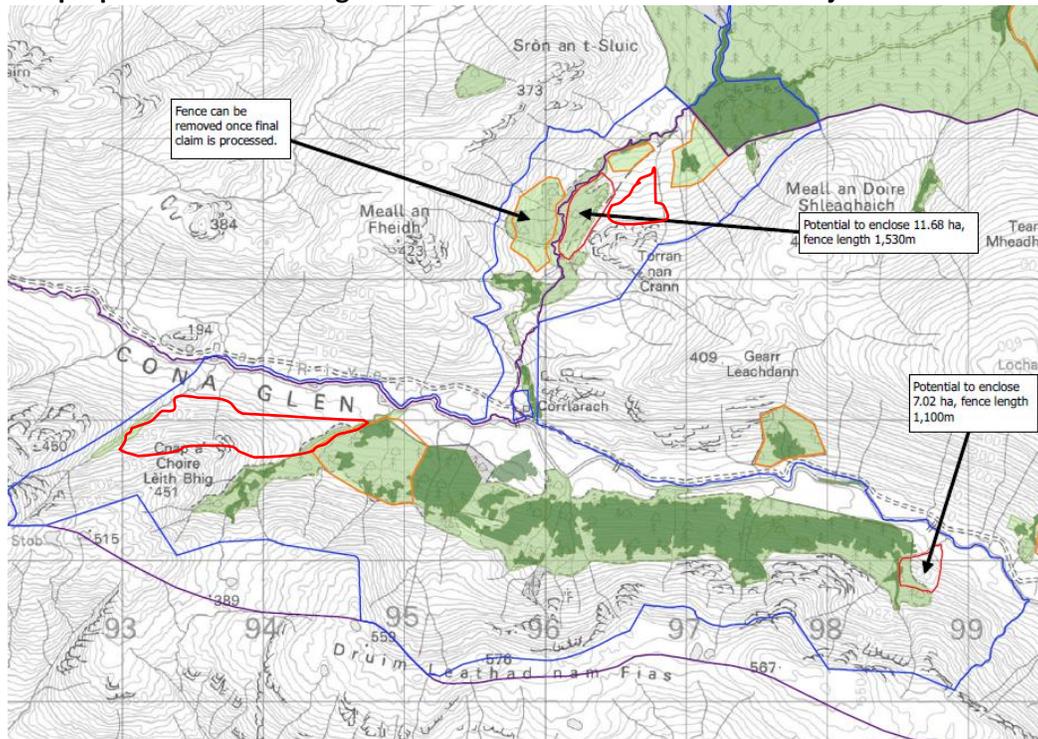
The system works on the principal of considering the overall lifecycle of the forest being in the hundreds of years and always ensuring that an area is being protected from browsing pressure so that it can establish while utilising the remainder of the woodland as vitally important deer shelter and forage areas particularly in the winter months.

During this almost 60-year period of tenure and investment in the woodland considerable areas of established natural regeneration have been created along with good average canopy covers figures of 50-90% for the majority of the main woodland in Conaglen itself. Conaglen’s woodland advisors are of the opinion that in the life cycle of a forest it is not significant if samplings are largely grazed off areas, even for up to 20-25 years, if these areas already benefit from significant woodland canopy cover and a mixed age group of existing trees.

“The availability of seed depends on the proximity to neighbouring trees. The majority of seed falls within 18m of the parent tree and a little beyond 30m (Booth, 1994). The availability of light is also an important factor. Seedlings have been found to germinate in low light levels but their survival is dependent on there being sufficient light” (Baker, 1945).

Further lifecycle protection and expansion of these woodlands is always a priority for Conaglen Estate and it is hoped that further enclosures can be created for both natural regeneration and planting in 2019 & 2020. It is however understood that fencing areas which already benefit from good canopy cover will not significantly increase the woodland expansion or speed up the life cycle of improvement required in a mixed age forest.

Potential proposals for main Ardgour Pinewood area in Glen Cona and adjacent to South Duisky.



The above plan shows the potential Conaglen Estate proposals which are being worked up for new fenced enclosures for planting and natural regeneration in the main Ardgour Pinewood area in Glen Cona and adjacent to South Duisky.

There are four new potential enclosures being considered at this time.

The largest circa 30-40ha would be for planting is located at the western end of the main woodland in an area long devoid of any trees.

There is also a proposal to add two new 10ha blocks to the northern area lying adjacent to Duisky, one of which would be natural regeneration and the other new planting and to open the largest and best established of the three existing blocks in this location.

A proposal is also being considered to create a 10ha block on the eastern edge of the existing woodland which would be planted with low density hardwoods and which would benefit from natural regeneration of pine.

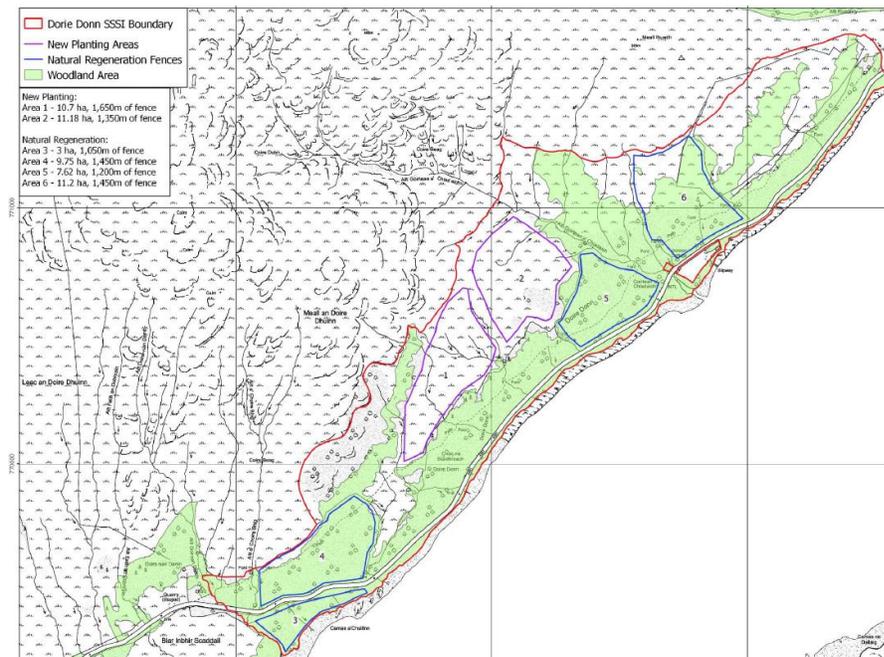
9.6.5.3

iii) The Doire Donn Oakwoods SSSI (Eastern Sub-Group Area)

Conaglen Estate submitted the below plan in July 2018, to FCS and SNH for consideration in relation to a woodland proposal to improve the Doire Donn SSSI based on surveys which have been undertaken in late 2017 and 2018. The Estate deems that the creation of multiple smaller enclosures is more effective to allow both the Estate to utilise the woodland and promote natural regeneration within the woodland and minimise the chance of deer breaking into the enclosures.

This proposal would continue with the rotational fencing system used by the Estate to develop and strength woodland cover and follows on from a previously successful 17.3ha (10% of the SSSI designated area) of established regeneration (NWSS data) in an enclosure which was established about 20-25 years ago in the north of the Doire Donn SSSI.

This proposal would be for planting about 24ha, which would receive a high percentage of oak planting. In parallel there would be natural regeneration enclosures offering a further 21ha of woodland protected for natural expansion. This would equate to a further 27% of the designated site being fenced (ideally in 2019) if approval is granted. This would bring the total area having been subject to the two rotations of fences to 37% of the designated site which would easily allow the whole woodland area to be fenced within the lifetime of the designated feature, being that of Oak trees.



9.6.5.3

iv) Loch Shiel SSSI

ELSDMG understand from SNH that there is a total of 192.07ha of designated woodland features within the area of the ELSDMG. However, SNH have not confirmed how much (if any) of this specific 192.07ha of woodland features is in unfavourable condition for upland oak. Therefore, ELSDMG have requested further clarification from SNH on this matter including requesting location plans in July and August 2018 showing areas within the ELSDMG area which are deemed to be in Unfavourable Condition for Upland Oak.

9.6.5.3

v) **The Sunart Oakwoods SSSI (Western Sub-Group Area)**

Resipole Farm has been undertaking Woodland Improvement work for in excess of 20 years on their property, including the removal of sheep stock grazing pressures, establishment of a fence to prevent grazing stock accessing approximately 50% of the Sunart SSSI on their property and where grazing stock is present it operates these areas as part of a grazing plan approved by SNH through the SRDP scheme.

ELSDMG have assessed from the NWSS Herbivore Pressure Plan that Low or Medium impacts were recorded on approximately 310Ha of the Sunart SSSI, primarily to the West of Resipole Farm, which equates to at least approximately 30% of the designated Sunart SSSI site within the ELSDMG area not being subject to Heavy Grazing pressures.

ELSDMG understands that the majority of the remaining Sunart SSSI area out with Resipole Farm, which lies within its DMG area, is in fact deer fenced to exclude access of deer from the hill range and is primarily owned and managed by FCS/FES.

ELSDMG have requested further clarification from SNH on the size and location of the designated woodland features forming part of the Sunart SSSI which lie within the ELSDMG area. ELSDMG have requested location plans in July and August 2018 showing areas of woodland within the ELSDMG area which are deemed to be in Unfavourable Condition for Upland Oak.

ELSDMG will encourage its members (primarily being FCS) to complete an initial fencing audit and repair program, followed by a culling regime in the securely fenced Ardery Woodland locations to improve the Oak Regeneration in these locations.

ELSDMG will support and encourage their participating members who own land within the Sunart SSSI to engage with SNH to have areas re-assessed to confirm exactly which areas are deemed to be in unfavourable condition, following from many years of habitat improvement and stock exclusion work which has been undertaken.

ELSDMG will encourage SNH to open dialogue with the Sunart Oak Woodland Owners Group (SOWOG) who's primary members are FCS/FES, Ardery Farm/Crofts and Resipole Farm to assess which areas of the Sunart SSSI within the ELSDMG are currently in unfavourable condition and to agree a management regime to address this matter. ELSDMG consider that this management regime should focus on an initial fencing audit and repair program, followed by a culling regime in securely fenced locations to improve the Oak Regeneration in these locations.

9.7 Blanket Bog / Peatland

The area of Blanket Bog / Peatland measured in the LCS 1988 plan within the ELSDMG area extended to 1,274 Ha. This area is therefore equates to 2.8% of the overall DMG area.

The majority of the Blanket Bog / Peatland areas are not subject to large agricultural livestock grazing pressures within the ELSDMG area. Indeed, grazing pressures have been reduced significantly since the 1988 survey due to the removal of a significant number of sheep stock from the majority of the members properties since that date.

Approximately 25-30% of the Peatland area is located at SNH's Claish Moss SSSI site and this designated area has been improved following from fencing and the subsequent deer culls which took place to significantly reduce the browsing and trampling pressures on this peatland location.

9.7.1 Peatland Restoration Schemes

Some members of the ELSDMG have considered SNH's longer term aspirational goal to deliver restoration or creation of new peatlands with the wider Scottish context but have concluded that retention and/or continued restructuring with conifer or native woodland species contributes more to carbon sequestration and balance than peatland restoration could offer. Therefore, at present no specific peatland restoration projects are currently planned on any property within the ELSDMG area.

Conaglen Estate however intend during 2018/19 to research SNH's Peatland Action Fund in relation to establishing if an area of historically deforested lodgepole pine woodland, which on the request of FCS has not been restocked, could be eligible to be economically restored to peatland via the Peatland Action Fund.

The members of ELSDMG have however confirmed that they would be willing to consider any directly recommended Peatland Restoration or Creation Schemes which SNH may wish to raise with them in the future subject to the availability of grants for such schemes.

9.8 River Basin Management Plans

River basin management planning (RBMP) is intended to protect and improve Scotland's water environment in a way that balances costs and benefits to the environment, society and economy. SEPA does not list any catchment in the ELSDMG area as a priority for completion of a River Basin Management Plan during their next working period of 2015-2027. However, DMG members who are involved in local fisheries management will be delivering some of the wider actions of the national RBMP.

SEPA have not approached any ELSDMG member for information or access in relation to a River Basin Management Plan for any part of the ELSDMG area. Some members of the ELSDMG have confirmed that they have granted permission to SEPA to complete basic river habitat monitoring work, which they understand is used at a national level as a comparison location to gauge indications of water quality decline in central Scotland.

ELSDMG have considered this topic and deemed that no further action is required on this matter, however the members will of course respond to any communications received from SEPA in relation to issues relating to RBMP or water quality if any such issues arise.

10.0 Natural Heritage / Designated Sites Background Information

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) are responsible for the administration of designated sites; has a duty, under Section 3 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, to notify and assess conditions of SSSI areas of land that it considers to be of national importance for their fauna or flora or their geology or geomorphology (that is, their plants, animals, rocks and landforms). This assessment monitoring work is carried out by SNH staff and by specialist contractors with the range of skills and expertise needed to monitor the diversity of features in Scotland. At 31 March 2008, there were 1,423 SSSI's, covering a total area of 1,011,000 hectares or 12.7% of Scotland's land area.

A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is a site designated under the Habitats Directive. These sites, together with Special Protection Areas (SPAs), are called Natura sites and they are internationally important for threatened habitats and species.

Features within the ELSDMG area which are designated as SACs, SPAs and SSSIs are monitored by SNH on a rolling program using a standardized method of Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) based on the sensitivity and vulnerability of the features in question. This SCM can vary in occurrence between every 6 years and 24 years, for example some earth science features will only be monitored every 24 years, whilst more sensitive lowland heaths will be monitored every 6 years.

The purpose of SCM is to determine the condition of the designated natural feature within a site. This is to establish whether the natural feature is likely to maintain itself in the medium to longer term under the current management regime and wider environmental or other influences.

In addition, in order to help detect any changes to the habits, species populations or earth science features between SCM assessments, a new SNH monitoring method called Site Check has been introduced from 2012. The results of this monitoring is then be used to determine the effectiveness of current management actions and whether further remedial action is required on sites.

10.1 ELSDMG Summary of Designated Site Information

Considerable areas within the ELSDMG area are of special importance to the natural heritage, with the total area of SSSI, SAC & SPA qualifying features extending to 70% of the ELSDMG area. Overall 30,976ha or 95.8% of the designated SSSI's, SAC's, SPA's land and habitats with the ELSDMG area are assessed to be in favourable condition by SNH.

A plan has been included at Appendix 8 shows the boundaries of all designated land within the ELSDMG area.

The DMG recognises that an increased understanding of the balance between deer populations and the natural heritage is an objective of considerable importance. However, it should be noted that deer management is potentially relevant to only five of the designated SSSI/SAC sites equating to 3,400ha (7.35% of the DMG area).

These five sites are the Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI/SAC (1,487ha), Claish Moss SSSI/SAC (568ha), Doire Donn SSSI (167ha), Loch Shiel SSSI (192ha woodland features) and Sunart SSSI/SAC (986ha). A plan showing the condition of all SSSI's within the ELSDMG area has been included as Appendix 9.

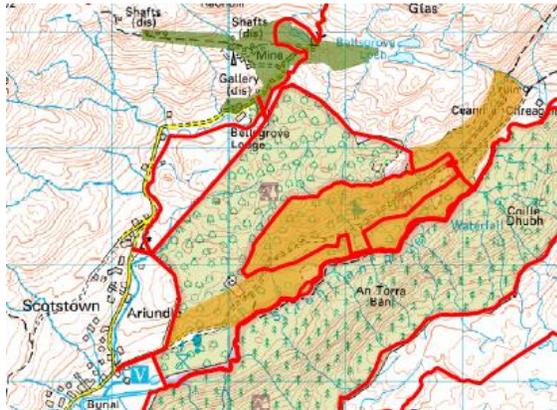
10.2.2 Ariundle Oakwood NNR (Western Sub-Group Area)

Area: 70ha

Qualifying Interests:

Now part of Sunart SSSI and Sunart SAC

Previously designated as Ariundle Oakwood SSSI



See Sunart SAC & SSSI RE Condition Information

10.2.3 Claish Moss SAC/SSSI/Ramsar Site (Western Sub-Group Area)

Area: 568.29ha

Qualifying Interests:

Bogs:

Blanket bog

Birds:

Breeding bird assemblage

Dragonflies:

Dragonfly assemblage



Favourable Condition all Designated Features/Species

10.2.4 Doire Donn SSSI (Eastern Sub-Group Area)

Area: 167.43ha

Qualifying Interests:	Woodland:	Upland oak woodland
	Butterflies:	Chequered skipper
	Other invertebrates:	Beetles



Favourable Condition Butterflies & Invertebrates

Unfavourable Declining Condition for Upland Oak (Last Assessment March 2015)

Please Refer to Section 9.6.5.3, ii) The Doire Donn Oakwoods SSSI

RE Actions Proposed to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites;

10.2.5 Loch Shiel SPA

Area: 2,291ha

Qualifying interests:	By supporting an average of 3 pairs of black-throated divers, representing 2% of the British population. Recorded breeding on Loch Shiel since 1974.
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Favourable Condition all Designated Features/Species

10.2.6 Loch Shiel SSSI

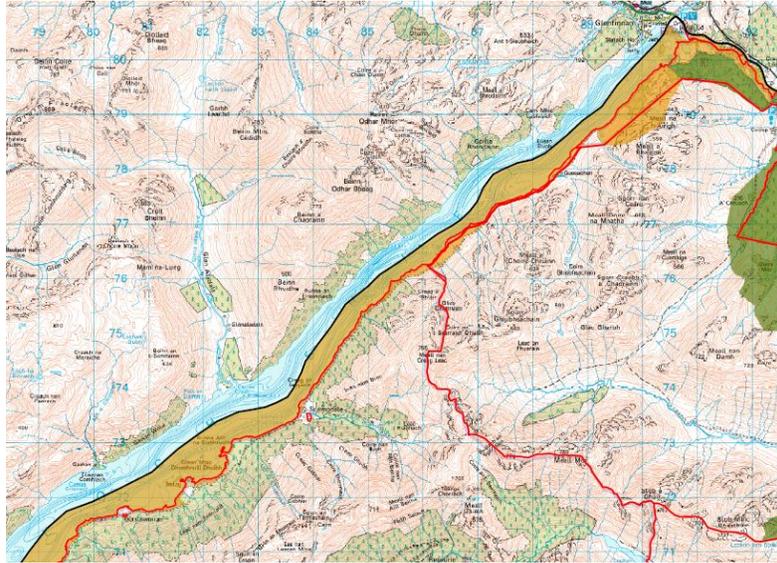
Area: 3,355.686ha

The citation area is split between ELSDMG and Moidart DMGs and also included the water body of Loch Shiel. SNH have confirmed a total of 192.07ha of designated woodland features lie in the ELSDMG area.

Qualifying Interests:

Freshwater habitats:	Oligotrophic loch
Woodlands:	Native pinewood
Woodlands:	Upland oak woodland
Non-vascular plants:	Bryophyte assemblage
Birds (breeding):	Black-throated diver
Butterflies:	Chequered skipper

Northern Area



Southern Area



Unfavourable but Stable Condition for Upland Oak (Last Assessment June 2008)
Favourable Condition all other Designated Features/Species

10.2.7 Moidart & Ardgour SPA

Area: 41,428.29ha (25,535ha within ELSDMG area)

Qualifying interests:

Regularly supporting a population of Golden Eagle (11 active territories in 2003, more than 2.4% of the GB pop).

Favourable Condition all Designated Features/Species

10.2.8 Strontian Mines SSSI (Western Sub-Group Area)

Area: 49.77ha

Qualifying Interests: Geological: Mineralogy

Favourable Condition

10.2.9 Sunart SAC (Western Sub-Group Area)

Area: 10,230.22ha

Qualifying Interests: Woodland: Richest complex of Atlantic bryophyte-rich sessile oak woods in the UK.

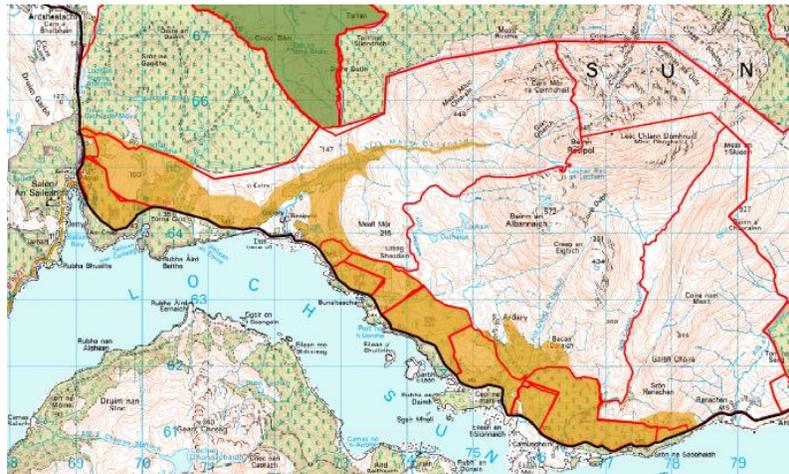
Unfavourable Declining Condition for Wet Heath, Dry Heath & Oak Woodland
Favourable Condition for Otters & Marine Reefs

10.2.10 Sunart SSSI (Western Sub-Group Area)

Area: 5,540.16ha

The citation area is split between ELSDMG, Morvern and Ardnamurchan DMGs. ELSDMG have calculated that 986Ha of SSSI designated land in this location lie within the ELSDMG area.

Qualifying Interests: Woodland: Richest complex of Atlantic bryophyte-rich sessile oak woods in the UK.



Unfavourable Recovering Condition for Upland Oak (Last Assessment Nov 2009)

Unfavourable Recovering Condition for Lichen (Last Assessment Nov 2010)

Unfavourable but Stable Condition for Bryophytes (Last Assessment Sept 2005)

Favourable Condition for 13 further Designated Species and Habitats

Please Refer to Section 9.6.5.3, iii) Sunart SSSI

RE Actions Proposed to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites;

10.3 Addressing Unfavourable SSSI Woodland Site Designations

As detailed above, deer management in the ELSDMG area is potentially relevant to three designated SSSI/SAC sites extending to a maximum area of 1,345ha which have been assessed in Mixed Condition, because they have had one woodland feature each assessed in non-favourable condition. These sites are:

10.3.1 Doire Donn SSSI – 167.43ha Woodland (Eastern Sub-Group Area)

Unfavourable Woodland Feature: Unfavourable Declining Condition for Upland Oak

Ownership: Conaglen Estate

Current Position:

ELSDMG understand from SNH that the upland oak woodland regeneration throughout the Doire Donn is deemed to be in unfavourable condition due to preferential browsing of oak trees by deer in the winter/spring periods.

Various proposed planting & regeneration schemes have been tabled to address the site conditions since 2008, but to date these have not been successful in getting through the support system.

Planned Actions:

The owner is once again in negotiations with FCS in relation to progressing a planting proposal for hopefully 2019/2020 planting equating to fencing approximately 27% of the woodlands which will improve the woodland recruitment of oak saplings and improve the condition of the woodland going forward.

**Please Refer to Section 9.6.5.3, ii) The Doire Donn Oakwoods SSSI
RE Actions Proposed to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites;**

10.3.2 Loch Shiel SSSI – 192.07ha Woodland Features

Unfavourable Woodland Feature: Unfavourable but Stable Condition for Upland Oak

Ownership within the ELSDMG area: FCS/FES and Conaglen Estate in the North
FCS/FES and SNH in the South

Current Position:

ELSDMG understand from SNH that there is a total of 192.07ha of designated woodland features within the area of the ELSDMG. SNH have not confirmed how much (if any) of this specific 192.07ha of woodland features is in unfavourable condition for upland oak. Nor indeed if any of the unfavourable woodland condition woodland lies within the ELSDMG area as the SSSI also extends to neighbouring DMG areas.

Planned Actions:

ELSDMG have requested further clarification from SNH on this matter including requesting location plans in July and August 2018 showing areas within the ELSDMG area which are deemed to be in Unfavourable Condition for Upland Oak.

10.3.3 Sunart SSSI – Up to 986ha (not all woodland) (Western Sub-Group Area)

Unfavourable Woodland Feature: Unfavourable but Stable Condition for Upland Oak

Ownership within the ELSDMG area: SNH at Ariundle NNR in the North (70 ha)
Resipole Farm NW of Loch Sunart (Approx. 300ha)
Ardrey FCS/FES North of Loch Sunart (320ha)
Ardery farm & crofts protected by a deer fence and as such out with the deer range.

Current Position:

Resipole Farm has been undertaking Woodland Improvement work for in excess of 20 years on their property, including the removal of sheep stock grazing pressures, establishment of a fence to prevent grazing stock accessing approximately 50% of the Sunart SSSI on their property and where grazing stock is present it operates these areas as part of a grazing plan approved by SNH through the SRDP scheme.

The majority of the remaining ELSDMG's Sunart SSSI area out with Resipole Farm, is deer fenced to exclude access of deer from the hill range and is primarily owned and managed by FCS/FES or grazed for agricultural purposes,

Planned Actions:

ELSDMG have requested further clarification from SNH on the size and location of the designated Unfavourable Condition Upland Oak woodland features within the ELSDMG area which form part of the Sunart SSSI which lie.

ELSDMG have encouraged its members to complete a fencing audit and repair program, followed by a culling regime in the securely fenced Ardery Woodland locations to improve the Oak Regeneration in these locations.

ELSDMG have encouraged its members who own land within the Sunart SSSI to engage with SNH to have areas re-assessed to confirm exactly which areas are deemed to be in unfavourable condition, following from many years of habitat improvement and stock exclusion work which has been undertaken.

ELSDMG will also encourage SNH to open dialogue with the Sunart Oak Woodland Owners Group (SOWOG) who's primary members are FCS/FES, Ardery Farm/Crofts and Resipole Farm to assess which areas of the Sunart SSSI within the ELSDMG are currently in unfavourable condition.

Please Refer to Section 9.6.5.3, iv) Sunart SSSI

RE Actions Proposed to Reduce Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland Sites;

11.0 Contributing to Public Health and Wellbeing

ELSDMG recently wrote to the three Local Community Councils and also to the Township Clerks of the Crofting Townships within the Group area to inform them where a copy of published DMP could be downloaded and to ask if they had any concerns or comments to make to the group in relation to Deer Management within the ELSDMG area.

A member of ELSDMG will also regularly attend the public Community Council meetings and when not in attendance will review the published minutes of each meeting to assess and report back to the ELSDMG if any issues have been raised.

11.1 Protecting and Preventing Impact on Historical and Cultural Features or Monuments

Although there are a number of built cultural and historic features within the ELSDMG area, it is unlikely that deer grazing will have a negative impact upon such features.

Unfortunately, old planting schemes of conifer woodlands are far more likely to have had a negative impact. Planting schemes now have to be aware of any historic or cultural features that need to be protected and flagged prior to planting or re-stocking.

The Highland Council have not contacted any ELSDMG member in relation to reporting or requesting action to be taken due to deer damage being caused to any built environment historical feature or monument.

The DMG Chairman has also written to the Highland Council in connection with this matter and is currently awaiting a response.

Therefore, ELSDMG have considered this topic and deemed that no further action is required on this matter at this time.

11.2 Public Access

The National Forest Estate in Scotland receives more than 9 million visitors per year.

Many parts of the ELSDMG area experience high levels of public access. All members subscribe to the Access Code and DMG Notices are in use throughout the area at the entrance to the primary Glens advising of deer management activities within the area. There are no core paths as highlighted on the Scottish Government Core Path Network within the DMG area.

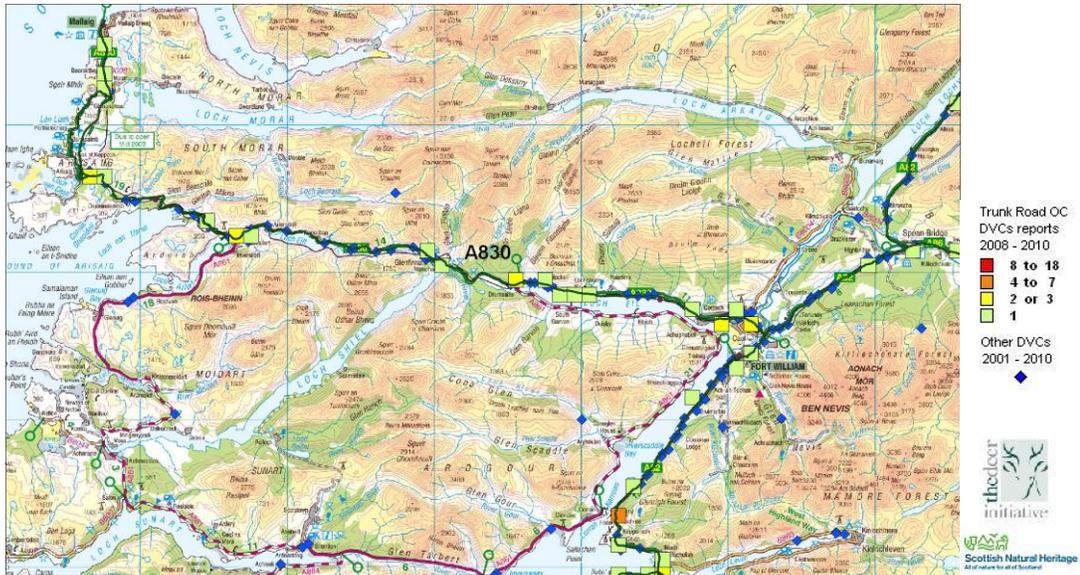
During the consultation period for this DMP, no group member suggested that they incur any significant negative impact from public access.

- There are significant numbers of access requests for Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes and other planned hiking and training/racing events.
- There is a significant volume of access requests involving walkers completing various long-distance routes.
- Annual Military Training Exercises are held in Glen Cona, Glen Scaddle, Glen Gour, Inversanda and Druim Laith. Some are simply on foot and others are authorised to proceed with 4x4 vehicles, boats, hovercrafts and air support. The members affected by these training events do so willingly and free of any commercial charges.
- Pony and horse trekking access through the main glens within the ELSDMG is usually low, although there was an organised cross-country pony event in June 2016.
- During May annually the Six Day Motor Bike Trails event takes place within the ELSDMG area. Although motorised access most members are happy to support this event.

Members of the Group will be encouraged by the DMG Secretary to ensure that they contribute to the Scottish Government’s initiative “Heading for the Scottish Hills”; before the beginning of the 2018 season to ensure that the public can easily source information on access and deer stalking activities’ within the ELSDMG area. Currently 6 of 9 contributing members contribute to this website relating to 81.3% of the land with ELSDMG.

11.3 Deer Vehicle Collisions (DVC)

There are no trunk roads within the ELSDMG area and there have been no DVC reported to the “**National Deer-Vehicle Collisions Project**” within the ELSDMG area since 2010. The below plan has been copied from the National DVC Report and it shows that only 5 DVC were reported in the ELSDMG area between 2001 and 2010.



All members are aware of their responsibility to report any collisions and to record all incidences. Fencing locations and the nature of planting and its proximity to roads is closely monitored by the Forestry Commission in order to prevent deer being trapped on roadsides and all members are to take due consideration when planning potential fencing near roadsides.

The ELSDMG is happy to work with Local Authorities to improve public safety and where possible mitigate the impact of possible DVCs.

The DMG’s agreed strategy to deal with any future increased number of DVC’s within the management group area is as undernoted;

1. The ELSDMG Secretary will record any DVC which are reported to group members.
2. Following the report of any significant number of DVCs in a similar location the ELSDMG Secretary will contact the local DMG member to make them aware of the DVCs frequency.
3. The DMG member in question will assess if any changes have been made to fencing locally which may have resulted in the increased number of DVCs and will take action accordingly to either amend or repair the fence if this is found to be the issue.

As DVC are a fairly minor matter, occurring very infrequently within the DMG area, it has been considered that no further immediate action is required at this time on this matter, other than to discuss this matter at DMG meetings if members become aware of any significant increase in numbers of reported DVCs within the DMG area.

11.4 Joint Agency Fencing Guidance

Group members understand that where applicable the Joint Agency Fencing Guidance should be considered prior to erection of significant fencing which would have an impact on the natural landscape. The group members have confirmed that this guidance is considered in combination with new or restocking woodland proposals and these fencing proposals are in turn assessed by FCS before an application proceeds to completion. Where fencing is deemed necessary by members to secure woodlands or agricultural land the fence will be located as to minimise the impact on the natural landscape.

12.0 Maximising Economic Benefits Associated with Deer to the National and Local Economy

12.1 National Economy

The ADMG, the Lowland Deer Network Scotland and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association commissioned a consultancy study by "Public and Corporate Economic Consultants" (PACEC) entitled "*The Contribution of Deer Management to the Scottish Economy*"; to assess the current contribution of deer management to the Scottish economy. The key findings for Scotland in 2013/14 were as follows:

- £140.8m of expenditure in Scotland was reliant on deer management of which £43.1m is directly due to deer management activities.
- The expenditure on deer management, of £43.1m equated to £7.7m capital expenditure, £15.2m on staff, and £20.2m other operational expenditure. This was partially offset by £12.5m in income from deer management.
- The study also found that there are 2,532 jobs in deer management which equated to an estimated at 845 FTEs.

The national forestry industry in Scotland is worth almost £1bn/year to the Scottish economy (£771m from timber and £183m from recreation and tourism). The national forestry industry employs 25,000 FTE jobs (19,555 in forestry and timber; 6,312 in recreation and tourism).

Of these national industry figures FES generates £395m each year for the Scottish economy from timber forestry and £110m from visitors. FES provides more than 11,000 jobs in forestry, timber processing and the tourism industries.

12.2 Local Economy

During 2018, an ELSDMG questionnaire was circulated to help identify/quantify many areas of deer management and the figures detailed below have been drawn from this questionnaire.

Many of the properties in the ELSDMG are run as businesses, to which normal commercial considerations apply; this inevitably has an effect on management policies and decisions effecting deer stalking, forestry and agricultural enterprises on the various properties.

During 2017/18 the direct sporting value of the deer cull within ELSDMG would have been approximately £50,000. Venison sales contribute an equally important part of land management income. Based on a cull of 348 stags, 379 hinds and 172 calves culled in 2017/18, it is estimated that the value of venison produced within the group area would have been approximately £80,000.

The total direct economic value of deer management within ELSDMG is therefore in the region of £130,000 per annum. This figure does not include additional income brought to the area by visiting guests, for example spent in guest houses, hotels, lodges or cottages, pubs and shops.

Some members of the ELSDMG expend significant financial sums on an annual basis within the local economy to manage and improve the sporting potential of their properties. Sporting staff are employed to complete culls and manage the habitat for the wild deer herd, larders and other buildings including residential accommodation and holiday letting properties are maintained in suitable conditions, capital expenditure occurs on fencing projects and purchase of equipment e.g. 4X4s, Argos & ATVs etc annually.

The members of ELSDMG jointly expend more financially on an annually basis on the management of their properties associated with sporting deer management than they achieve income from the resultant stalking, the sale of venison and the letting of associated accommodation combined.

The annual additional management expenditure within the ELSDMG area varies on a year to year basis but would be in the region of at least £300k-£350k per annum more than any income generated in relation to deer management (e.g. stalking or venison sales etc).

In addition to annual operation, maintenance and management expenditure incurred by ELSDMG members a very significant sum of money has been spent in the local economy in the past 10 years and also historically during this period members of the ELSDMG have directly funded large capital projects such as Hydro Electric Scheme Installation, Biomass System Installation and Residential Builds to name but a few project types. This expenditure has been made to ensure that the properties become self sufficient businesses in their own rights. It is very difficult to exactly quantify the full extent of this expenditure; but the figure will be in excess of £15,000,000 in the past 10 years. The majority of this expenditure has been directly with locally based or other Scottish based contractors and is a prime example of how the wider ethos of Deer Management helps to support a strong vibrant local community and economy within the ELSDMG area.

12.3 Minimising the Economic Costs of Deer Management to the National and Local Economy

Within ELSDMG it is extremely difficult to quantify the exact costs associated with deer management. The Eastern Group members of the ELSDMG do not consider that negative economic impacts of deer management exist in their own right. In that deer management constitutes only part of the management regime for each property and the costs of deer management and staffing are accumulated with many other activities involved in owning a property for example, stalking, fishing, livestock, forestry, property maintenance, hydro maintenance, and many other job types.

The owners of the sporting and farming properties within the DMG would suggest that referring to these costs as negative would do an injustice to their staff and instead simply view deer management costs as part of the overall expenditure costs of their businesses incurred subsequent to making a decision on management activities where certain costs such as fencing will inevitably be incurred.

In at least three of the hill farm locations in the group no stalker is employed, but rather deer control is completed in directly by the owner or on occasion accompanied stalking may be offered. In these farming locations, where agricultural incomes are diminished, deer control and or accompanied stalking and the sale of the resultant venison has historically been utilised to bring an additional income stream.

Across the group it can be stated that the costs of maintaining staff for deer management purposes far outweigh the annual income brought in by deer when considering only the letting rates to guest for culling animals and the venison value. Which is the primary reason for some landowners within the ELSDMG area undertaking their own deer management, thus making it economically viable.

From the landmass within the ELSDMG area the membership contributes at least £2,000,000 per annum to the National Economy. At present the majority of this turnover is spent locally, or is used to repay loans on capital projects which have been built with the DMG area in the past 10 years. A considerable portion of the day to day expenses are

invested in the local economy with regard to employment, property maintenance and capital projects. As such the local rural community and economy benefits from this private expenditure on trades and employment and in local business's, shops, eating places and garages etc.

FES confirmed that it costs them in the region of £250 per animal culled within the Lochaber Forest District area; therefore, maintaining a cull of in the region of 300-400 animals per annum within the ELSDMG area will cost FES in the region of £75,000 to £100,000 per annum.

The Lochaber Forest District has around 248km of strategic deer fencing with a replacement value of around £3million and FES confirmed that they spend around £100K each year on fence maintenance and replacement in the district area.

The Scottish Government's introduction of Sporting Rates on properties, based on land area sizes and not at all related to the availability of sport, is seen by the members of ELSDMG to be an additional unwarranted and unfair direct cost which going forward is considered by ELSDMG to likely to have adverse consequences for deer management in the West of Scotland. ELSDMG have urged all members to appeal against their Sporting Rates Levy.

12.4 Neighbouring Considerations

The Eastern Sub-Group of the ELSDMG also consider neighbouring management implications and in very many cases are willing to incur considerable maintenance and capital expenditure to ensure that deer impact on other neighbouring land uses is minimised.

Primary examples of these consideration and expenditure relate to:

- i) Fences which are maintained by landlords to prevent deer movement on to in-bye crofting/agricultural or forestry land.
- ii) The consideration by the Eastern Sub-Group that all new or restocked forestry schemes should be deer fenced to allow the tree crops to get away beyond browsing damage height and thus avoid the need for large scale deer culls, which would be required if woodland schemes were left unfenced.
- iii) The loss of substantial access to 'deer range' by fencing should be assessed by members and mitigated where necessary by a compensatory cull, to avoid unwanted displacement of deer on to neighbouring ground if this is likely to be an unintended consequence.

12.5 Local Employment

Deer stalking operated on a Sporting basis is the most widely practised form of land use by the members of the Group; combined with general property management work it provides:

8 full-time jobs

1 full-time HNC/HND trainee job

9 seasonal or part-time jobs

These staff are largely committed to deer management and stalking for at least seven months of the year (mid July to mid February).

Within ELSDMG several owners carry out their own let and unlet deer management on their agricultural properties which is reflective of the fact that many smaller properties

rely on a variety of land uses to prosper and survive and these activities include stalking, forestry and farming. There are also a number of self-employed contractors that undertake stalking duties within the smaller properties in the DMG and whom draw an important part of their business income and subsequent livelihood from stalking and culling of deer with the DMG area.

The Sporting Deer Stalking activity on the member's properties in turn supports employment in secondary roles such as tourism, hospitality and venison sales/game dealing. This secondary employment is very reliant in many cases on the DMG members being able to operate on a sporting cull basis.

Within the properties owned by the DMG members secondary employment extends to:

7 full-time jobs

32 seasonal or part-time jobs, partially dependent on sporting activities

However, the true secondary employment extends much further with the tourism industry, local shops, restaurants and accommodation providers all benefiting from the revenue stream brought to the ELSDMG by stalking guests.

Deer management operated by Forestry Enterprise Scotland within their Estate locally provides:

1.6 full-time equivalent jobs + other secondary employment in recreation, visitor services and the timber industry.

The above employment figures will equate to somewhere in the region of £880,000 annual expenditure on remuneration packages within the ELSDMG between primary deer stalking activities and secondary employment which is at least partially dependent on sporting activities.

The potential income for DMG members from local sales of venison, stalking lets and associated accommodation lets is in the region of £220,000 per annum.

As such four times as much expenditure as income takes place, within the region of an additional £660,000 spent on remuneration packages in excess of the value raised from sporting activities and associated accommodation lets.

Deer Stalking on both open hill and within forestry blocks and what this activity contributes towards the ongoing management of properties is considered by the ELSDMG to be of significant economic importance in the local rural area and economy. Therefore, the ongoing management of deer to continue to provide suitable Sporting Deer Cull is considered by ELSDMG as an essential part of the required wildlife and habitat management of the ELSDMG area.

13.0 Training Policy, Training Opportunities and Training Competencies

13.1 Training Policy

The DMG members will work towards all DMG Members or those acting on their behalf undergoing the necessary training to demonstrate competence.

Training will be used to promote professional development through the Best Practice Guidance (BPG).

- The DMG recognise that 'Competence' has been defined as members achieving Deer Stalking Certificate (DSC 1) or equivalent qualification.
- The DMG also recognise that members or their employees completing deer management work should attain DSC 2 status.
- When stalking, all members are encouraged to safeguard deer welfare by following the Best Practice Guidance and ELSDMG will encourage that DSC level 1 should be attained by anyone one undertaking practical deer management within the group.

The DMG recognise that Deer managers supplying venison for public consumption are required to certify carcasses as fit for human consumption and to demonstrate due diligence and therefore the "Trained Hunter" status is required for carcass certification. The Group is committed to promoting "Trained Hunter" status and encouraging those handling carcasses to obtain suitable training.

Members will also promote and facilitate the uptake of formal and CPD training opportunities for those participating in deer management.

The DMG members all recognise the requirement for each individual property/owner to operate (where applicable) under a written health and safety policy which would cover details on first aid and lone working arrangements as well as relevant specialist training relating to use of firearms, ATVs and other equipment, vehicles and machinery etc.

13.2 Bio-security and Personal Welfare Considerations

The DMG will ensure that deer managers are made aware that they should be familiar with notifiable diseases and that a reporting system for recording such issues is in place.

The DMG members will ensure individually that appropriate bio-security measures are enacted when stalking clients from locations where Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is present, e.g. North America or Scandinavia.

- Where people from these regions take stalking with in the ELSDMG area, members are to ensure that the visitors are presented with a copy of the CDW information leaflet which has been provided to all group members at an ELSDMG meeting.

The DMG members will ensure individually that the risks associated with Lyme's Disease and other tick-borne diseases are understood, amongst stalking staff and guests/visitors.

- Stalking Guests and Visitors should be presented by members a copy of the Lyme's Disease information leaflet which has been provided to all group members at an ELSDMG meeting.

13.3 Training Opportunities

Within the DMG Conaglen Estate regularly offers week long Fort William or Ardnamurchan High School coordinated work placements to local teenagers who want to experience the Gamekeeper's role on a Sporting Estate.

Conaglen Estate have been able to offer a full-time trainee's position since approximately 2001; to an HNC/HND student studying on the Northern College's Gamekeeping Course.

Maintaining Deer numbers at a sufficient level to be able to deliver a sufficient sporting cull to guests is the primary concern which may in the future affect the Estate's ability to continue to offer such a valuable training placement.

13.4 Training Competencies

Individual members of the DMG will undertake an annual skills and training assessment audit to establish current skill levels applicable to deer management within the DMG. A "Skill – Experience – Training – Certification Log Sheet" has been included in Appendix 10.

It is notable that all contributing members with properties within the ELSDMG area have at least one owner or member of staff, who complete the culling activities, trained to a minimum of DSC Level 1 and many have attained the Level 2 DSC.

13.5 Training Development Requirements

ELSDMG have agreed to actively try to coordinate training opportunities with other members in the area when such opportunities arise.

ELSDMG have agreed to discuss training requirements at each of our DMG meetings to assess if any member requires assistance with organise or finding suitable training courses for any activity relevant to the operation of a property within the DMG area, such as First Aid Training, ATV Training etc.

14.0 Improving Scotland's Ability to Store Carbon

The ELSDMG achieves considerable tonnes of carbon capture per annum due to the extent of the areas of existing standing woodlands, undisturbed blanket bog/peatland within the ELSDMG area.

Within ELSDMG there are 12,896ha of standing woodlands, 1,274ha of blanket bog and peatlands and 18,978ha of heather moor. Peatland areas in particular require to be protected from overgrazing and trampling by deer and sheep and due to the agricultural reforms and subsequent restructuring which have taken place since the late 1960's ELSDMG can confirm that 13,170 breeding ewes and gimmers have been removed from the ELSDMG area. This reduction in agricultural animals is very significant and will act to protect the blanket bog/peatlands and heather moor areas from any significant over grazings.

Only one site, Claish Moss SSSI, is designated in relation to a feature relating to blanket bog/peatlands. This site owned by SNH is deer fenced to exclude deer from grazing it and as such the site is in favourable condition.

14.1 Carbon Store Summary

Taking into account the existing vegetation cover with ELSDMG area, it can be estimated that carbon capture by existing vegetation is quite significant.

Approximately the undernoted volume is achieved annually:

- *4,531Ha Native woodlands + (3,411 Open Ground x 50%) = 6,237Ha x 0.7 tonnes per Ha p.a. = 4,366 tonnes carbon capture p.a.*
- *8,365Ha Commercial conifer woodland x 1.4 tonnes per Ha p.a. = 11,711 tonnes carbon capture p.a.*
- *20,252Ha of blanket bogs/peatlands & heather moor X a minimum of 50% undisturbed = 10,126 x 0.5 tonnes per Ha p.a. = 5,063 tonnes carbon capture p.a.*

Hence an overall figure in the region of **21,140 Tonnes Per Annum** of carbon is captured in existing vegetation cover within the DMG area.

14.2 Renewable Energy Production Offsetting Carbon Release

The ELSDMG achieves considerable tonnes of carbon release avoidance due to the considerable number of renewable energy schemes which have been brought into production within the ELSDMG area. This carbon release avoidance is a Public Health and Environmental advantage being provided by the members of the ELSDMG in their wider remit as land custodians.

14.2.1 Hydro Electric Schemes

Since 2002 there has been approximately 4.63MW's of hydroelectric schemes installed within the ELSDMG area. This equates to in the region of 13,384MWhrs of electricity production p.a.

- $13,384 \times 0.527 \text{ tonnes/MWh} = 7,054 \text{ tonnes p.a. of Co}_2 \text{ avoided from fossil fuel related electric production, which equates to 1,411 tonnes of carbon release being avoided p.a. (Conaglen, Sunart Comm. \& Druim Laith).}$

http://www.carbonindependent.org/sources_home_energy.html

14.2.2 Carbon Neutral Wood Fuel Heating Systems

A number of DMG members have also installed carbon neutral wood fuel heating systems in their properties, which significantly reduce the need for energy production via burning fossil fuels.

- Within the ELSDMG area these systems extend to 280kW (Conaglen & Ardgour) which provides carbon neutral heating which results in an equivalent avoidance of 56 tonnes of carbon release per annum, which would traditionally have been incurred via the burning of fossil fuels.

14.2.3 Hence an overall figure in the region of **1,467 Tonnes Per Annum** of Carbon Release is avoided via the Renewable Energy Production & Carbon Neutral Heating Systems within the ELSDMG area.

15.0 Reducing or Mitigating Risk from Non-Native Species & Secondary Native Species

15.1 Invasive Non-Native Species

15.1.1 Sika Deer Policy

There is no evidence of a resident Sika population within the ELSDMG area and only a very small number of wandering Sika stags have ever been observed during the rut on any property in the DMG area.

All members have agreed to a "cull on sight policy" for Sika Deer which are observed within the group area, within legal limits and animal welfare standards.

15.1.2 Muntjac Policy

There are no established wild Muntjac populations in Scotland. ELSDMG members will ensure no populations of Muntjac are established in the area and will report any sightings (whether dead or alive) to the DMG Chairman and SNH.

All members have agreed to a "cull on sight policy" for Muntjac which are observed within the group area, within legal limits and animal welfare standards. In Scotland, Muntjac can be culled at any time as they are not offered protection by the Deer (Scotland) Act. However, animal welfare standards should still be followed.

15.1.3 Feral Pig Policy

There are no populations of Feral Pigs within the ELSDMG area. ELSDMG members will report any sightings of either Feral Pigs (whether dead or alive) to the DMG Chairman and SNH. If this situation changes the group has agreed that Feral Pigs will be culled on sight.

15.1.4 Rhododendron

There are considerable areas of Rhododendron within the ELSDMG area, which has a negative impact on a number of designated sites woodland sites including the Doire Donn SSSI the Loch Shiel SSSI and the Sunart SSSI.

ELSDMG encourage members to access Forestry grants, where possible, to undertake Rhododendron removal work within the area of the ELSDMG.

Conaglen has undertaken two major scale Rhododendron removal projects in since 2013 extending to in excess of 65 ha of dense Rhododendron being removed and 120 ha of low density Rhododendron being sprayed. These projects have been focused on removing the remnant rhododendron from the Doire Donn SSSI along with the removal of the surrounding potential seed sources from Stronchreggan, Gorsten and Conaglen in an attempt to ensure that that the Doire Donn woodland remains free from Rhododendron regrowth. Conaglen will continue it Rhododendron removal work in coming years.

15.2 Secondary Native Species

15.2.1 Roe Deer Cull Targets & Policy

The DMG have no specified Roe deer culling targets or objectives as the majority of the Roe culled by group members are found within woodland blocks and members generally try to reduce this population to as low a figure as possible and as they independently assess necessary on each property.

If the Roe Deer population is observed by members to dramatically increase, then the DMG members will review the need for amending this policy and possibly setting specific targets for each member.

15.2.2 Wild Goat Policy

There are no populations of Wild Goats within the ELSDMG area. ELSDMG members will report any sightings of Wild Goats (whether dead or alive) to the DMG Chairman and SNH.

If this situation changes, the group has agreed that Wild Goats will not be culled unless their population becomes problematic. Historically there used to be Wild Goats present with the ELSDMG area, but have not been for 20+ years, and members feel that a small population will do very little harm.

16.0 Venison Marketing

16.1 Sharing Infrastructure Considerations

All of the members of the DMG manage their larder facilities to Best Practice Standards and the ELSDMG members have historically considered if there are any opportunities for to share game larders and deer management infrastructure to improve carcass handling and to ensure maximum benefit from venison production whilst minimising carbon costs.

However, was considered that group members are unable to share larders due to the requirements of Best practice, the SQWV Assurance Scheme and the geographical distance between each of the properties.

16.2 Venison Supply Chain

The supply of venison of the highest standard into the food chain is a prerequisite for the ELSDMG and its members and the majority of the group members currently use the same Game Dealer; who collects venison from the larders on a regular route during the year, hence minimising the carbon costs via increased efficiency.

16.3 Scottish Quality Assurance Scheme for Venison Production

Membership of the Scottish Quality Assurance Scheme for Venison Production, namely the Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV) Scheme is recommended but cannot be forced upon DMG members.

The undernoted members are SQWV scheme accredited:

Conaglen Estate, including Glenscaddle and Glen Gour
Forest Enterprise Scotland

The membership of SQWV equates to 77.4% of the land in the DMG area and 77.6% of the 2017/18 cull being processed under the SQWV scheme.

Members have been encouraged to participate in the free SQWV Larder Audits which have been available during 2018 to assess if joining the SQWV would be viable. At present Druim Laith (North Carnoch) and Resipole Farm are currently working towards SQWV accreditation.

16.4 Food Safety Standards and Notifiable Diseases

The DMG members will continually identify means of ensuring food safety is maintained in carcass handling and venison processing and will be compliant with the BPG in relation to meat hygiene and will comply with any guidance issued by the "Food Standards Agency" in relation to E-coli 0157.

No notifiable diseases have been encountered within the group area and all members are aware that if there are any suspicions over deer behaviour prior to culling or of disease once culled then this carcass will not be entered the food chain and a veterinary officer will be alerted immediately.

17.0 Communications Policy

The ELSDMG will operate in an open and transparent manner. The Group will undertake updates of the ELSDMG section of the website of the ADMG. This deer plan will be uploaded to that site, along with minutes from DMG meetings and an Annual Report of activities carried out in the preceding period.

Where applicable external communication will be directed both at members and at parties not directly involved in the DMG but who have a significant interest in deer management including individuals, local bodies such as crofting clerks, community councils, local authorities, the Scottish Police Authority, local media and other specialist interests.

17.1 ELSDMP Public Circulation/Consultation List

The ELSDMP and all appendices have been provided to ADMG to be published on the ELSDMG's webpage of the ADMG website; to allow public access to the documents.

Stakeholders have been formally contacted in writing with a request for them to confirm if they have any views or comments to make on the DMP and the role and activities of the ELSDMG.

Neighbouring DMGs

Ardnamurchan DMG
Moidart DMG
Morvern DMG
West Lochaber DMG

Community Councils

Acharacle CC
Ardgour CC
Glenfinnan CC
Sunart CC

Crofting Townships/Clerks

Ariundle, Anaheilt & Scotstown
Blaich
Clovullin
Garvan & Duisky
Treslaig

Other Interested Parties/Stakeholders

SNH – (Group Member)
FES – (Group Member)
ADMGs
The Highland Council
Scottish Police Authority, via the,
Strontian Police Station

The ELSDMG will consider all responses provided on the DMP or up on the activities of the DMG. Where responses are deemed appropriate by the ELSDMG they may lead to an early amendment(s) or revision(s) of the DMP.

17.2 Ensuring Effective Communications on Deer Management Issues

The ELSDMG holds regular meetings which are well-attended by members. These meetings offer a forum for regular exchange of information on counts, culls and other routine monitoring information. Members are fully committed to attendance at such meetings or where unable to attend, to send representatives.

ELSDMG has increased the volume of communications to group members across the area since 2014 and has invited Community Council representatives to attend the recent DMG meetings. Community representatives will be invited to future meetings and encouraged to contribute going forward.

Whenever possible a DMG member shall also attend Community Council meetings within the ELSDMG to represent the Group and answer any questions arising about deer management within the area. The DMG will identify and implement actions to address community issues on deer, or deer management activity and would like to support and promote wider opportunities for further education on deer. To this end the ELSDMG has

recently discussed the potential of having a member(s) attend the local schools to allow the children an opportunity to further understand deer and their habitat.

The DMG shall encourage a member to attend public meetings held to discuss Long Term Forest Plans (or other plans open to public consultation) where these concern a property within the Group.

ELSDMG currently has a page on the ADMG website which enables ELSDMG to reach a broader community and keep others abreast of how ELSDMG manages their deer population.

17.3 ELSDMG Privacy Policy Review

For the furtherance of our business as a Deer Management Group, ELSDMG need to hold and 'process' certain personal data of our Group members.

17.3.1 Use of personal data

The personal data that ELSDMG holds about its members will be used for the following purposes:

- Membership business, contact and updates
- Notification of DMG meetings, events, consultations, other items of interest in relation to the deer sector.

We may publish a list of the members of the DMG on our website or in documents relating to the DMG (i.e. our deer management plan) but will only include any information, beyond the name of your estate, land holding or business as relevant, with your consent.

17.3.2 Data held

The data that ELSDMG holds may consist of the following:

- Name
- Business/home address
- Post code
- Telephone number(s)
- Email address

17.3.3 Consent basis

By giving ELSDMG your consent you are giving us permission to hold and process your personal data for the purposes identified above. ELSDMG will always tell you why your personal data will be retained and used.

You may withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the ELSDMG secretary at the address given.

17.3.4 Legitimate interest or contractual basis

Alternatively, ELSDMG may hold your data on a 'legitimate interest' or 'contractual' basis.

17.3.5 Disclosure

ELSDMG will not pass on, share or trade your personal data with any person or organisation without first receiving your consent unless for the purpose of DMG business (i.e. to other members of the Group, to agencies such as SNH, FSS etc) or contractors engaged in work with the DMG; or in the general furtherance of the business of deer management within the area of the DMG). Under no circumstances will ELSDMG sell your information to third parties or advertisers.

17.4 Conflicts and Grievance Procedure

The primary purpose of this conflicts and grievance procedure is to enable members or other significant landowners with properties adjacent to, or within the boundaries of ELSDMG to air any formal grievance that they have about practices, policies or treatment they have received from ELSDMG, or an individual member(s); and to produce a speedy resolution where a genuine problem exists.

Although it may not be possible to solve all problems to everyone's complete satisfaction, this policy forms an undertaking by ELSDMG that it will deal objectively and constructively with all conflicts and grievances, and that anyone who decides to use the procedure may do so with the confidence that their problem will be dealt with fairly.

This conflicts and grievance procedure is not a substitute for good day-to-day communication; where ELSDMG encourages all members to discuss and resolve daily issues in an open manner. Many problems can be satisfactorily solved on an informal footing if members are prepared to keep the channels of communication between themselves open and working well. This procedure is designed to deal with those issues that need to be approached on a more formal basis so that every route to a satisfactory solution can be explored.

17.4.1 Procedure

If you cannot settle your conflict or grievance informally, you should raise it formally. This procedure has been drawn up to establish the appropriate steps to be followed when pursuing and dealing with a formal grievance.

17.4.2 Stage 1

In the event of you having a formal grievance relating to your membership or a practice of ELSDMG or an individual member(s); you should in the first instance, put your complaint in writing and address it to the Chairman ELSDMG. You will be invited to attend a conflicts and grievance meeting with the Chairman to discuss the conflict and your grievance and you have the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a witness of your choice.

Following the meeting, the Chairman will discuss the conflict or grievance with any other involved member of ELSDMG, to understand their position in relation to this conflict or grievances; and the Chairman will then endeavor to respond to your grievance in writing as soon as possible.

17.4.3 Stage 2

If you feel your grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved, you may then appeal in writing to the Secretary ELSDMG, within ten working days of the grievance decision. On receipt of your appeal letter, the Secretary ELSDMG shall make arrangements for yourself and all ELSDMG members involved in the conflict or grievance to meet along with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary of the ELSDMG; so that all parties can present their grievance at an appeal meeting and at this meeting you may again, if you wish, be accompanied by a witness of your choice. The Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary may delegate to or nominate another member to carry out respective meetings or responses as appropriate.

Following the appeal meeting, the ELSDMG board will endeavor to respond to your grievance in writing as soon as possible. This is the final stage of the grievance procedure and the ELSDMG board's decision shall be final.

18.0 Habitat Monitoring and Managing Deer Impacts on the Wider Countryside

The welfare and condition of the wild deer population in the DMG area is dependent on the availability of food and shelter, particularly over the winter months and in the spring. Historical deer management decision making for the DMG has been based on professional judgements and evidence as witnessed by the group members and their professional staff on the ground. This habitat and deer population monitoring has been completed daily on all group properties based on a wealth of experience by all stalkers and deer managers on the ground since long before ELSDMG's records began in the 1960's.

Information gathered by the DMG includes deer count figures, culls figures, mortality and recruitment observations. Information is collated in a consistent manner and provided to members at DMG meeting and as part of the annual review process of the DMP. The Eastern Sub-Group of ELSDMG consider that the deer population is being managed sufficiently to address the required concerns and to prevent extensive growth of the population or extensive damage to the natural habitat.

Since the late 1960's the DMG members have undertaken extensive agricultural livestock removal programs which have increased the availability of grazings for wild deer. In particular, 13,170 sheep have been removed since the late 1960's and as such additional grazing range has been made available to allow expansion of the wild deer population.

Improving the underlying grazing vegetation to support the wild deer herd is an on-going and major objective of the Eastern Sub- Group of ELSDMG's habitat management strategy. As such most these members carry out annual muirburning within the applicable seasons and legislation.

Subsequent visual monitoring by professional staff of utilisation of these rejuvenated grazing areas within the wider landscape takes place and it is quite evident to the professional staff on the ground that removing such a vast number of sheep combined with targeted muirburning allows more than sufficient grazing land for the current population of wild deer to utilise in the Eastern Sub-Group area.

18.1 Historical Habitat Monitoring within ELSDMG area

Tolerable levels of grazing for each location and each manager will depend in large on whether areas are primarily managed for conservation, for forestry, agriculture, or sporting or as mixed-use properties and also when considering the lifecycles of the features in question which are being grazed.

Inevitably there may be localised areas where heavier grazing impacts may be recorded and particularly where these may occur within important habitats or designated sites further actions will be considered and discussed by the DMG members and if necessary an action plan may be put in place to address any such areas.

Members of ELSDMG will consider habitats as a whole, particularly woodland habitats. Many members of the Eastern Sub-Group practise a system of rotational native woodland fencing to allow sections of woodlands to rejuvenate and trees to become established beyond browsing heights. These projects consider the overall lifecycle of the woodland normally being in the hundreds of years; and the aim is to always ensure that a sufficient area is being protected from browsing pressure so that it can establish; while utilising the remainder of the woodland as vitally important deer shelter and livestock forage areas particularly in the winter months.

As such ELSDMG would not propose to react each time to localised levels of heavy browsing damage which it considers acceptable for its management purposes. In for example a woodland which has a good age structure, high percentage of canopy cover or where other areas in the same woodland are rejuvenating; probably because these other areas have either been fenced or are currently fenced to allow said rejuvenation and prevent grazing impacts. Conaglen Estate have been practicing a system of rotational native woodland fencing since 1959 to regularly allow different sections of in particular the Ardgour Pinewoods to rejuvenate and trees to become established beyond browsing heights.

18.2 Designated Site Areas

SNH assess the designated features within the ELSDMG area such as SACs, SPAs and SSSIs in their rolling program “Site Condition Monitoring” and “Site Check” assessments to determine the condition of the designated natural feature within a site.

As per Section 10 there are three designated sites within the ELSDMG area which each have historically had a single designated woodland feature deemed to be in Unfavorable Condition.

These sites are;

Doire Donn SSSI - Unfavourable Condition for Upland Oak (Last Assessment March 2015)

Loch Shiel SSSI - Unfavourable Condition for Upland Oak (Last Assessment June 2008)

Sunart SSSI - Unfavourable Condition for Upland Oak (Last Assessment Nov 2009)

SNH instructed a survey in 2018 of the woodland features of the Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI with 50 woodland survey plots established, the Doire Donn SSSI with 25 woodland survey plots established and the Sunart SSSI with 85 woodland survey plots established in the ELSDMG area. The resultant data will be checked by ELSDMG’s consultants and will provide new baseline data going forward for these unfenced designated woodlands.

One interesting question going forwards will be the degree to which habitat monitoring should take place in the wider countryside, outwith designated sites. The extent and distribution of unfenced designated features across the group is such that assessment of the designated features could almost certainly be used as a proxy for the whole area. There may be some exceptions to this, and this will have to be looked at in some detail, but as the mixture of habitat types is relatively straightforward across the group area, then the condition of the designated habitats is likely to give a good indication of the condition of the habitat resources as a whole.

18.3 Enclosed Woodland Areas

FES under contracts with consultants, undertake a process referred to as “Effective Deer Utilisation” via assessing pellet group counts on their properties. The results are then modelled together with FES woodland browsing impact surveys. The last survey was completed in 2009 and suggest 7.5 deer/km² in Glen Hurich.

The FES woodland regeneration target is to achieve less than 10% leader browsing damage and they currently report that browsing within their woodlands is above this across the ELSDMG area, with their 2016 leader damage survey showing 18.6% damage in some locations. FES have also confirmed however that security and maintenance of deer fencing is a major issue and influencing factor on this browsing damage figure.

Within the privately-owned woodlands in the ELSDMG area it has been agreed that secure deer fences must be erected and maintained throughout the vulnerable period of early tree growth. Ardour/Glenscaddle, Conaglen and Druim Laith (North Carnoch) Estates all undertake frequent surveys of leader browsing damage in their natural regeneration and restocking sites throughout the year to assess deer impacts. If impacts are found, then any animals which have accessed these enclosures are either driven out or culled as soon as possible.

It is not at this stage intended that the DMG should get involved in dung counting but given the difficulty in counting in the local terrain, dung counting in the woodland areas to monitor occupancy should be reviewed on an annual basis.

18.4 Recommended Habitat Monitoring programme

It is suggested by SNH that, in addition to the monitoring work on designated sites, that the DMG should monitor three habitats types (i) blanket bog, (ii) dwarf shrub heath and (iii) woodland to give an indication of impacts in the wider countryside. Such a programme of monitoring would be expected to include provision for training as well as the potential use of contractors and self-completion of HIAs.

SNH have recommended that for each habitat type a minimum of 30 HIA sample points should be developed within each DMG, with the same plots being re-monitored on a three-yearly basis. This would give a minimum of 3 habitats X 30 sample plots X 2 sub-groups = 180 sample plots to be monitored on the basis of one third annually per habitat type.

It is suggested that 2 X people could measure 10 X plots in a day, with some additional time required to plan for and collate information across the Group when complete.

External costs of doing this volume of HIA is likely to be £8,000+ in the first year, perhaps reducing to half this in a subsequent year, to maybe £2,000 a year once group members are proficient in carrying out their own monitoring, only then requiring some limited external co-ordination and data collation and interpretation.

18.5 Currently Undertaken Habitat Impact Assessment Programme

A key part of this DMP is to agree on how to fund and implement a more comprehensive programme of habitat monitoring across the DMG, both on designated sites and in the wider countryside. Such a programme will consist of a combination of statutory Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) by SNH, and private habitat impact assessments (HIA), a proportion of which may be carried out by contractor &/or members themselves.

Dwarf shrub heath, blanket bog and woodlands will be used as a proxy for a wider suite of habitats, and group members will look to monitor each habitat on a three-yearly cycle. Very small properties within ELSDMG will be excluded from HIA.

Three group members of ELSDMG, namely Conaglen, Druim Laith (North Carnoch) and Resipole Farm have commenced completion of HIA monitoring of herbivore impacts on vegetation condition. These members have completed some HIA plots prior to July 2018.

The DMG plans to commence collation of the initial results in Autumn 2019 when re-assessment will have taken place on some of the oldest established plots within the group. Also collection of further baseline data will continue where plots have only been surveyed once and this baseline data will be reassessed every three years.

Number of Blanket Bog or Dwarf Shrub Heath Plots Established

- Druim Laith (North Carnoch)
 - 10 Plots Established in 2015 and re-assessed in 2018
 - 10 Plots Established in 2016
- Conaglen
 - 10 Plots Established in 2018

Number of Woodland Plots Established

- Conaglen will use the 50 Plots in the Ardgour Pinewoods and 25 Plots in the Doire Donn established by SNH in 2018 going forward as baseline information.
- Resipole Farm – 20 (TBC) Plots have been monitored annually for 15-20 years in and adjacent to Sunart SSSI.

18.6 Future Consideration for Habitat Monitoring

Ardgour Estate (15 Plots), Conaglen Estate (30 Plots) and Glen Scaddle Estate (15 Plots) have committed to establishing 60 further HIA plots per habitat type between them. With the commitment that this work will commence in March 2019, if weather conditions are suitable i.e. no snow cover. All plots established in 2019 will be re-surveyed as part of the three yearly HIA review process in Spring 2021.

The existing HIA plot locations have been marked on the plan, 'Habitat Impact Assessment Monitoring Plots', included at Appendix 11; along with approximate proposed locations for the new HIA plots which are to be assessed in 2019.

Other members, such as SNH, have confirmed that they intend to start HIA monitoring at their Clais Moss property in Spring 2019, but further information is required at this time to confirm how many HIA plots will be established.

A number of the ELSDMG members have however extensively considered completing a HIA programme based on the Best Practice Guidance, however, some of these members are not in a position to be able to progress with this matter.

The justification for this decision includes the undernoted considerations:

- i) Overgrazing or over utilisation of the wider open range is not evident to some members who have no designated sites on their land, which they feel is also extensively underutilised and under-grazed hill land. The Open Range of ELSDMG supported an additional 13,170 sheep in the 1960s which have now been removed from the DMG area.
- ii) The majority of the non-fenced designated woodland habitats within the DMG area are deemed to be in favourable condition by SNH.
- iii) No overpopulation of deer is evident on the ground, as annual natural mortality rates are not significant.
- iv) The economic costs and management time requirements associated with rolling out an extensive HIA system are not justifiable or achievable for some members.

In order to address the economic concerns in relation to completion of an increased HIA projected funding would have to be made available from SNH or SGRPID to the DMG to extensively fund any expansion of the current HIA project. However, at present, SRDP and ECAF options for funding habitat monitoring appear to be unwieldy and under-funded or no longer available.

19.0 Red Deer Population Modelling

A forward-looking population model has been completed and included in the "ELSDMG Action Plan – Working Document".

Generally Open Range DMGs can apply simple models to their population based on deer counts, recruitment, mortality and subsequent culls. However, given the level of woodland within ELSDMG another layer of complexity is added as we are unaware of the level of deer population resident within the woodlands. The DMG does know that during the winter period a large number of deer, particularly stags, move from the open range into woodlands for shelter and are being culled by FES.

The Population Model considers the undernoted:

- Deer Counts & other Population Assessments
- The DMG Area and the Open Range and Enclosed Woodland Population Areas
- Population Density
- Deer Recruitment
- Deer Mortality
- Migration/Immigration both internal between the sub-groups and externally.
- The Public Interest
- Habitat Impacts
- Designated Sites
- Short and Long-term Target Deer Densities
- Short and Long-term Cull Targets and Projections

The population Model will be reviewed and updated at least annually taking the above into account. The updated provisional Population Model will then be circulated to the members, allowing discussion and approval or alteration.

19.1 Eastern Sub-Group Objectives

The Eastern Sub-Group members of the DMG would like to retain a Red Deer population to provide a sporting cull of higher average age stags. The overall DMG's density at March 2016 was 10.1 deer/km² (See Section 8.4.1) and it has been agreed that the DMG's agreed targeted Red deer density on hill ground is to be kept within SNH's medium rated category of 8 to 15 deer/km² density.

19.2 FES Historical Culls

It is evident in recent years that the FES woodland culls within the Group area have increased considerably. This increase can be seen from examining the cull information provided for the previous 15-year period, which shows the FES combined cull from their properties increased:

From --- 161.6 Red Deer per annum during the period from 2004/05 to 2008/09

To --- 307.8 Red Deer per annum during the period from 2013/14 to 2017/18

- This represents an 90.4% increase during this period.

It is also of particular concern to the Eastern Sub-Group of the DMG, is that the FES combined Red Stag cull for their properties increased:

From --- 70 Stags per annum during the period from 2004/05 to 2008/09

To --- 152 animals per annum during the period from 2013/14 to 2017/18

- This represents a 124.3% increase during this period.

FES confirmed that it is likely that their cull taken has increased due to immigration from the surrounding properties and that the majority of these 'immigrants' are stags.

19.3 Measures to Address Situation

FES had been working towards repairing and replacing the strategic fences within the ESLDMG area. The Glen Hurich fence from Scammodale to the Strontian to Polloch public road from has had large sections renewed and a programme was in place to renew/maintain other sections as and when funding allows.

The Eastern Sub-Group would suggest that largely unproductive surplus land, which lies out with the FCS/FES strategic boundary fences could be sold to the adjoining neighbours e.g. such as the northern portion of Glen Hurich or along the existing western FCS boundary as far as Achnanellan and Pollock.

If arrangements could be established then subsequent march fence boundaries could be renewed with shared responsibility, as opposed to having fences in some case 500-1,000m inside the actual legal march boundaries. Under these circumstances some of the private ELSDMG members could consider accepting some liability for new fences between the various properties.

20.0 Annual Cull Targets

Annual cull targets have been agreed upon and included in the ELSDMG Action Plan Working Document.

Historically, to ensure an annual supply of mature stags across an area, typically between $\frac{1}{6}$ to $\frac{1}{7}$ of the stag population should be culled. Research (Clutton Brook, 1994) carried out on Scottish red deer management shows that aiming for a sex ratio as close to 1 stag to 1 hind was mutually beneficial to both deer and land managers. Hence, in the instance of the research, taking a cull of female deer at between 14 - 17% ($\frac{1}{6}$ to $\frac{1}{7}$) of the hind population was optimal for ensuring:

- Higher survival rates in male calves
- Improved calving weights, therefore larger/ more productive deer
- Density of deer is at an optimal level for both habitat condition and economic requirements
- There is evidence across Scotland that wild deer populations that suffer from high hind densities tend to displace males to lower ground i.e. generally where deer damage is most noticeable

ELSDMG's annual cull setting will be based on the following key aspects:

- Let stalking aspirations
- Most recent deer count data & previous trends
- Recruitment and mortality data
- Changes in management – e.g. compensatory culls for fencing/changes in livestock
- Habitat monitoring data & trends

But will also take account of:

- Preventing risk to deer welfare
- Managing risk to public safety e.g. reducing risk of Deer Vehicle Collisions
- Unusual weather circumstance
- Temporary changes within the deer range, e.g. construction activity etc

Ultimately the cull should be achieved in a collaborative manner shared between members, whilst still enabling individual management practices where possible. Improved habitat monitoring within the group should identify where culls need to be revised to prevent damage to habitat.

The annual cull to be completed by Forestry/Non-Open Range members, within securely fenced woodlands should not be restricted; however, the Eastern Sub-Group of the DMG would like any member completing this type of non-restricted Forestry Cull to confirm that the woodland in question is securely fenced. The Eastern Sub-Group would like the Forestry Owner/Manager to vouch prior undertaking an increased woodland cull that as far as practically possible that no significant movement in deer population is possible from the open hill range to the specific enclosed woodland in question.

20.1 Red Deer Cull Target Review's

The DMG's cull target will be reviewed and agreed at the bi-annual ELSDMG meetings and noted in the minutes.

Appendix 12

DMG Plan Development Timeline and Progression

The initial Draft DMP was prepared and circulated by e-mail to all group members for comments on 25th March 2015.

A 2nd Edition of the draft DMP was provided for further consideration to all members by e-mail on 23rd June 2015; following discussion at DMG meeting on 22nd June 2015.

A 3rd Edition of the DMP was discussed at the 1st December 2015 DMG meeting and again comments and information was requested from all members.

A 4th Edition of the DMP was circulated to SNH and ADMG on 8th March 2016 for their comments on progression to date. In addition, a request was lodged with ADMG on 10th March 2016 to put this version of the DMP online on their website and it was also circulated to the Stakeholders List.

A 5th Edition of the DMP was provided for review to the DMG Chairman & Secretary on 14th June 2016 and sent to SNH on 16th June 2016, to allow re-auditing of the document to be completed. This copy was then sent to FCS on 21st June 2016.

Following SNH re-audit on 28th June 2016 a 6th Edition of the DMP was updated for the DMG meeting on 26th July 2016. This copy was further updated to form a 7th Edition and was circulated to members on 3rd August 2016.

An 8th Edition was completed on 23rd May 2017 after further feedback from FES following from the March 2017 DMG meeting and was circulated to the Chairman, Secretary and FES for any additional comments.

The 9th Edition has been drafted following from the ADMG/SNH Seminar in Birnam which took place on 6th June 2018. The 9th Edition was utilised at the ADMG interim review on 21st September 2018 and subsequent to a number of minor alterations was circulated to members and the stakeholders' list on 28th September 2018 for comments.

It is anticipated that one month will be allowed for further input or comments to come from DMG members and stakeholders before the plan is put forward to the DMG members for formal adoption. It is proposed that this Edition of plan will be used in the forthcoming SNH audit in April/May 2019.