



East Loch Shiel Deer
Management Group
Report
Summer 2024



Stephen Fox & David Mosgrove

East Loch Shiel

Deer Management Group Report – Summer 2024

ELS meetings 96.

This report is a supplement to the ELSDMG Deer Management Plan

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

Deer Management Plan (DMP) & Business

- Our current DMP & DMG business documents are publicly available and published on the East Loch Shiel DMG section of the ADMG website.¹
- Our DMG business meetings, which are open to the public are well attended by our members and/or their representatives.
- DMG reports, emails, Action Plan updates, and Website updates also help to update and inform our members, stakeholders, public, &etc.
- Andrew MacMaster was appointed as our NatureScot Wildlife Management Officer in August last year. We welcome Andrew to our team and look forward to working with him to help deliver on the Public Interest and Sustainable Deer Management.
- ELSDMG is updating its external communications list. If you wish to receive communications relevant to your interests, please opt in and confirm your email address for the DMG to use by writing to this email eastlochshielchair@gmail.com and briefly say why you are interested in deer management for this area. You may opt-out at any time by writing to this email address. ELSDMG will only use your email address for DMG business and this will not be passed on or sold to other organisations or persons.

Deer Management

- Deer management in East Loch Shiel provides employment for, and benefits from, a team of skilled deer managers and controllers.
- 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.
- East Loch Shiel DMG deer managers are producing excellent, quality-assured, healthy, low-fat venison.
- There are significant economic, environmental and social benefits resulting from the deer management in East Loch Shiel.

Deer Counts: -

- Due to the remoteness of much of our area foot counts are not considered practical or effective. Aerial counts are considered to be the only viable alternative for counting our open hill range.
- Nature Scot advise of a move away from helicopter counts citing cost and carbon concerns. The ELSDMG supports this move and awaits the NatureScot proposals and funding of an alternative method.
- Local Mortality Assessments and sample Recruitment Counts are carried out by members in late Spring in East Loch Shiel.

Deer Population: -

- Our Appendix 15 – Population Model and Targets summary is published on the East Loch Shiel section of the ADMG website.¹

- With inputs from density and recruitment counts, mortality assessments and culls our forward-looking Population Model is updated each year.
- Overall, the East Loch Shiel deer density is being maintained within the proposed target that is recommended in the DWG report for the Scottish Government.
- The Group culling effort continued throughout the last year. Where necessary culls have been concentrated to prevent higher impacts.

Disease risks - a reminder: -

- Notifiable diseases are detailed in the BPG Health and Welfare section which can be found at the following link <https://www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk/health-welfare/>
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) information is detailed in the BPG Health and Welfare section which can be found at the following link <https://www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk/health-welfare/>
- The British Deer Society (BDS) has a more detailed section regarding Chronic Wasting Disease on this link [Chronic Wasting Disease \(CWD\) - The British Deer Society \(bds.org.uk\)](https://www.bds.org.uk/Chronic-Wasting-Disease-(CWD)-The-British-Deer-Society-(bds.org.uk)) which also contains this link to their CWD leaflet [Chronic-Wasting-Disease-Leaflet-2-final-final-12-March-2021-BRANDED.pdf \(bds.org.uk\)](https://www.bds.org.uk/Chronic-Wasting-Disease-Leaflet-2-final-final-12-March-2021-BRANDED.pdf) This leaflet should be issued to all guests in advance of their arrival.
- Deer managers are reminded to be aware of the risks of Lime Disease and to raise awareness with visitors and guests. The Ticks and Lime Disease leaflet should be available to visitors and guests. [1 tick-lyme-disease-infosheet-20170810.pdf \(windows.net\)](https://www.windows.net/1-tick-lyme-disease-infosheet-20170810.pdf)

HIA: -

- Our Appendix 13 – H&IA Log summary is published on the East Loch Shiel section of the ADMG website. ¹
- Overall, the HIA data shows our open-range deer and large herbivore impacts are within our group targets with changes in management practices resulting in the overall large herbivore pressure/impact being significantly reduced.
- SNH advised in July 2017 that the BPG HIA Guides are under review and will change. No information has been given yet as to any detail nor even a date indicated by which the changes may be published leading to delay with our planning.
- Forest Research have identified a new Aphid and Fungal infestation of Scots Pine trees with some present in our area. They are still evaluating the implications for the Scots Pine trees.
- Heather beetle impacts are being observed year on year.

Lead-free ammunition: -

- A legal ban on lead ammunition is likely to be implemented within the next 5 years or so.
- The SQWV standard has been updated to only accept carcasses, shot with Non-lead ammunition into the scheme WEF the 1st of January 2024.
- Difficulties that have arisen include using up stocks of lead ammunition, non-toxic ammo supply issues, and calibre issues, all of which are exacerbated by guests bringing their rifles and ammo.

Land Management, Climate Change Mitigation, and Energy Security

Woodlands: -

- With over 12,800 HA the Scottish Government target of 25% woodland cover is exceeded. Some 8300 HA 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.

Designated Woodlands: -

A brief summary of some of Conaglen Estate's woodland management and habitat enhancement work completed in the East Loch Shiel DMG area in the past 10 years.

- Within the Doire Donn SSSI, Conaglen Estate has completed the installation and planting in March 2023 of a new woodland creation scheme.
- Consent was granted in 2021 for the establishment of 3 new woodland creation blocks for native woodland planting and native regeneration to provide expansion options and to enhance Oak recruitment and also for the reopening of a regeneration block which had been secure for the past 20+ years.
- The new enclosures extend to 64.43ha of fenced SSSI, which equates to 52% of the 122.80ha Forest Area.
- The old regeneration block which has now been opened extended to 21.39ha, which equated to 17% of the 122.80ha Forest Area.
- As such 69% of the designated area has or is now in active woodland creation/protection blocks, it should be noted that at least a further 20% of the designated area is unsuitable due to ground conditions to ever carry trees.
- The new 2022/23 enclosures include 10ha of low-density broadleaves planting and a further 33.18ha is expected to naturally regenerate new woodland.
- The three blocks were identified and designed to incorporate as much of the land as possible where it was deemed there was a strong feasibility for natural regeneration to occur was a strong possibility.
- The overall woodland area will now be managed and results observed going forward for perhaps the next 20 years.
- Within the Ardgor Pinewoods SAC/SSSI, Conaglen Estate has installed 3 new woodland creation enclosures during 2022 & 2023, at which planting was again completed in March 2023.
- Consent was granted in 2021 for establishment of 3 new woodland creation blocks for native woodland planting and native regeneration to provide expansion options.
- These enclosures extend to about 101ha of fenced land, 57.41ha has been planted, comprised of an area of 20.00ha planted with low-density broadleaves and 27.41ha planted with broadleaves.
- Of the remaining area enclosed area, a further 37.90ha is suitable land and is expected to naturally regenerate new woodland.
- On-going observation, control of deer numbers and the continuation of the rolling program of woodland fence enclosures will be maintained.
- Commercial Forestry Land Management Objective Changes
- In the next 2-5 years, Conaglen Estate will be restocking almost 300ha of clear-felled monoculture commercial conifer woodland at Duisky & in Glenscaddle with much more diverse planting.
- Until 2022, deer have had access to all established commercial woodland on the Estate for Shelter.
- The majority of Duisky was closed from deer movements in late 2022 and some deer jumps were installed in locations to allow deer to leave the block.
- A cull is proposed within the block in 2023 & 2024 prior to restocking commencing of an area extending to approximately 270ha and over the next 5 years the number of deer outside the

enclosure will be monitored and a compensation cull completed accordingly if deemed necessary.

- On-going fence inspections and maintenance will be completed regularly to prevent deer from re-entering the area.
- These Conaglen management and enhancement works contribute further to the significant net ecological and environmental gains already achieved in ELS.

FLS further designated sites works.

- In another positive move from an SSSI position for the DMG, FLS advised of two new woodland enclosures at Callop being created during 2023. The larger block is inside the designated Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI area and the new fence will close a clear-felled previously commercial area. Initially, they hope to get good natural native tree regen away in both but will review after a couple of years and consider some possible enrichment planting of native species if required. These 2 new enclosures will be far easier fence lines to construct and more importantly, far easier to keep deer-proof and maintain. Both these new enclosures will be entirely on FLS ground.

Peatland preservation and restoration: -

- The local peatland officer at Lochaber Fisheries Trust will advise on potential peatland restoration works and any possible funding contributions.
- With just over 3% of the ELSDMG area identified as Blanket Bog and Peatland, most of which is contained in the NatureScot Claish Moss and the FLS Longrigg, there may be limited opportunity for peatland restoration. With most of our open range being heather moor and grassland significant emphasis is placed on preserving our soils.

Low Carbon Hydro Power: -

- Hydro Electricity Generation Schemes installed on East Loch Shiel member properties provide 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 MWh of electricity produced in coal-fired generation produces around 874 KG of CO² into the atmosphere whereas river hydro produces less than 13 KG of CO² per MWh. 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 280 Kw are supplying heating and hot water as an alternative to coal, gas, or oil and are leading to further significant reductions of CO² emissions.

ADMG

- ADMG are keeping us well updated via their **E-Scope** newsletters. You can subscribe to **E-Scope**, if you have not already done so, on the ADMG website. ¹

References: -

- ¹ [ADMG | Association of Deer Management Groups | ADMG \(deer-management.co.uk\)](http://deer-management.co.uk)
- ² [Carbon Footprint of Electricity Generation \(parliament.uk\)](http://parliament.uk)