



East Loch Shiel Deer
Management Group
Spring Report 2021



S Fox & D Mosgrove

East Loch Shiel

Deer Management Group Report – Spring 2021

Compiled by - S. Fox & D. Mosgrove. April 2021.

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

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 littering and wildfire risk.

Scottish Government response to the DWG Report

- The Scottish Government's response to the Deer Working Group's report was published in March 2021 and can be viewed via this link. [Scottish Government response to the DWG Report](#)
- ADMG issued a response that can be viewed via this link. [E-Scope Newsletter \(mailchi.mp\)](#)
- This will lead to more change for all of us in our deer and land management.
- You are encouraged to read and understand the Government response and consider how we may progress those changes we agree with and plan how we may respond regarding those we do not.

FLS review of Glenhurich Land Management Plan: -

- With FLS advising of the Glenhurich Land Management Plan being reviewed the Chairman has written to FLS, firstly requesting that the DMG may be given opportunity to provide meaningful input during the preparation of the review of the plan, - then again explaining in detail our concerns and the implications regarding the failing forestry fences.
- Other than a note to say: - *'The LMP will be placed in the consultation section of the FLS website for about a month before being submitted to Scottish Forestry for approval. I will let you know when that occurs,'* there has been no response yet.

Deer Management Plan (DMP): -

- Our current DMP & DMG business documents are publicly available, published on the East Loch Shiel DMG section of the ADMG website. [ADMG | Association of Deer Management Groups | ADMG \(deer-management.co.uk\)](#)

Attendance, meetings and communications: -

- Even though we were unable to hold our planned 2020 and Spring 2021 meetings due to the Coronavirus situation our members agreed and have continued to address our business via email and telephone communications.
- 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 are requested for late Spring this year from Ardgour, Carnoch, Conaglen and the Western Working Group to establish a post mortality recruitment rate.
- FLS carried out a population density assessment last year for their areas. We are awaiting issue of the data.
- 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' is a 'stand-alone' document which is at Appendix 15. The population and cull targets are set out there and will next be updated during summer 2021 upon receipt of cull returns, HIA, recruitment and mortality assessments & etc.

Culls: -

- The Group culling effort continued throughout the last year despite the difficulties posed by the Covid restrictions. Where necessary culls have been concentrated to prevent higher impacts.
- Please send to the chairman, your Final/Total cull figures for 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 without delay to allow our update to the 'Population Models and Targets' for the coming season.
- FLS continue to cull out of season and at night.

Lead free ammunition: -

- A ban on lead ammunition is likely to be implemented within the next 5 years or so.
- Meanwhile the National Game Dealers' Association has announced that its members will no longer be accepting lead-shot game from July 2022.
- Many have chosen to change voluntarily and this helps with the public perception of the venison product leading to greater acceptance from the customers for our product.
- It makes sense as your lead ammunition is used up to replace with non-lead alternatives.

Venison market: -

- Venison marketing was covered in various emails throughout last season.
- Albeit with a much-reduced price Fyne Game continued to provide an excellent collection service throughout the season, with payments made promptly.

Deer condition: -

- The condition of the hinds and calf's through this season was reported as generally very good to good at the start of the season, with weights falling off as expected through the season.

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.

- Proposals for suitable areas were developed in conjunction with Scottish Forestry with these proposals consulted on extensively through last year.
- Fully detailed applications are now with the agencies for final approval and support.

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**.'*

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

- The primary area of concern here is the ongoing migration of open range deer through the failing forestry fences that is having a serious negative financial and environmental effect to members, neighbours, and the broader economy.
- See FLS review of Glenhurich Land Management Plan above.
- The Economic Benefits and Costs of Deer are covered in more detail in: - **ELSDMG The Economic Benefits and Costs of Deer.**

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 [ADMG | Association of Deer Management Groups | ADMG \(deer-management.co.uk\)](http://ADMG | Association of Deer Management Groups | ADMG (deer-management.co.uk))

FLS update: -

Nature Scot update from Sinclair Coghill: -

- Dear Chairs and Secretaries,
- I hope this email finds you well.
- You will have seen in the papers and online that the Scottish Government Response to the Deer Working Group Report has been published.
- The report can be found [here](#), and the response to the report can be found [here](#).
- As you will see, Scottish Government have accepted nearly all of the 99 suggested recommendations. This could mean several changes within the sector over the coming years; no closed season for stags, a ban on lead ammunition in the next 5 years, an upper limit on deer densities (10 deer/Km²), and the establishment of a competency register, among others. These changes, if they go ahead, will all take time to implement, in some cases, several years. Changes to legislation will require consultation, at which point the sector can have its say.
- What the response does is highlight Scottish Government's drive towards Net Zero and a carbon neutral future and their efforts to mitigate both the climate and biodiversity crises. The report response also indicates a desire from Scottish Government to shift the rural economy from its dependence on traditional uses, and to move forward with a focus on

Nature Based Solutions. Expect woodland creation and peatland restoration to feature heavily going into the future and be a key feature in any new Deer Management Plans.

- Deer Management Groups will continue to play a key role in helping to deliver these aims and objectives, to support individuals and communities in the coming months and years, and to have a role steering and shaping changes.
- Please feel free to share the links and this information with your group members, if you haven't already.
- If you or your DMG members have any questions or queries about this, please don't hesitate to get in touch.
- There are big changes ahead and I am here to support you all however I can.
- Kind regards,
- Sinclair

Rather than repeating them here, please refer to our previous ELSDMG Reports 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).
- Deer management email communications list.
- Economic benefits and costs of deer.
- Designated Sites.
- Meeting attendance record.
- Covid 19.

And, in Group emails including: -

- Collaborative venison marketing,
- Scottish Venison videos,
- ESCOPE subscription,
- Best Practice Guides,
- CWD,
- CWD Visitors template,
- Field Guide to Disease & Conditions of Deer,
- Lyme disease,
- Code of Practice on Deer Management,
- ADMG Principles of Collaboration,
- African Swine Fever,
- Scottish Deer Health Survey,
- Cull returns split either side of the count,

As well as other general group communications between officers, working group and group members.