



East Loch Shiel Deer  
Management Group  
Autumn Report 2020



S Fox & D Mosgrove

# East Loch Shiel

## Deer Management Group Report – Autumn 2020

Compiled by - S. Fox & D. Mosgrove.

This ELSDMG Report is a supplement to the ELSDMG DMP Action Plan – Working Document.

### **Even despite the pandemic our members continue to deliver on the Public Interest and Sustainable Deer Management.**

The pandemic however, continues to cause significant practical, logistical, and financial problems for our members. These include, but are not limited to the following: -

- Increased costs resulting from compliance with Covid guidance and regulation.
- Increased administration for members and the DMG,
- Reduced guest and venison revenue,
- Reduced guest culling effort,
- No Sporting NDR (business rates) relief for Covid,
- No Government financial support for many of us,
- Increased numbers of hill walkers with disturbance particularly from the many of those that do not use the HFTSH facility.

Deer Management Plan (DMP): -

- Our DMP, Action Plan – Working Document, Constitution & DMG business documents are publicly available, and published on the East Loch Shiel DMG section of the ADMG website.
- Our 1<sup>st</sup> Edition DMP Action Plan – Working Document was reviewed with the latest update in July 2020. Our DMP appendices continue to be updated as appropriate.

Attendance, meetings and communications: -

- Even though we were unable to hold our planned Spring and Autumn 2020 meetings due to the Coronavirus situation our members agreed and have continued to address our business via email and telephone communications.
- Frequent DMG reports, emails and website updates also help to update and inform our members, stakeholders, public, &etc.

Counts: -

- Open range recruitment counts and mortality assessments were carried out late Spring this year on Ardgour, Carnoch, Conaglen and Sunart. The results suggest a post mortality recruitment rate of ≈25% for 2019/20.
- FLS has carried out a population density assessment this year for their areas. We are awaiting issue of the information.
- Nature Scot advises of a move away from helicopter counts citing carbon footprint and budgetary concerns.

Population Model and Targets: -

- The 'Population Model and Targets' has been removed from main body of the Action Plan – Working Document and is now a 'stand-alone' document which is at Appendix 15. This allows for periodic updates of each at appropriate intervals and is published on the ELS section of the ADMG website. The current population and cull targets are set out there and will next be updated during summer 2021.

Culls: -

- Our members have done extremely well despite the difficulties posed this year with the open range stag culls reported for the period 01/04/2020 to 20/10/2020 largely on target, and the hind cull underway.
- FLS continue their cull out of season and at night.

Deer condition: -

- The condition of the stags through this season was reported as generally average, good to very good.

HIA: -

- The ELS HIA LOG - Revision 2 at Appendix 13 details our HIA and ongoing programme.
- Overall, HIA data shows our open range impacts are within our group targets with changes in management practices having resulted in the overall herbivore pressure/impact being significantly reduced.

Collaborative Woodland Project progress: -

- The collaborative woodland project and preliminary proposals were reported on at the November 2019 DMG meeting, at which VC gave a presentation highlighting the aims, methods, and background to the collaborative proposals. Whilst woodland proposals are under consideration on all four estates there is significant emphasis being placed on the designated woodland sites.
- Consultation on some woodland projects closed late this summer with detailed proposals now with the agencies for evaluation and progress.

Peatland preservation and restoration: -

- The local peatland officer at Lochaber Fisheries Trust will advise on potential peatland restoration works.
- The NatureScot webpage <https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action> is the first port of call for peatland improvement. We were advised here, however, 'The funding round for 2019-20 closed on Friday 17 May 2019.' and that 'since the Scottish Government's announcement of funding for peatland restoration their focus is now on COVID-19 control and peatland restoration is not permitted under current guidance.'
- On 10 September 2020 we were advised that for 2020/21 funding: - 'The next round of Peatland ACTION funding is now open and applications can be submitted until **midnight on 30 September 2020.**' No date is given for the opening of the next round of funding.

Venison market: -

- Venison marketing was covered in various emails throughout the season.
- The current situation is that Fyne Game, in July, resumed and are continuing to collect carcasses.
- There may be restrictions through the hind season on the numbers of carcasses they can take.
- The venison price remains depressed and is currently at about 40% of last year's price.
- Please refer to the ADMG letter on the venison market and marketing which was distributed via email on the 24/11/2020 to the DMG.

A group discussion on the Economic Benefits and Costs of deer in ELS has been opened via email July 2020: -

- A summary discussion note is under preparation for distribution in the near future.

ADMG update: -

- ADMG are keeping us well updated via their **E-Scope** news-letter. I urge you all to keep abreast of their current news etc. You can subscribe to E-Scope if you have not already done so, on this link <https://us12.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=d3fc8c5fa7488240ad43cd222&id=9b75d86623>

FLS update: -

- FLS gave an update in lieu of our meeting as follows: -
- *A population assessment has been carried out for FLS although the data has not been received yet.*
- *The Glenhurich land management plan is being renewed.*
- *Fence maintenance ongoing.*

Nature Scot update: -

- Nature Scot gave a written update in lieu of our meeting, the full update was distributed via a DMG email on the 24/11/2020. Headlines copied are: -
- *We appreciate that COVID19 has brought challenges for sporting and venison but estates are urged to deliver on the cull as planned.*
- *The simplest means to demonstrate that DMGs can deliver sustainable deer management is to ensure the basics of collaborative cull planning, cull delivery and impact assessments are implemented and promoted.*
- *Climate change, biodiversity loss and green recovery are the three priority areas we need to look to. Effective sustainable deer management can contribute to these priority areas and provide good news story.*

Rather than me repeating them here, please refer to the 2020 ELSDMG Spring report for the items which were covered in detail and remain largely the same including the following: -

- SNH Deer Management Group Assessment 2019.
- Peatland preservation and restoration (SNH 2019 meeting address).
- Historic and cultural features.
- Public health and wellbeing.
- Deer welfare.
- Non – Native species.
- Standards of Competence - Training – Certification (Log now updated to August 2020, published online).
- Deer management email communications list.
- Economic benefits and costs of deer.
- WWG area Designated Sites.
- Meeting attendance record.
- Covid 19.