

**WEST ROSS DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP
ACTIONS FROM DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN
AS AT NOVEMBER 2019**

The Deer Management Plan action list has been discussed at Group meetings held in:-

- May 2016
- August 2016
- December 2016
- March 2017
- May 2017
- August 2017
- March 2018
- May 2018
- November 2018
- March 2019
- June 2019
- November 2019.

A questionnaire covering all of the topics listed below was issued to all members in November 2016.

I. DESIGNATED SITES (Led by Randal Wilson (RW))

I.1 Plan Target I

Designated sites currently described as “unfavourable” as a consequence of herbivore impacts will have deer management in place to work towards favourable/unfavourable recovering status.

I.1.1 Action Required

Develop an action plan for sites in unfavourable condition and explore funding options.

I.1.2 Updates

Date	Update
Dec 2016	<p>Five estates are aware of designated sites affecting their property and described as unfavourable. These members are taking action as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundonnell – An Teallach SSSI – goat culling and fencing to protect sensitive areas. Sheep numbers reduced significantly. • Fannich – maintain habitat monitoring. Moorland Management Plan in place through SRDP/AECS in addition to ongoing Deer Management Plan. • Gruinard – reducing the number on affected areas. • Letterewe/

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterewe – fenced off 93.94 ha. This comprises 21 deer enclosures. Done between 1995 and 2014 at cost to the estate. • Lochrosque – in discussion with SNH over Fannich Hills SAC future agreement.
Nov 2018	The Fannich Hills SAC population is currently well below target densities, as reflected in the recent deer count.
March 2019	RW confirmed that further surveys are being undertaken by SNH in connection with the Section 7 Agreement.
June 2019	TL confirmed that 100 extra plots are being incorporated in the An Teallach SSSI 2019 survey, the intention being to provide better data for the Group's use.

1.2 Plan Target 2

The Group commits to reviewing the status of all designated sites within the Group area and to facilitate any actions that may be required.

1.2.1 Action Required

Identify how sites will be monitored.

1.2.2 Updates

Date	Update
August 2016	RW confirmed that we are awaiting information on the An Teallach SSSI from Tamara Lawson (TL) of SNH. Ken Bowlt (KSB) to email Graham Taylor (GT) of SNH for an update on the status of all designated sites within the Group area. GT responded, advising that we can check any current changes to the site on the SNH website. He further advised that he had cross-checked the current DMP with the information available and it didn't look like there had been any changes.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording within the DMP. Noted that funding may be available for a consultant to visit each estate to review current impacts and what can be done. Sinclair Coghill (SC) agreed to move forward with this.
May 2018	TL of SNH confirmed that SNH would contact Eilean Darach, Dundonnell and Gruinard with a view to holding a discussion on adjusting the management so that the habitat could be brought back into an improving status in the An Teallach SSSI area.
Nov 2018	TL of SNH confirmed that they hope to appoint a contractor soon to meet with each of the three above estates with a view to drawing up a management plan for deer, stock and feral goats on the SSSI.

March 2019	SNH have been unable to appoint a contractor due to funding difficulties. They have confirmed that this will be revisited moving forward.
May 2019	TL confirmed that a funding bid had been submitted and that this had now been successful. She hoped that work would now progress in developing a Management Plan focussing on the An Teallach SSSI area. She confirmed that she would contact Eilean Darach, Dundonnell and Gruinard with a view to moving this forward.
Nov 2019	TL confirmed that Linzi Seivwright has been appointed to pull together a Management Plan for An Teallach, involving Dundonnell, Eilean Darach and Gruinard. It is hoped that this will be done by the end of January 2020.

2. **RETAINING EXISTING NATIVE WOODLAND COVER** (Led by RW)

2.1 Plan Target

The Group commits to reviewing the condition of native woodland within the Group area and to facilitate any action that may be required to retain and improve the condition of native woodland, exploring options for SRDP funding.

2.1.1 Action Required

Develop plan to improve condition of native woodlands and explore funding options.

2.1.2 Updates

Date	Update
Dec 2016	The responses from the questionnaire suggested that no-one was aware of any native woodland categorised as having high or very high herbivore impact.
March 2017	Letterewe had confirmed that they were aware of native woodland within their estate categorised as having high or very high herbivore impact, although a Memorandum of Understanding was in place to improve the condition of this woodland. Agreed to explore grants for new native woodlands. Agreed that everyone should review Map 5 in the DMP and double-check that they had no woodlands which were in unfavourable condition.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording within the DMP. Agreed that Map 6 from the DMP would be considered as regards the properties where woodlands had been categorised as having high or very high herbivore impact. Dr Ben Lennon (BL) from Bowlts would be asked to help come up with a sensible methodology for the survey of these woodlands.

May 2018	Agreed that this should be agreed at ADMG level before any surveys take place. GT of SNH to try to obtain a copy of the report produced by Taylor Wildlife for the West Lochaber DMG.
Nov 2018	Agreed that the Group should wait until a common standard was determined for the methodology of surveying the woodlands.
June 2019	Holding position to remain.

3. **NEW WOODLANDS (Led By George Seligman (GS))**

3.1 **Plan Target**

Group members will be encouraged to explore the possibility of woodland expansion in the context of Deer Management Group needs. In the event of woodland expansion being undertaken by Group members, consideration will be given to deer population levels via the deer population model. Regard will be had for any changes in range, forage and shelter.

3.1.1 **Action Required**

Develop how woodland expansion be reported to the Group and fed in to population model.

3.1.2 **Updates**

Date	Update
August 2016	GS would prepare a questionnaire for circulation to the members in respect of the woodlands shown on Map 8 of the DMP.
Dec 2016	Noted that our maps are up to date and one or two members may be considering planting new woodlands in the next five years.
March 2017	Noted that two members were considering woodland expansion.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording within the DMP.
March 2018	KSB tabled a draft proposal which would form part of an application for a forestry cooperation grant in respect of woodland creation in the Group area. Agreed to proceed with this application.
May 2018	BL to submit the application for funding. GT confirmed that any new plantings had to be recorded, mapped and fed through to the Deer Population Model.
Nov 2018	Noted that the application for funding is working its way through the system.
March 2019	The FC have confirmed that our application will only be considered on receipt of letters of support from all participating members. We still await letters from Foich and Inverbroom.

March 2019	We now have all of the letters of support and so are hopeful that the FC will process the application.
June 2019	Awaiting response from Forestry Scotland to the application submitted for funding. GS mentioned the acquisition of the Grudie Oakwood by Strathbran Estate and his plans to restore them.
Oct 2019	We now have grant approval. Background GIS mapping work was undertaken over the summer months. BL will be undertaking basic walkover site work shortly to proof his findings. A draft report will be prepared by the end of the year. BL will report to the Group at the March 2020 meeting.

4. **CARBON SENSITIVE HABITATS (Led by RW)**

4.1 **Plan Target**

The Group will consider opportunities and priorities for the creation and restoration of peatlands, identifying funding sources where possible. In addition, the Group will encourage members to minimise surface damage to peatland.

4.1.1 **Action Required**

Develop programme of possible areas for peat restoration and investigate funding options (SRDP?).

4.1.2 **Updates**

Date	Update
August 2016	RW confirmed that his estate was having a Moorland Management Plan prepared, together with Heights of Kinlochewe. GS confirmed that Strathbran may also get involved.
Dec 2016	Agreed to delete reference to the creation of peatlands from our DMP. Agreed that funding is an issue and Mary Gibson (MG) of SNH was asked to investigate the availability of funding.
March 2017	Noted the new Peatland Restoration Grant Scheme and the application process. All members were encouraged to explore this.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording within the DMP.
March 2018	Nduri Abah (NA) of SNH advised that there would be £4 million available under the Peat Restoration Grant Scheme this year. She also confirmed that funding might be available for feasibility work.
May 2018	BL undertook to submit an application for the peatland feasibility study project by 31 st May. This was done and we are awaiting the outcome.

Nov 2018	NA confirmed that the Group's application is with the SNH case officer. RW confirmed that they were now on the third phase of work on his family estate. If anyone wanted to come and have a look, he would be happy to arrange this. Angus Davidson (AD) confirmed that approval had been received for a scheme on Fannich Estate.
Dec 2019	Received notification that our application was unsuccessful.
March 2019	The new round of Peatland Action funding has just opened. The deadline for submissions is 17 th May 2019. NA has suggested arranging a meeting to discuss what should be included in any further application.
March 2019	Noted a reduction in funding available and agreed that a further application would be made at some point in the future.
June 2019	TL confirmed that there was less funding available under the Peatland Action Scheme and that in future, feasibility work would be done on an estate by estate basis and by SNH officers.
Nov 2019	TL advised that more funding was now available and SNH would consider applications for collaborative funding, KSB is to ask BL to contact Nduri Abah to see whether we can take this forward next year. Noted that Fannich, Gruinard, Kinlochewe and Lochluichart are already involved in this initiative.

5. **HABITAT MONITORING (Led by Norman Kelman (NK))**

5.1 **Plan Target**

Targets for improvement towards “good management “ of each habitat will be agreed by the Group. Once the means of collating, analysing and presenting the habitat impact data is available, the Group will identify a sustainable level of grazing and trampling for each of these habitats. This will be mapped and the necessary action agreed. Once the means of collating, analysing and presenting the habitat impact data is available, the Group will consider identifying where different levels of grazing may be required and will prioritise accordingly. Habitat monitoring surveys will be carried out at three-year intervals and monitoring data will be fed back to the DMG for consideration at the AGM. As soon as the system being developed by SNH for recording habitat monitoring is available, the Group intends to use it to assist in analysing data collected.

5.1.1 **Action Required**

Identify sub-group to decide on targets for sustainable levels of grazing once initial data has been analysed. Investigate interim measures for collating and analysing data in absence of SWARD.

5.1.2/

5.1.2 Updates

Date	Update
August 2016	Noted the difficulties which SNH were experiencing in funding the SWARD programme.
Dec 2016	Noted that the ADMG were trying to raise funds to progress with both SWARD and Best Practice. Members were asked to consider making a one-off contribution. Noted that all estates had confirmed that habitat impact data collection had started. Everyone was asked to ensure that the habitat impact data was forward to KSB.
March 2017	Everyone was encouraged to submit their data to KSB. So far, we have data from Eilean Darach, Heights of Kinlochewe, Inverbroom, Lochrosque/Kinlochewe and Letterewe. Agreed to lodge an application for funding to SNH.
May 2017	SC confirmed that habitat monitoring plots should be revisited perhaps every three to five years. Noted that methodology for monitoring was being considered by the ADMG and that guidance on best practice would be issued.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording in the DMP. Acknowledged that we were still awaiting data from Dundonnell, Fannich, Foich, Gruinard, Letterewe, Forestry Commission, Strathbran, Strathvaich and Tournaig.
March 2018	Agreed that all plots should be re-surveyed this spring. Noted that funding of £1,800 had been obtained to assist with the collation and analysing of data in a digital map format. The work is to commence shortly.
May 2018	Caroline Cook (CC) of Bowls confirmed that she doesn't yet have everyone's habitat monitoring data. All estates were encouraged to feed this through to KSB. CC agreed to feed the information back to the estates.
Nov 2018	CC confirmed that she has now obtained most of the data required, in multiple formats. In future, she will issue a template so that all data is returned in the same format. The Group will have to agree target percentages of plots within each category and there will be further discussion on this once all of the data is available.
March 2019	CC now has all the data and produced draft maps which she confirmed will be circulated in due course. Agreed further consultation is required on setting target percentages within "low-medium".
June 2019	Acknowledgement that plots on Dundonnell dwarf shrub heath habitat browsing impacts were largely sheep. It was agreed that the Group should explore the possibility of overlapping data of other herbivores, e.g. sheep, goats, etc, to see high trampling/browsing levels could be associated with herbivores other than deer. Generally/

	<p>Generally agreed that wherever plots did not appear to be randomly chosen throughout the estate, they should be. KSB to circulate the randomised plots generated by SNH.</p> <p>TL advised that more random plots were being chosen when SNH were undertaking their survey work for the Fannich Hills SSSI and this was welcomed by the Group.</p> <p>Agreed that the Group should look at a target of 85% of all plots for trampling/browsing in all habits being in the low to moderate category.</p>
Nov 2019	Discussed and agreed once again the importance of using random plots in terms of habitat monitoring.

6. **PUBLIC ACCESS (Led by Ruari Matheson (RM))**

6.1 **Plan Target**

The Group will encourage members to upload information to the SNH Outdoor Access Code website. www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/practical-guide-all/heading-scottish-hills.

6.1.1 **Action Required**

Collate estate information to pass on to SNH for uploading on website.

6.1.2 **Updates**

Date	Update
Dec 2016	Encouraged all estates to load their details onto the Heading for the Scottish Hills website. Agreed to discuss funding for path improvement with SNH in due course.
March 2017	SC to find out how much use the public make of the Heading for the Scottish Hills website.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording in the DMP. SC confirmed that there is the possibility of (limited) funding for car parks, paths, etc.
May 2018	KSB confirmed that all of the properties who hadn't yet submitted details to the Heading for the Scottish Hills website had been written to and so hopefully this will lead to comprehensive cover for our area.
Nov 2018	Gruinard, Dundonnell, Eilean Darach and Lochluichart have still to upload their entries onto the Heading for the Scottish Hills website.
March 2019	Agreed to check whether these estates had now loaded their entries.

Nov 2019	Gruinard have now uploaded their entries. Reminders sent to Eilean Darach and Dundonnell.
Nov 2019	Alasdair MacDonald (AM) to liaise with SNH with regard to uploading the Dundonnell entries. Jamie Bain (JB) of Lochluichart to look at whether their entries need to be updated.

7. **DEER POPULATION AND POPULATION MODEL** **(Led by Barbara MacDonald (BM))**

7.1 **Plan Target 1 – Plan Targets 2016-2021**

To develop/fine tune a simple population model based on local conditions to provide guidance on Group and estate cull target setting over the long-term.

7.1.1 Action Required

None agreed.

7.1.2 Updates

Date	Update
August 2016	BM circulated the questionnaire which she had prepared.
Nov 2017	Deer Population questionnaire issued to all members.
Jan 2018	Reminder issued to estates who hadn't completed the questionnaire.
Feb 2018	BM and CC met to progress with population model.
May 2018	CC confirmed that an email regarding mortality and recruitment would be circulated to all members shortly.
Nov 2018	BM and CC are working on developing/fine tuning a simple population model based on local data.
March 2019	The model has now been agreed and is being used as a management tool to assist in decision making.
June 2019	AGM confirmed the above but also noted the continual enhancements to the Model.

7.2 **Plan Target 2 – Population Model**

The Group is in the process of developing a model using the SNH guidance. Further discussion and count information needs to be collected in order to produce a realistic population model that is based on current data and local conditions and can help the Group with the long-term cull targets. The Group understands the importance of coordinated and Group-wide deer count data and appreciates the importance in terms of modelling and managing the deer population. The Group will investigate funding options for/

for more comprehensive counts to be carried out. A further helicopter count would confirm the current population, however existing data will be fed into the SNH population models and along with information on local circumstances, will be discussed within the Group to come up with suitable cull targets for the next five years.

7.2.1 Action Required

Identify sub-group to meet and feed local information into population model. Investigate helicopter count and possible funding sources.

7.2.2 Updates

Date	Update
May 2016	Agreed that a spring count should be undertaken. Information should be fed back to BM.
Dec 16	Agreed the importance of establishing livestock numbers – e.g. sheep, cattle, horses, goats, etc – on the hill. SC to confirm whether SNH will be doing a deer count in 2017.
March 2017	Noted count largely undertaken on 28 th February 2017. The exceptions were Dundonnell, Gruinard and Lochluichart. BM confirmed that Letterewe will probably do a summer helicopter count.
August 2017	Noted that we now have the spring count data, except for Gruinard. SC confirmed that SNH will carry out a helicopter count in early 2018.
Feb 2018	Helicopter count carried out on 21 st and 22 nd February.
May 2018	Once data has been received from SNH, this, along with recruitment and mortality data, will be fed into the population model with a view to looking at cull levels and apportioning to each estate.
Nov 2018	The Group agreed a mortality figure of 30%. RW stressed the importance of summer foot counts. CC to input any further data she can and then circulate a copy of the population model with suggested deer density of about 8 per km ² and proposed collaborative cull levels for the Group. Late rut noted.
March 2019	Agreed the importance of a recruitment count in late May. This information is to be fed back to CC. Two “count coordinators” were appointed – Jake Buckthorp for the north and Kenny Ross for the south. The plan is for a sensible count programme to be agreed. Noted the need for a commitment to reduce the deer cull.
June 2019	AGM agreed to reduce the stag cull to 20% of adjusted five year average for the Group as a whole and to maintain the five year average cull figures for hinds for the next season.

Nov 2019	<p>All members were asked to confirm stag cull figures to KSB so that the Population Model can be updated.</p> <p>Agreed that Jake Buckthorp (JB) of Foich and Kenny Ross (KR) of Lochrosque would organise counts in the spring of 2020 (total population foot count) and in May 2020 (recruitment sample count).</p>
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8. **DEER WELFARE (Led by Kenny Ross (KR))**

8.1 **Plan Target**

The Group will continue to encourage members to provide appropriate data on mortality, recruitment and larder weights and to review the data on a Group basis and where appropriate feed into the deer management planning process. The Group will identify a member to collect/collate this information for input to the Deer Management Plan and deer management process.

8.1.1 **Action Required**

Identify group member to collect and collate information.

8.1.2 **Updates**

Date	Update
August 2016	Agreed that questionnaire should be compiled on mortality, recruitment, etc. Derick MacAskill (DM) agreed to pull this together. DM also agreed to let KSB have a copy of their return sheet, which he duly did.
Dec 2016	Encouraged all members to report deer collisions on the appropriate website. BW of Gruinard agreed to let KSB have a copy of the spreadsheet for recording larder weights and this would be circulated to the Group.
March 2017	KSB circulated the spreadsheet.
May 2017	Agreed that a recruitment count could be done twice a year, but if only counting once, then it is best to do this in May after the spring count.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording in the DMP.
May 2018	Request issued to all members for information on recruitment and mortality.
Nov 2018	KSB to re-issue the form provided by BW, asking members to complete this for the previous season.
March 2019	Agreed our return sheet would be simplified and re-issued.
June 2019	AGM agreed to collect and collate data on larder weights and also on training qualifications.

Nov 2019	Emailed members re: training qualifications.
Nov 2019	KSB to re-issue the larder sheets to those who hadn't returned them (Dundonnell, Eilean Darach, Lochrosque and the Forestry Commission).

9. **NON-NATIVE SPECIES (Led by David Bennett (DB))**

9.1 **Plan Target**

The Group will develop a policy, through open discussion within the Group, for the management of goats within the Deer Management Group area. The Group will develop a policy for Sika deer to prevent their spread. The Group reminds members that introducing any species of deer outwith their natural habitat range may be illegal.

9.1.1 **Action Required**

Identify sub group to develop policies and consult with Group to implement.

9.1.2 **Updates**

Date	Update
May 2016	WL to let DB have sight of the Forestry Commission's draft policy. Brian Fraser (BF) of Eilean Darach is going to carry out a deer count in June and would include goats. He would pass this information to the Group.
August 2017	Agreed changes to the wording in the DMP.
May 2018	Noted that this action had been completed and the appropriate policy adopted within the DMP.