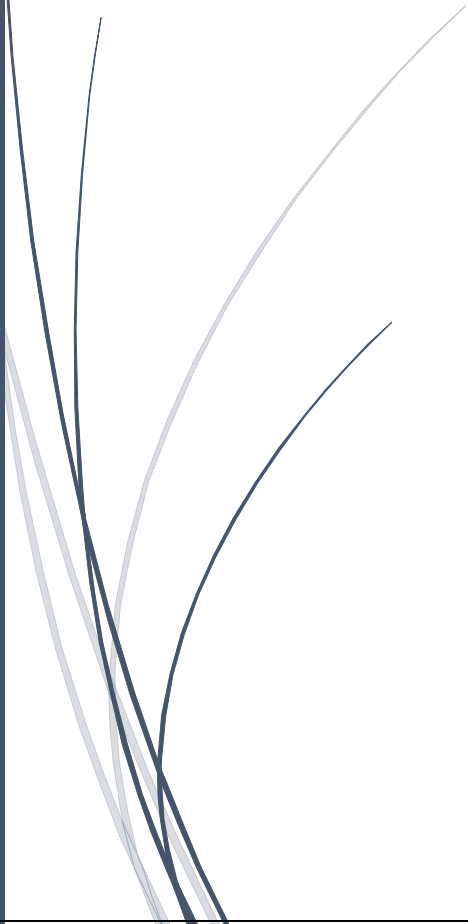




East Loch Shiel Deer
Management Group
Autumn 2021 Report



East Loch Shiel

Deer Management Group Report – Autumn 2021

November 2021.

This report is a supplement to the ELSDMG Action Plan – Working Document

Our members continue to deliver on the Public Interest and Sustainable Deer Management.

The pandemic however, has caused significant practical, logistical, and financial problems for our members over the last 20 months. These included, but were 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 the deer management industry.

Whilst responsible access is encouraged there has been a noticeable increase in irresponsible access leading to: -

- Increased wildlife disturbance.
- Disruption of culling effort.
- Increased littering, fly tipping, dog and other waste.
- Increased wildfire risk.

Deer Management Plan (DMP) & Business

- Our current DMP & DMG business documents are publicly available, published on the East Loch Shiel DMG section of the ADMG website. ¹
- Even though we were unable to hold our planned 2020 and 2021 meetings our members have continued to address our business, as agreed, via email and telephone communications. It is hoped that we may return to holding normal meetings in 2022.
- DMG reports, emails, Action points summaries, and website updates also help to update and inform our members, stakeholders, public, &etc.

Rather than repeating them here, please refer to our previous 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,
- Outcome of the Nature Scot (SNH) DMG Assessment,
- Group Reports.

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

Deer Management

Training Competence and Employment: -

- East Loch Shiel benefits from a team of skilled deer managers and controllers. A log of Group wide training, skills, certification &etc. is maintained and updated periodically.
- Members training needs are considered and reviewed periodically with collaborative support offered as appropriate.
- Many local businesses, enterprises, and people are reliant on the income, employment and the diverse benefits generated from and around deer management, providing for both primary and secondary employment.
- At the last review, deer management in East Loch Shiel provided for 8 full time and 9 seasonal or part time jobs plus opportunity for a full time HNC/HND trainee. A further 7 full time and 32 part time people are engaged with and reliant on secondary employment relating to the open range sporting deer management, helping support other local industries and enterprises, often leading to many other often less tangible but no less important economic and social benefits.

Counts: -

- NatureScot advises of a move away from helicopter counts citing carbon footprint and budgetary concerns.
- Sample recruitment counts and mortality assessments were carried out late winter/ spring this year allowing an update of our population models.
- Overall, the East Loch Shiel deer density is within the proposed 'Target' that is recommended in the DWG report for Scottish Government to consider.

Culls: -

- The Group culling effort continued throughout the last year and despite the difficulties posed by the Covid restrictions the overall cull targets were met. Where necessary culls have been concentrated to prevent higher impacts.
- Please submit your stag cull figures to the 20th October this year.
- FLS continue to cull out of season and at night.

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 were updated during summer 2021 following receipt of cull returns, HIA, recruitment and mortality assessments & etc.

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 stalkers have chosen to change voluntarily and this helps with the public perception of the venison product leading to greater acceptance from customers for our product.
- A number of our deer controllers are already using non-toxic ammunition. It makes sense as your lead ammunition is used up to replace with non-lead alternatives.

Venison Production and Collaborative Marketing: -

- East Loch Shiel deer managers are producing excellent, quality assured, healthy, low-fat venison.
- Venison marketing was covered in various emails throughout summer following Gordon Slaughter's retirement and the closure of Fyne Game.
- Members are supplying both/either Ardgay Game and/or Highland Game this season for venison sales allowing a comparison of service, etc. as the season progresses.

Deer condition: -

- Nett recruitment this year was high and observed mortality at normal levels. Reports of stags culled this season suggest the deer are in good condition going into the winter.

A group discussion on the economic benefits and costs of deer in ELS was opened in July 2020: -

- The primary area of concern here is the ongoing migration of open range deer through the failing FLS forestry fences that is having a serious negative financial and environmental effect to members, neighbours, and the broader economy.
- A Members Discussion Paper on '**The Economic Benefits and Costs of Deer**' Issue 2 May 2021 was prepared and issued to members and immediate stakeholders who were invited to contribute further. The summary from this paper is copied below.
- Sinclair Coghill of NatureScot has just contributed an alternative view for discussion at our next meeting.

Summary from 'The Economic Benefits and Costs of Deer' Member's discussion paper: -

Significant and ongoing emigration of deer through failing FLS forestry fences into the enclosed forestry areas has been identified as diminishing the benefits whilst at the same time increasing the costs of deer within the East Loch Shiel DMG area.

The open range members are obliged to maintain a larger density of deer than they require for their own objectives but to satisfy the non-targeted migration through failing enclosed forestry fences.

The ongoing annual cost of forestry protection culls driven by the immigration of deer is calculated as currently averaging over £25,000 p.a. plus add on the unquantified cost of impacts to the forestry.

Open range members identified losses of income from available stags emigrating equating to over £27,000 p.a. plus the losses of hind/calf income plus the losses to the local and broader economy.

Pragmatic, economically and environmentally sound proposals to address this issue to the benefit of all and in pursuit of sustainable deer management have been made by the open range DMG members.

FLS Deer Report: -

- FLS issued their Deer Report which was distributed to members and other affected neighbours.
- Our Vice-chair responded to FLS expressing deep concern re the content of the report, the interpretation of the content, the conclusions and negative implications for the open range neighbours. These concerns are generally shared among the responding open range members and neighbours.

FLS review of Glenhurich Land Management Plan: -

- With FLS advising of the Glenhurich Land Management Plan being reviewed the Chairman has written to FLS, requesting that the DMG may be given opportunity to provide meaningful input during the preparation of the review of the plan. FLS responds: - *'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,'*
- Without the opportunity to provide meaningful input the chair then wrote to FLS again, explaining in more detail our concerns and the implications regarding the failing forestry fences hoping that our concerns may be considered.

Land Management and Climate Change Mitigation

HIA: -

- Further HIA's were carried out this spring/summer. A comprehensive report (Appendix 13 - ELS HIA LOG - Revision 3A June 2021) is published on the East Loch Shiel section of the ADMG website, ¹ which details our HIA and ongoing programme.
- Overall, the HIA data shows our open range deer and large herbivore impacts are within our group targets with changes in management practices having resulted in the overall large herbivore pressure/impact being significantly reduced.

Woodlands: -

- With over 12,800 HA the Scottish Government target of 25% woodland cover is exceeded. Some 8300 is commercial forestry. Over 4500 HA are native woodland areas, some of which are mature/ancient whilst some are newly planted with further areas under consideration.
- Collectively the East Loch Shiel woodlands contribute to the strategic national forest estate growing essential timber, whilst at the same time absorbing carbon from the atmosphere and providing important bio-diversity with a patchwork of different habitats for wildlife, flora and fauna.

Collaborative Woodland Project progress: -

- The collaborative woodland project and preliminary proposals were reported on at the November 2019 DMG meeting, at which a presentation was given 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 and this 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 and any possible funding contributions.
- The Peatland ACTION Fund is closed for winter 2021/22 delivery and remains open for applications for delivery in future years.
- With just over 3% of the ELSDMG area identified as Blanket Bog and Peatland there may be limited opportunity for peatland restoration.
- With most of our open range being heather moor and grassland significant emphasis is placed therefore on preservation of our soils.

Low Carbon Hydro Power: -

- East Loch Shiel DMG members have a number of Hydro Electricity Generation Schemes installed providing clean, secure energy for the nation with a combined installed capacity of over 4.63 MWh. On average these will produce around 16,000 MWh of electricity a year allowing a similar reduction in coal fired generation.
- Each kWh of electricity produced in coal fired generation produces around 0.874 KG of CO² into the atmosphere whereas river hydro produces less than 0.013 KG of CO² per kWh. ²
- These hydro installations allow for coal fired stations to run on reduced capacity or be turned off leading to a reduction of CO² emissions of over 14,200 tonnes a year. With our river hydro producing just 200 tonnes annually the nett reduction is over 14,000 tonnes of CO² no longer being released to the atmosphere each year.
- The Sunart Community scheme adds a further estimated 423 MWh of electricity output leading to a further reduction of 364 tonnes of CO² no longer being released to the atmosphere each year.

Low carbon heating and hot water: -

- ELSDMG members bio-fuel, air and ground source heat pumps with a combined installed capacity exceeding 0.28 MWh are supplying heating and hot water as an alternative to coal, gas, or oil and are leading to further significant reductions of CO² emissions for East Loch Shiel.

ADMG

- Richard Cooke, the long-term Chairman of ADMG has retired and Tom Turnbull replaces him in the role. We wish Richard all the very best for his retirement and thank him for all his hard work on our behalf. Good luck and best wishes to Tom in his role as the new ADMG Chairman.
- ADMG are keeping us well updated via their **E-Scope** news-letters. 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 the ADMG website. ¹

FLS update: -

- The GlenHurich Land Management Plan is not yet out for consultation.
- They have nothing to add to our 'Economic Costs and Benefits of Deer' discussion.
- Their overall ELS area cull 1st April 2021 to 20th October 2021 is 102 stags and 2 roe bucks.
- The deer are in good condition.
- AOB – none.

NatureScot update: -

- HIA has been carried out on Claiash Moss with results supplied for inclusion in the HIA Log.

References: -

¹ [ADMG | Association of Deer Management Groups | ADMG \(deer-management.co.uk\)](http://ADMG | Association of Deer Management Groups | ADMG (deer-management.co.uk))

² [Carbon Footprint of Electricity Generation \(parliament.uk\)](http://Carbon Footprint of Electricity Generation (parliament.uk))