

**INVERARAY & TYNDRUM
DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP**

**DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN:
WORKING PLAN 2015-2025**

UPDATED OCT 2020



PREFACE

This Deer Management Plan has been developed for the Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Group (ITDMG). The Original Plan was privately funded, and was the first such document produced by the Group. It was written by Victor Clements. SNH funding was accessed for updating the plan in 2015-16. The Plan was written in 2013 and was updated fully in 2015 and has been formally endorsed by all the Members of the Group.

This Working Plan is used as the Group's action plan and is regularly updated to reflect current group issues and plans.

A separate document 'Deer Management Plan: Background Information' provides information about the structure and running of the Group, count and cull information, designated sites, and all other deer management issues that affect the Group. It is updated when necessary.

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1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Based on the information provided in the Deer Management Plan: Background Information, it is considered that these are the main objectives for the Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Group, in all cases adhering to Best Practice Guidelines:-

- 1 To safeguard and promote deer welfare within the ITDMG area
- 2 To achieve an appropriate balance between deer and their habitat, and between deer and other land uses, to minimize unacceptable damage to agricultural, forestry, sporting or natural heritage interests.
- 3 Within the constraint of (2) and the necessary management culls associated with this, to fulfill **the annual sporting and venison production** objectives of individual Members. This **currently amounts to some 540 stags and approx 1530 animals overall.**
- 4 To market sporting and venison production to the best advantage of the Group.
- 5 To ensure such resources, training and monitoring capacity that are required are made available to achieve the above objectives.
- 6 Through Habitat Impact Assessments (HIA), ITDMG aims to actively maintain the habitats, forage and shelter required to sustain a healthy and productive deer herd, resilient enough to cope with future uncertainties. Records should be kept of all those land managers undertaking HIA and those not undertaking HIA should be encouraged to do so.
- 7 To facilitate the implementation of any other deer-related management agreements within the group area, and to provide a mechanism for dealing with any disputes. ITDMG will always refer to the ADMG principles for collaboration if disputes arise.
- 8 To ensure full participation from throughout the area in the deer management group, for both counting and cull reporting purposes.
- 9 To maintain and improve local employment, be that specifically in deer management or wildlife management and agricultural activity more generally within the area.
- 10 To ensure that the Group is following the Code of Practice on Deer Management.
- 11 ITDMG should strive to always undertake deer management in the public interest whilst meeting individual management objectives. ITDMG's communications and consultation policy (see Background Information Plan P32) aims to include individuals, local bodies such as community councils and local authorities, and welcomes communication and consultation from neighbouring DMGs.
- 12 To maintain an up-to-date Deer Management Plan (available online) that acts as a suitable source of information and direction for all group members.

2. ACTIONS SUMMARY

The following actions will be delivered by the Group during the period of this plan, in conjunction with SNH, ADMG and others. The actions will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, and others added, as appropriate. These action points are taken from Parts 3 & 4 of the 'Deer Management Plan: Background Information', covering both the Operation of the Group and the Public Interest Assessment. Wider background information on the current situation can be found in those sections.

OPERATION OF THE GROUP

2018 updates are given in blue. 2019 updates are given in orange. 2020 updates are given in purple, 2021 updates in red.

Membership

Action Points

1.1 Devise a suitable arrangement whereby tenant farmers can share information on livestock management with the Group.

Constitution & Finances

Action Point

2.1 The group will produce annual budgets, and look to increase member subscription rates so that a buffer can be built up in the bank account. A realistic aim would be to have the equivalent of one year's subscription to ADMG in reserve at all times.

The first annual budget was produced for the November 2018 group meeting.

Subscription rates were increased in 2019 to build up a buffer.

2020 subscriptions were reduced to take into account the impacts of Covid-19.

Meetings

Action Point

3.1 Continue to invite Community Councils, LLTNP and other stakeholders to meetings and prepare information for them to share with local communities about relevant deer management activities, such as important stalking dates and hill walking.

Community Councils are aware that they can contact ITDMG with any deer-related issues, but do not see the need to regularly attending group meetings. LLTNP are invited to and attend all group meetings.

Reviewing the Plan

Action Points

4.1 Review and update the Working Plan at least every six months, agreeing changes at group meetings.

4.2 Continue to update Community Councils and other local interests, and incorporate any feedback.

Code of Practice on Deer Management

Action Point

5.1 Ensure adherence to code at all times, both by the Group, and by individual members.

PUBLIC INTEREST ACTIONS

2017 updates are given in green. 2018 updates are given in blue. 2019 updates are given in orange. 2020 updates are given in purple. 2021 updates in red.

Developing Mechanisms to Manage Deer

Action Points:

1.1 Ensure that continued assessment is undertaken of ITDMG against the benchmark in collaboration with SNH. *ADMG health check was completed in August 2018. SNH assessment was carried out in April 2019.*

1.2 Continued development of the Working plan to provide an up-to-date and evolving DMP. *Reviewed at November 2018 group meeting. Reviewed at April 2019 group meeting. Reviewed in June 2020.*

1.3 Continue to collate information from the Group to provide up-to-date information to the public. *Count and cull data for 2017-18 have been added to the Plan. Count and cull data for 2018-19 have been added to the Plan. Count and cull data for 2019-20 have been added to the Plan. Count and cull data for 2020-21 have been added to the Plan.*

Delivering Designated Features into Favourable Condition

Action Points:

2.1 Continue to liaise with SNH regarding the condition of Coille Coire Chuilc SSSI (the only designated site in Unfavourable condition). *There is ongoing discussion between SNH, LLTNPA and land managers regarding some of the designated sites and neighbouring estates (Ben Lui SSSI/ SAC, Collie Coire Chruic SSSI & Ben Vorlich SSSI). Individual members are engaging and there has been some positive discussion on further collaboration between neighbours.*

2.2 Continued introduction and implementation of HIA within ITDMG. *Group HIA project baseline data collected during 2018. Group HIA project summary results added to the Plan Apr 2019. HIA data collected by group members in Spring 2019 was collated and mapped for the group meeting in November 2019. The Covid-19 crisis in 2020 has prevented most members from carrying out HIA. Group members are carrying out HIA in Spring 2021.*

Managing Deer to Retain Existing Native Woodland Cover and Improve Woodland Condition in the Medium to Long Term

Action Points:

3.1 Discuss and target those areas that need improved and increased deer management to contribute towards preventing high or very high herbivore impact levels. *Maps of NWSS herbivore impacts on native woodland have been circulated to group for feedback on any changes to management since the survey.*

3.2 Devise a method of woodland browsing monitoring that can be undertaken by deer managers to prevent deer impacts. *We are waiting for guidance from SNH and ADMG on this.*

3.3 Update the plan when necessary to show those areas that need to be targeted to promote woodland protection.

Demonstrating ITDMG Contribution to Woodland Expansion Target

Action Point:

4.1 ITDMG will not be actively encouraging more planting but will show an on-going commitment to the preservation and protection of those woodlands within the Group. New planting schemes should be put forward to the Group and implications for deer management discussed.

Monitoring and Managing Deer Impacts on the Wider Countryside

Action Point:

5.1 ITDMG will progress the group-wide HIA monitoring programme, updating the DMP to show the progress and results of HIA monitoring. *Group HIA project baseline data was gathered in 2018. Group HIA project baseline results summary has been added to the DMP in Apr 2019. 2019 data from project members has been collated and mapped. The group HIA project plots will be revisited in Spring 2021.*

5.2 Members carrying out their own HIA monitoring will be encouraged to share their data with the group. *Glenfalloch have shared their HIA data with the group. SNH Ben Lui, Glenfalloch, Auchreoch and Strathfillan have shared their HIA data with the group.*

5.3 Members not currently doing HIA will be advised to start monitoring and supported where possible.

Improving Scotland's Ability to Store Carbon

Action Points:

6.1 Group members will be encouraged to explore peatland restoration opportunities and available funding sources. *Funding was obtained from Peatland Action for a Peatland Restoration Feasibility Study during 2018-19 covering over half of the group area, with report due March 2019. Forestry Commission are doing their own peatland assessments and restoration. Glenfalloch have started their own peatland restoration. The Peatland Restoration Feasibility Study final report was received in March 2019. Cononish is planning some peatland restoration and other members are investigating potential funding options.*

6.2 Target those areas of woodland that need to be protected. *Maps of NWSS herbivore impacts on native woodland have been circulated to group for feedback on any changes to management since the survey.*

Reducing or Mitigating the Risk of Establishment of Invasive Non-native Species

Action Points:

7.1 Continue to cull Sika deer to prevent any spread. *Data on culled sika deer were collected with 2017-18 cull returns and the information added to the Plan. Data on culled sika deer were collected with 2018-19 cull returns and the information added to the Plan. Data on culled sika deer were collected with 2019-20 cull returns and the information added to the Plan. Data on culled sika deer were collected with 2020-21 cull returns and the information added to the Plan.*

7.2 Endeavour to capture an idea of Sika population size within ITDMG however transient it may be.

Protecting Historic and Cultural Features

Action Points:

- 8.1 ITDMG will maintain contact with community groups and other stakeholders to try to prevent any potential threats that deer may be to historic and cultural features. *No concerns were raised regarding this issue in 2018. No concerns were raised regarding this issue in 2019. No concerns have been raised up to June 2020. No concerns have been raised so far in 2021.*
- 8.2 All new planting schemes will be assessed for any negative impacts.

Delivering Higher Standards of Competence in Deer Management

Action Points:

- 9.1 Clarify the exact proportion of DMQ level 1 and 2 within the ITDMG area. *A group questionnaire was circulated in Apr 2019 to collect this information.*
- 9.2 Look for further opportunities to improve general training levels within the Group. *A visit to FC Glenbranter larder with training on carcass contamination was held in Dec 2018. An HIA training day was held in Apr 2019.*

Contributing to Public Health and Wellbeing

Action Points:

- 10.1 Continue communication between Community Councils and ITDMG.
- 10.2 Remind and update all members and stakeholders of the potential threats from CWD and similar diseases and advise on preventative measures. *Some group members provided samples for the Scottish Deer Health Survey 2017-18 which looked at E.coli 0157 prevalence.*
- 10.3 Continue to work closely with SNH, LLTNP and walking groups to promote the need to access the land responsibly whilst deer management is being undertaken. *Glenfalloch represents ITDMG on the LLTNP Access Forum and contributes to the new NPA strategy.*
- 10.4 Advise group members to ensure that they promote a positive and welcoming message to all those visiting the hills.
- 10.5 Continue to promote the use of the HFTSH website by the group.

Maximising Economic Benefits Associated With Deer

Action Points:

- 11.1 Investigate the possibilities for increasing the sporting value of deer stalking.
- 11.2 Look at the potential to instigate deer watching trips across the group as an 'added value' to deer management.
- 11.3 Investigate the potential for group-wide venison marketing.
- 11.4 Continue to gather information on the economic value of deer stalking.
- 11.5 Continue to encourage members to gain SQWV accreditation.

Minimising the Economic Costs of Deer Management

Action Points:

- 12.1 Start to promote the discussion of the economic costs of deer management.
- 12.2 Keep abreast of the implications of the costs of the introduction of sporting rates. *A former member of the Scottish Assessors Association attended the group meeting in Nov 2017 to update the group on sporting rates and answer questions. Updates on sporting rates, including the appeals process, have been shared with group members in 2018, 2019 and 2020, including the lack of rates relief for Covid-19 affected deer management businesses.*

Ensuring Effective Communications on Deer Management Issues.

Action Point:

13.1 ITDMG should attempt to draft a communications policy during 2018. *Done – see section 12 (P32) of Background Information Plan.*

Ensuring Deer Welfare is Safeguarded at Individual and Population Level.

Action Points:

14.1 Continue to strive to bring natural habitats into favourable condition. *There is ongoing discussion between SNH, LLTNPA and land managers regarding designated sites and there has been some positive discussion on further collaboration between neighbours. Most group members are now undertaking HIA.*

14.2 Maintain good communications within the group to monitor deer numbers and any potential threats to deer welfare. *Most group members shared cull and count data and attended group meetings in 2018 and 2019. DVC data was mapped and discussed at Nov 2018 group meeting.*

14.3 Improve communications with walkers. *ITDMG is represented on the NPA Access Forum.*

3. POPULATION MODEL & FUTURE CULL TARGETS

Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG has many varied objectives, all of which may require differing levels of deer density across the area. A key annual task of the DMG is to set cull targets that are sustainable – i.e. achieving habitat targets and maximising economic benefits (let stalking / venison sales) whilst minimising unacceptable damage (e.g. damage to woodland plantings) – and should be based on the most up-to-date information as possible.

Annual cull setting will be based on the following key aspects:

- Let stalking aspirations
- Most recent deer count data & previous trends
- Recruitment and mortality data
- Changes in management – e.g. compensatory culls for fencing/changes in livestock
- Habitat monitoring data & trends

But will also take account of:

- Preventing risk to deer welfare
- Managing risk to public safety e.g. reducing risk of Deer Vehicle Collisions
- Unusual weather circumstance
- Temporary changes within the deer range, e.g. construction activity, in-depth survey work

Ultimately the cull should be achieved in a collaborative manner shared between members, whilst still enabling individual management practices where possible. Improved habitat monitoring within the group should identify where culls need to be revised to prevent damage to habitat. Now that many group members are undertaking monitoring, the information gained can be used to better inform where increased culls are necessary.

Generally Open Range DMGs are able to apply simple models to their population based on deer counts and subsequent culls. Given the level of unfenced woodland within ITDMG another layer of complexity is added as we are unaware of the level of deer population resident within the woodlands. However we do know that during the late summer/ rut woodland deer, particularly stags, do wander onto the open range and no doubt contribute a proportion of the overall stag cull of the open range. The cull of woodland stags on the open hill during the rut is likely benefitting all land holdings as the overall stag cull taken (i.e. including these woodland deer) is greater than what would be required based on the open range population alone.

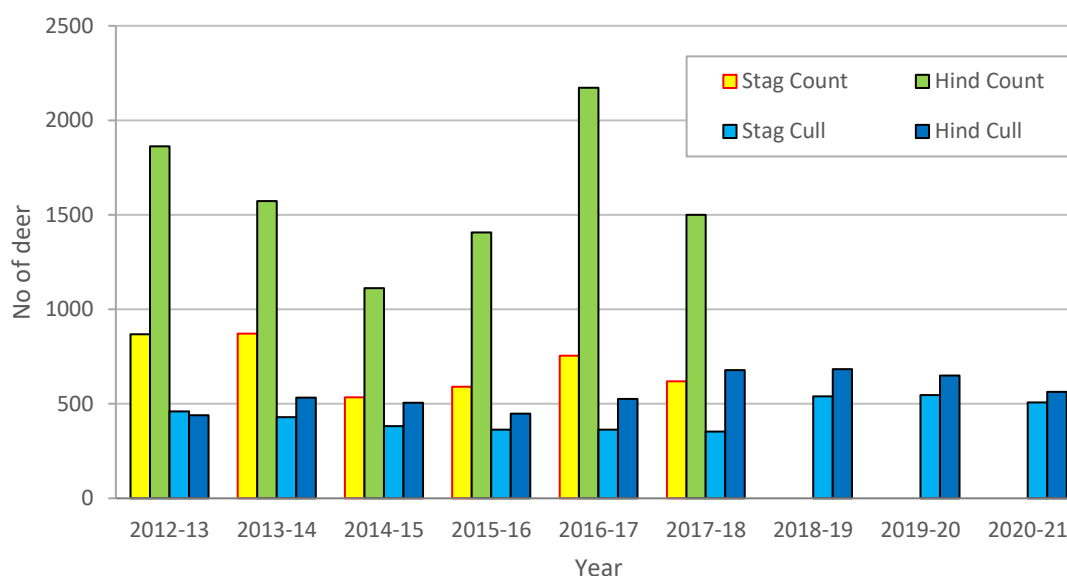
Historically, to ensure an annual supply of mature stags across an area, typically between a 6th to 7th of the stag population should be culled. Research (Clutton Brook, 1994) carried out on Scottish red deer management shows that aiming for a sex ratio as close to 1 stag to 1 hind was mutually beneficial to both deer and land managers. Hence, in the instance of the research, taking a cull of female deer at between 14 - 17% (a 6th or 7th) of the hind population was optimal for ensuring:

- Higher survival rates in male calves

- Improved calving weights, therefore larger/ more productive deer
- Density of deer is at an optimal level for both habitat condition and economic requirement i.e. not over producing calves which results in larger culls of hinds (and particularly stags out of season – linked to displacement below)
- There is evidence across Scotland that wild deer populations that suffer from high hind densities tend to displace males to lower ground i.e. generally where deer damage is most noticeable

As at March 2020 the collective cull aspiration of the ITDMG is to take a total of 460 stags in both woodland and hill. Given the challenges facing ITDMG on balancing all management objectives it would be sensible in the first instance to aim for an optimal deer population across the group that collectively delivers the objectives. A sustainable population should be based around a high calving percentage of 45%. Based on a current annual required cull of 460 stags per year, a hind population of around 1300-1400 hinds is required to maintain a stable deer population. The 2017 helicopter count figures (covering all open range and some woodland) were 2173 hinds, 956 calves and 754 stags. In order to achieve a stable deer population culls will need to be in the order of 250 stags and 500 hinds on the open range for the next couple of years, with further management culling required in woodland areas across the group. By undertaking a cull this high, we will be ensuring that population culls match recruitment on the open range. ITDMG will also need to discuss increased culling of all age ranges of deer to meet this target.

ITDMG Culls and Counts 2012-2021



Graph 1: Culls and counts in ITDMG area 2012-2020 (group foot counts for all years except 2016-17 which was an SNH helicopter count; the 2018-2021 counts were incomplete due to bad weather).

Graph 1 above shows the current total culls (open range and woodland) and the counts for the open range only. The setting of the annual cull will be even more challenging as there will be an element of ‘horse trading’ for how many deer each land holding is able/ willing to shoot. This is particularly the case for ensuring maximum annual potential for income from

deer stalking in the stag season and in ensuring that an appropriate hind cull target is reached. It is critical in aiming to achieve the balance of all objectives that in the first instance DMG members deliver the optimal open range hind population. See Table 1 below for a population model of the open range deer only.

Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG - open range population model - Spring 2021

	Stags	Hinds	Calves
2017 Counted Population Feb 2017	754	2173	956
2017 Mortality	15	43	57
2017 Spring Population	739	2130	899
2017 Summer Population	1188	2579	1032
2017/18 Reported Hill Cull	175	410	215
2018 Mortality	24	52	62
2018 Spring Population	989	2117	755
2018 Summer Population	1367	2495	998
2018/19 Proposed Cull	200	500	200
2018/19 Reported Hill Cull	198	411	187
2019 Mortality	27	50	60
2019 Spring Population	1141	2034	751
2019 Summer Population	1517	2409	964
2019/20 Cull Targets	177	368	152
2019/20 Reported Hill Cull	240	442	224
2020 Mortality	30	48	58
2020 Spring Population	1247	1919	682
2020 Summer Population	1588	2260	904
2020/21 Cull Targets	304	508	204
2020/21 Reported Hill Cull	263	399	223
2021 Mortality	32	45	54
2021 Spring Population	1293	1816	627
2021 Summer Population	1606	2129	852
2021/22 Proposed Cull	200	500	200
2022 Mortality	32	43	51
2022 Spring Population	1374	1587	601
2022 Summer Population	1674	1887	755
Target population*		1400	

Assumptions/ notes

mortality = 2% for adult deer, 6% for calves

summer calving = 40% - average over group August 2017

sex ratio split of calves = 50:50

Full ITDMG helicopter deer count in Feb 2017 - area around woodland was flown but unknown number of deer in woodland.

Aiming for target population of 1400 hinds on open range as per DMP
this is OPEN RANGE modelling only

Incomplete foot counts in 2018-2021 cannot be used in the model.

A key action for the ITDMG is to ensure this flexible 'trading' on cull targets is taken and ultimately the culls achieved. As is mentioned in this DMP, ITDMG have a good participation for their annual Spring foot counts. However, given the amount of forestry which is present in the group there is an unknown number of deer, in particular red deer, that will cause an issue for woodland managers, but will also provide opportunities to those stalking for income in both the open range and woodland setting.

Individual land managers may carry out population assessment in woodland areas and whilst this is acceptable for helping provide some data it is recognised that this may be costly/inefficient or have large margins of error. Therefore ITDMG are not collectively promoting this and would rather use damage assessments for establishing an acceptable population of deer utilising woodland areas.

Woodland deer culls are expected to be set by individual land managers to achieve their objectives, with both the individual and the DMG considering implications on the open range population and how this affects either actual deer impacts on trees or indeed the consequences of the cull on the open range. Again this will be discussed and over time, with future improvement in data gathering (counts/ culls/ damage levels/ calving rates etc), ITDMG will identify changes to the population that may be required.

Poor weather has resulted in incomplete Spring foot counts in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. As a result, an additional foot count has been arranged for October 2021 to aim to gather up-to-date figures on deer numbers across the group. This can then be used for setting cull targets.

4. RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTS

Group members agree to forward details of any such current projects, or ongoing management operations. The following group members have ongoing or proposed RDC contracts which include an element of deer management planning:

Strone Estate received funding for 70 ha of native tree planting and deer fencing in 2014. Strone Estate also received funding for riparian tree planting from Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park.

Glenfalloch Estate commenced an Agri Environment and Climate Scheme at the beginning of 2018 which aimed to build upon the success of the previous RDC-RP and RSS schemes. This new scheme is primarily focused on moorland management and includes commitment to undertaking Habitat Impact Assessments, a Deer Management Plan, a Moorland Management plan as well as undertaking peatland restoration. Predator control will continue to be carried out to the benefit of the Black Grouse found on the Estate along with the count and submission of information on Black Grouse leks. Over 7,000ha will be managed with the objective of improving the habitat and biodiversity they support. Glenfalloch will be applying for a second AECS scheme to begin from 1/1/20 which will aim to expand this positive management to cover an additional area of approximately 2,700ha of the newly in hand Keilator farm. This management will include moorland management including an area

of the Ben More and Stob Binnein SSSI, management of wader grazed grassland, predator control for black grouse, deer management planning and habitat impact assessments. Glenfalloch is now in its fifth year of undertaking a wide-ranging survey of its habitats and species as part of the Basic Payment Scheme. These surveys have year on year demonstrated that Glenfalloch support the whole list of upland breeding bird species in Scotland, including a number of priority species, lots of woodland bird species as well as colonies of the Mountain Ringlet butterfly.

Glenfalloch continues to work in conjunction with all stakeholders on the management of the woodland on the Estate and in particular the woodland SSSIs. The management of these areas is challenging given the nature of a woodland SSSI but Glenfalloch hopes that the regular discussions and involvement with stakeholders means that where possible better outcomes are being achieved. The Estate has no plan for woodland expansion although consideration will be given to sensitive expansion of the woodland area along burn gullies and to extend native woodland areas.

The Estate is also working on a wider land use management plan which it hopes will help inform the management of the Estate to include consideration of habitats which can be overlooked such as peatlands and water as well as considering the Estate's wider engagement with the community.

5. POTENTIAL FUTURE SCHEMES

Group members are encouraged to share with the Group any future plans which they consider might have an impact on deer management within the area.

Peatland regeneration

Strone Estate has received an offer of funding for this but had to decline due to the tight timescales. Further funding will be investigated. Brackley Farm also secured funding for peatland regeneration but were unable to carry out the work due to bad weather. They are still interested in carrying out regeneration in the future.

Woodland creation

Strone Estate plans to plant blocks of trees along the River Kinglas to improve migratory fish habitat, using funding from the Woodland Trust.

Forestry Co-operation Grant (Forestry Grant Scheme)

A grant of up to £10,000 can be used for a consultant to scope out options on behalf of 4 or more landowners. However, landowners need to show a keen interest in doing native woodland planting or improvement following the scoping study, and there is also grant funding for this. Glenfalloch and Strone noted their interest in taking part.

Ancient Woodland Surveys

Angus Bevan, consultant for Integrated Woodland Management, has offered to do ancient woodlands surveys for individual DMG members, which would be funded by The Woodland Trust.