

EAST LOCH SHIEL HABITAT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Appendix 13.

Revision 2: - July 2020.

PART 1: -

HABITATS AND IMPACTS

Designated Sites: -

The DMG herbivore impact target for Designated Sites is to be favourable, stable or, URDTM. Often there is more than one feature in a designated site which requires different conditions so to improve one may degrade another. Designated Sites are assessed under the SNH - SCM programme.

The Designated Sites are reported on in the DMP 9th Edition, Background Information Document at Section 10. At September 2018 the majority of the designated features, SSSI's, SAC's, SPA's land and habitats within the ELSDMG area were reported as in favourable condition by SNH.

The condition status of some Designated Features has been downgraded from favourable to unfavourable during 2019/20¹.

Woodland protection, creation and regeneration projects are progressing to address concerns with designated features, with significant use of rotational fencing within the DMG area to provide a mosaic of landscape management, as opposed to a mono-culture.

Non-Designated Open Range: -

The group's herbivore impact target for the Non-Designated Open Range is to be at least 50% light or moderate². Whilst BPG is the HIA method promoted for Non-Designated Open Range^{3 4} it is accepted that other suitable methods may be used by landholdings. The onus where this is the case is for these landholdings to confirm whether their deer impacts are within the DMG target or not.

The 'Land Cover Scotland 1988' (ELSDMG DMP – Appendix 3) plan shows just over 3% of the ELSDMG area is identified as Blanket Bog/Peatland (BB), much of which is on the SNH Clais Moss SAC/SSSI/Ramsar Site. With the remaining non-designated BB being under 2% of the group area more emphasis group wide is placed on Dwarf Shrub Heath (DSH) HIA monitoring.

Habitat Impact Assessments over the Non-Designated Open Range is underway on a 3-5 year cycle with re-measures indicating the trend. Analysis of BPG - BB & DSH HIA shows the overall herbivore impacts as over 50% light or moderate. Heavy impacts recorded are mostly concentrated in areas where the remaining domestic livestock is grazed. Group wide, overall our Non-Designated Open Range deer impacts are within the DMG target.

We also take into consideration: Current deer densities have been stable for a long time. That the deer density is at the lower end of the SNH medium rated category of 8 to 15 deer/km². Changes in management practices has resulted in the overall herbivore pressure/impact being significantly reduced with >13170 sheep + followers and >350 cows + followers having been removed from the open range in recent history. This is equivalent to a >75% reduction by number of large herbivore presence.

Much of our area is grass dominated. There is no BPG HIA method for grassland or grass-dominated habitats. With grassland monitoring being extremely technical and requiring extensive botanical knowledge our SNH WMO advises the group should carry out BPG BB and DSH monitoring only. ⁵ (DMG meeting 12/11/2019)

Heather beetle impacts have been observed year on year with members reporting much higher than normal heather beetle impacts during 2019 ⁶. The “Heather Trust believes that the heather beetle *Lochmaea suturalis* has been instrumental in driving the change from heather to grass dominated moorland. This is a particularly significant cause of moorland decline in the wetter areas, generally on the west side of the country where there is often greater competition from grasses. Purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is often the chief competitor.” <https://www.heathertrust.co.uk/#!/heather-beetle/c58r>

Native Woodlands: -

The group Native Woodland target is to retain existing native woodland cover and improve the woodland condition in the medium to long term. This is measured as being greater than 50% low or medium deer impacts. Native Woodlands are assessed under the NWSS programme which shows herbivore impacts to be within the DMG target. More detail is provided in the ELSDMG DMP Background Information - Section 9 and Appendices 5 & 7. SNH advises (2017) that a Woodland Monitoring method and training for DMG’s are under development and are still to be rolled out.

FLS Woodland and Open Range: -

FLS explained (29/04/2019) that their priority was to monitor woodland condition. They have extensive woodland HIA data and results showing their woodland condition deer impacts are satisfactory. Their view is that as their woodland condition deer impacts are satisfactory then adjacent open range by default is also satisfactory and are within the DMG target.

DEER DENSITY

Deer Density Target: -

Overall grazing pressures are lower now than for very many years, with higher impacts mostly concentrated where domestic livestock continues to be grazed. The officers of the DMG conclude that with regard to deer impacts the target Spring deer Density can remain at 10 per km² +/- 5%. Refer to the population model (Appendix 15 Population Models and Targets) which considers all population criteria, indicators, the collective objectives of the DMG members and the public interest to set the overall population and cull targets.

ONGOING ACTIONS

HIA monitoring is just one activity that has been affected by the COVID pandemic with monitoring postponed until circumstances allow for re-programming.

Woodland protection, creation and re-generation projects are progressing to address designated sites issues. Proposals are out for consultation.

With the Non-Designated herbivore impacts within the DMG targets, the issue is one of maintenance and of addressing any localised areas of high deer impacts on an Estate by Estate basis.

Emphasis is placed on deer managers to maintain the DMG planned cull through the 2020/21 season despite the difficulties posed by the COVID pandemic.

Review this HIA document annually incorporating updated and new data.

Review updated HIA data and confirm or re-set the deer density target during summer 2021.

NOTES

¹ There is concern among the DMG membership regarding the downgrading of the condition status of designated features which is not based on deteriorating condition on the ground but rather on changes to the assessment method, simply the goalposts have been moved. The downgrading of the condition status has been applied to whole designated sites, despite the fact in some areas extensive, expansion, protection and improvement works have been carried out over many years.

² Agreed at the SNH DMG Assessment on 08/05/2019 with clarification of the definition of 'predominantly' as being greater than 50% low or moderate.

³ There is concern among the DMG membership that; We were told in July 2017 the BPG HIA Guides are under review and will change. Will any change simply move the goalposts and lead to a downgrading of condition status? Will any change lead to a lack of statistical robustness to any ongoing results? Will the current data collected even be compatible with the new/changed BPG? No information has been given yet as to any detail nor even a date by which the changes may be published.

⁴ There is concern among the DMG membership regarding the inconsistencies of the HIA training received, the differences between the training, issued documents and BPG.

⁵ There is concern among the DMG membership that in an area with e.g. a lot of grassland, such as East Loch Shiel, impacts measured on other habitats may not be representative of the overall impacts and therefore may not be relevant.

⁶ There is concern among the DMG membership that Heather Beetle impacts over time has and will continue to lead to an ongoing deterioration of heather, with these impacts,

particularly loss of heather or reduction in average heights of vegetation, occurring gradually, being misinterpreted as by other causes, perhaps as deer impacts.

July 2020.

PART 2: -

Landholding BPG HIA Log

East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group. HIA Log

Sheet No.1A	Landholding: - Ardgour/Glenscaddle	Date created	17/04/2019
Responsible	EM	Date updated	31/07/2020

Year	Area/Location	Number/Measure	Habitat	Method	O/A Impacts
2018	Glengour	Ecologist survey			See note below *
2019	Glengour	7 Baseline	BB	BPG	Light/Moderate
2019	Glengour	5 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Light/Moderate
2020	Glenscaddle	5 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Postponed Covid
2020	Glenscaddle	5 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Postponed Covid
	Glengour	7, 1 st re-measure	BB	BPG	
	Glengour	5, 1 st re-measure	DSH	BPG	
	Glenscaddle	5, 1 st re-measure	DSH	BPG	
	Glenscaddle	5, 1 st re-measure	DSH	BPG	

Information provided by: - EM

*The funding for the ecologist survey noted above was withdrawn. It is now very unlikely that any results or analysis will be available.

East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group. HIA Log

Sheet No. 2A	Landholding: - Carnoch/Druim Laith	Date created	17/04/2019
Responsible	SF	Date updated	31/07/2020

Year	Area/Location	Number/Measure	Habitat	Method	O/A Impacts
2014	Carnoch SW	10 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Light/moderate
2015	Druim Laith NE	10 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Light/moderate
2016	Druim Laith NW	10 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Light/moderate
2017	Carnoch SW	9 1st re-measure	DSH	BPG	Light Moderate
2017	Carnoch GC	5 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Light/moderate
2018	Druim Laith NE	10, 1st re-measure	DSH	BPG	Light/moderate
2020	Druim Laith NW	10, 1st re-measure	DSH	BPG	Postponed Covid
	Druim Laith NE	10 2nd re-measure	DSH	BPG	
	Druim Laith NW	10 2 nd re-measure	DSH	BPG	

Information provided by: - SF

Carnoch Estate straddles the East Loch Shiel DMG area boundary with the Morvern DMG area. With effect from 2020 HIA on Morvern DMG has been contracted out. The Plots established and titled ‘Carnoch’ above will no longer be monitored. The results of the MDMG Carnoch monitoring will be used to inform the overall Carnoch/Druim Laith Estate HIA.

East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group. HIA Log

Sheet No.3A	Landholding: - Claish Moss SNH.	Date created	17/04/2019
Responsible		Date updated	30/07/2020

Year	Area/Location	Number/Measure	Habitat	Method	O/A Impacts
2000/13	See below *				
2019		See below		BPG	
2020		See below		BPG	

Information provided by: - GT - LS

* Email GT 12/09/2018.

“Just to let you know that we will be monitoring Claish in 2019 using Wild Deer Best Practice. The site has also been subject to multiple rounds of SNH site condition monitoring between 2000-2013 so effectively the 2019 HIA is a continuation. We could also do woodland plots in 2019 whilst doing our open range if that helps the group progress, however woodland is very limited on the site so I would expect we could manage only one or two plots.”

Action Plan response LS 14/01/2020. ‘The SNH Nature Reserves team confirmed on 30/10/19 that HIA was not carried out in 2019 therefore no historical detail can be provided’. ‘HIA on Claish Moss is to be carried out in 2020 and results will be circulated.’

East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group. HIA Log

Sheet No.4A	Landholding: - Conaglen	Date created	17/04/2019
Responsible	DM	Date updated	31/07/2020

Year	Area/Location	Number/Measure	Habitat	Method	O/A Impacts
2018	Conaglen	10 Baseline	BB	BPG	Light/moderate
2019	Conaglen	48 Baseline	DSH	BPG	Light/moderate
	Conaglen	10, 1 st re-measure	BB	BPG	
	Conaglen	48 re-measure	DSH	BPG	

Information provided by: - DM

PART 3

Browsing and Trampling Impacts

<u>East Loch Shiel DMG HIA Open Range Summary.</u>					<u>Baseline Data</u>					ELS HIA Summary - Excel				
Browsing impacts														
Blanket Bog					Dwarf Shrub Heath									
Landholding	# plots	# Light	# Moderate	# Heavy	Landholding	# plots	# Light	# Moderate	# Heavy	Landholding	# plots	# Light	# Moderate	# Heavy
Ardgour/Glens	7	2	3	2	Ardgour/Glens	5	1	4		Ardgour/Glens	5	1	4	
Carnoch N&S	21	18	1	2	Carnoch N&S	35	28	5	2	Carnoch N&S	35	28	5	2
Claish Moss					Claish Moss					Claish Moss				
Conaglen	10	6	1	3	Conaglen	48	29	10	9	Conaglen	48	29	10	9
FES					FES					FES				
Inversanda					Inversanda					Inversanda				
Resipole					Resipole	10	10			Resipole	10	10		
Sunart	30	24	2	4	Sunart	30	17	6	7	Sunart	30	17	6	7
	68	50	7	11		128	85	25	18		128	85	25	18
		Light	Moderate	Heavy			Light	Moderate	Heavy			Light	Moderate	Heavy
		74%	10%	16%			66%	20%	14%			66%	20%	14%

Blanket Bog Browsing Impacts

Impact Level	Percentage
Light	74%
Moderate	10%
Heavy	16%

Dwarf Shrub Heath Browsing Impacts

Impact Level	Percentage
Light	66%
Moderate	20%
Heavy	14%

East Loch Shiel DMG HIA Open Range Summary.					Baseline Data					ELS HIA Summary - Excel				
Trampling Impacts														
Blanket Bog - Bare Ground with hoof prints present							Dwarf Shrub Heath - Heather stem breakage							
Landholding	# plots	None Light or Moderate	# Moderate	# Heavy	Landholding	# plots	None Light or Moderate	# Moderate	# Heavy					
Ardgour/Glens	7	7			Ardgour/Glens	5	5							
Carnoch N&S	21	21			Carnoch N&S	35	35							
Claish Moss					Claish Moss									
Conaglen	10	10			Conaglen	48	48							
FES					FES									
Inversanda					Inversanda									
Resipole					Resipole	10	10							
Sunart	30	27	1	2	Sunart	30	30							
	68	65	1	2		128	128	0	0					
		None Light or Moderate	Moderate	Heavy			None Light or Moderate	Moderate	Heavy					
		96%	1%	3%			100%	0%	0%					
<p>Blanket Bog Trampling Impacts</p> <p>Legend: Light (Green), Moderate (Yellow), Heavy (Red)</p>					<p>Dwarf Shrub Heath Trampling Impacts</p> <p>Legend: Light (Green), Moderate (Yellow), Heavy (Red)</p>									