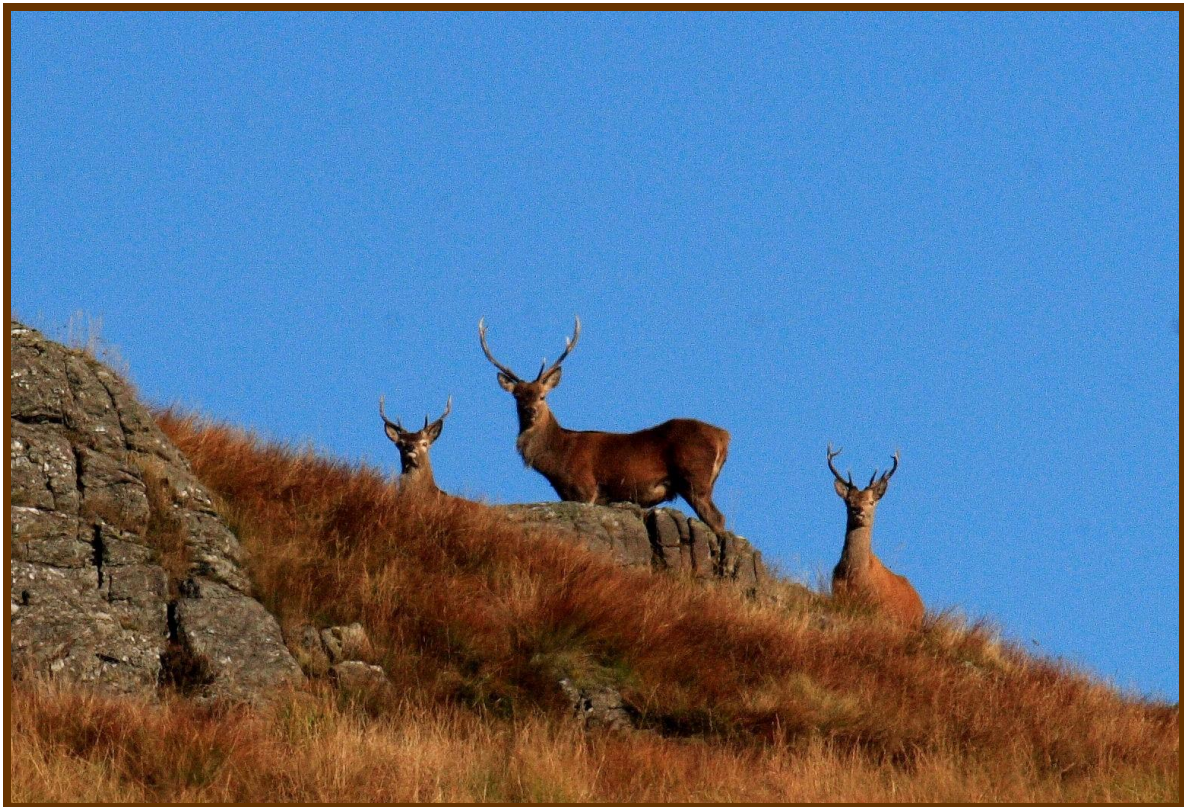


**INVERARAY & TYNDRUM
DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP**

**DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN:
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

UPDATED OCTOBER 2022



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. NatureScot 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 Background Information document 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.

A separate document 'Deer Management Plan: The Working Plan' is used as the Group's action plan and is regularly updated to reflect current group issues and plans.

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PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE OF PLAN

The purpose of this Plan is to provide:-

- (a) an agreed statement of the shared views of the Members of the Group about the management of wild deer in the area covered by the Group;
- (b) an agreed set of the actions to try and ensure that deer management in the area is in line with those shared views;
- (c) an agreed pattern of arrangements to try and ensure that the actions are implemented and their effectiveness monitored;
- (d) an agreed set of actions to ensure that deer management is undertaken in the public interest.

It is also set out to be a useful summary of the management objectives and contact information details for members of the Group, and an introduction document for anyone in the local or wider community who is interested in the management of deer in the ITDMG area.

Group members:

- acknowledge what they have in common, namely a shared commitment to a sustainable and economically viable Scottish Countryside.
- make a commitment to work together to achieve that.
- accept that they have a diversity of management objectives and respect each other's objectives.
- undertake to communicate openly with all relevant parties.
- commit to negotiate and, where necessary, compromise, in order to accommodate the reasonable land management requirements of neighbours.
- undertake to work together to resolve areas of disagreement where they exist.

2. LONG TERM VISION

Members support the long term vision for deer populations and their management as laid out in *Scotland's Wild Deer – A National Approach*. Members also fully support the *Code of Practice on Deer Management*. At the time of writing, the group looks forward to the Scottish Government's reply to The Deer Working Group report (The Management of Wild Deer in Scotland, Dec 2019) and the NatureScot report (Assessing Progress in Deer Management, Sept 2019).

- Deer populations will be managed sustainably so that their management is fully integrated with all local land uses and land use objectives, including the Public Interest.
- Such management will ensure high standards of deer welfare and public safety, and play a constructive role in the long term stewardship of local habitats.
- Local deer management will continue to deliver and further develop its positive contributions to the rural economy. Deer management and wildlife management more generally within the Group will be seen as an attractive and worthwhile occupation associated with high standards of skills and employment practice.

3. GROUP AREA

The Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Group (ITDMG) covers 59,137 ha (see Map 1: ITDMG Members Map). It has 23 members, and was formed in 2002. It is not part of any other local association. The group subscribes to the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG). The boundaries of the area are:

- in the north: from the south shore of Loch Awe, following the River Lochy to Tyndrum,
- in the east: from Tyndrum down to Crianlarich, and then down Glenfalloch to Tarbet on Loch Lomond.
- in the South: from Tarbet across to Arrochar, then following the A83 (T) through to Ardkinglas. From there, follow the north side of Loch Fyne around to Inveraray
- in the west: following a north westerly line from Inveraray through to Loch Awe.

Other neighbouring Deer Management Groups are Blackmount DMG and Breadalbane DMG to the north, and Balquhidder DMG to the east. There is no DMG presence to the southeast or to the west. West Loch Lomond and Cowal are both looking to set up a group. ITDMG encourage dialogue with neighbouring DMGs where this is in the public interest.

Employment

Within the ITDMG area, there are currently approximately ten full time jobs that are either fully or partially involved with deer management. This figure does not include extra seasonal ghillies that are taken on for the main sporting season, or support staff dealing with accommodation, bookings or other necessary support services.

The Group is notable in that seven of the twenty-three owners carry out their own deer management activities. A number of contractors/self-employed stalkers also operate within the Group area.

Almost all deer management personnel within the ITDMG area, whether employed or self employed, have a range of other duties, ranging from other wildlife management duties, livestock management, habitat monitoring and rangering. In a number of cases, the deer element is only a small proportion of the total.

Economic Value

Allowing that a proportion of the stag cull is a management cull only, it is estimated that the direct sporting value of the stag cull in the ITDMG area is £80,000 annually. Up to 25% of the hind cull is likely to be taken with sporting guests, the value of which might be £20,000 annually. In both cases, extra value will be obtained from a number of estates through letting of accommodation and other ancillary services.

Based on a cull of 370 stags, 400 hinds and 200 calves, it is estimated that the total value of venison produced within the group area is £120,000 annually.

The total direct economic value of deer management within the Inveraray & Tyndrum area is therefore likely to be in the region of £220,000 annually, this before any ancillary services or economic multipliers are considered. The majority of sporting estates will also consider their overall capital value to be related to the numbers of stags that can be culled.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has been and continues to be a significant factor for all members both in terms of the marketing of deer carcasses (at prices significantly below last year's) and in terms of ability to carry out the cull.

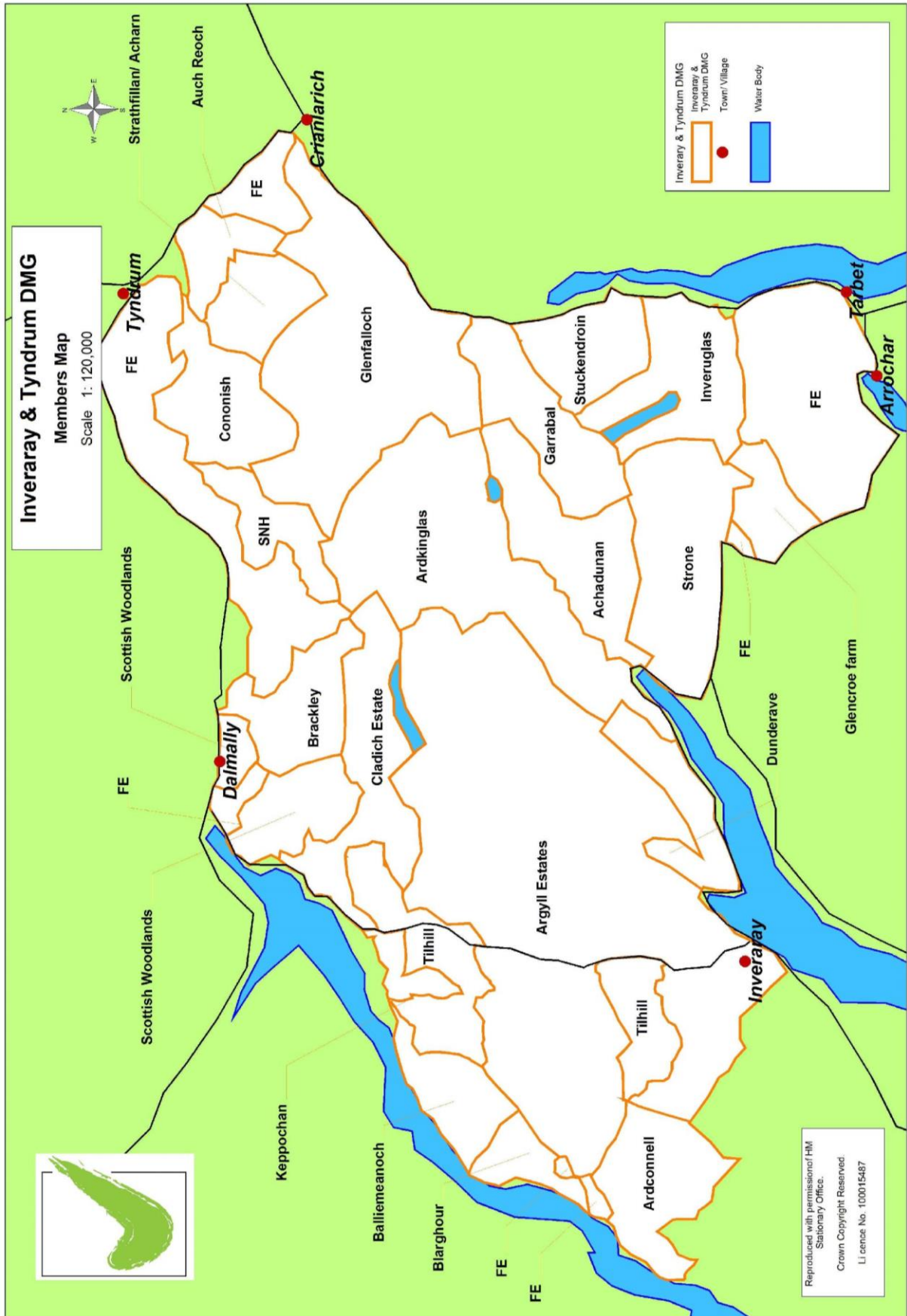
A number of properties within the group who do not obtain any sporting value from deer management will regard such activity as an overall net cost to their own management objectives, and would no doubt readily forego any income derived from deer management.

Local Stakeholders

ITDMG recognise the importance of communicating and consulting with local stakeholders. They will be invited to attend ITDMG meetings so that they can learn about deer management issues in the area, and can also feedback any views and concerns to the Group. Consultation with these stakeholders should also help with reduction or mitigation of public safety risks and monitoring of the effectiveness of these actions.

Stakeholders within the ITDMG area include:

- a) Community Councils – Arrochar & Tarbet; Cairndow; Glenorchy & Innishail; Inveraray; Strathfillan.
- b) Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park
- c) MSPs, MPs, MEPs
- d) Local Authority staff
- e) Local NGOs – woodland, Argyll Fisheries Trust, energy, biodiversity
- f) National NGOs – NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, NTS, Historic Scotland
- g) Tourism groups
- h) Estate staff
- i) Farmers
- j) Scottish Government and RACCE committee



Map 1: ITDMG Members Map

4. GROUP MEMBERSHIP

ITDMG enjoys a good level of participation from among the 23 members of the group. There are two main management regimes within the group, with four other combinations of management objectives covering the remaining area (see Map 2: ITDMG Management Objectives Map):

- Nine properties covering 26,805 ha or 45% of the area who list a combination of both deer and livestock production as the main management objectives for their hill area.
- Seven properties who list woodland management as a primary management objective on at least part of their holding, extending to 17,568 ha or 29% of the Group area. Over and above this, there are another approx 3000 ha of woods that are either open to deer as part of the normal range, or have not been mapped separately within the overall picture. One third of the DMG therefore is covered in trees, a notably high figure for a deer management group.
- Four members, covering 5550 ha or 9% of the area, list livestock production as their main land use objective, although they would make use of deer if they were present.
- Only one property, covering 1947 ha or just 3% of the DMG, lists deer by themselves as their primary land use objective. This is unusual for deer management groups.
- Two properties, covering 3051 ha or 5% of the area, list an integration of trees and deer as their primary objectives.
- Finally, one property lists access/conservation management as their primary objective.

The majority of land is privately owned, but Forestry and Land Scotland is a significant landowner in the area. Scottish Natural Heritage owns part of Ben Lui. There are no NGO landowners within the area, but there is a community landowning group (Strathfillan Community Development Trust), which attended meetings in 2015 but no longer engages with the group.

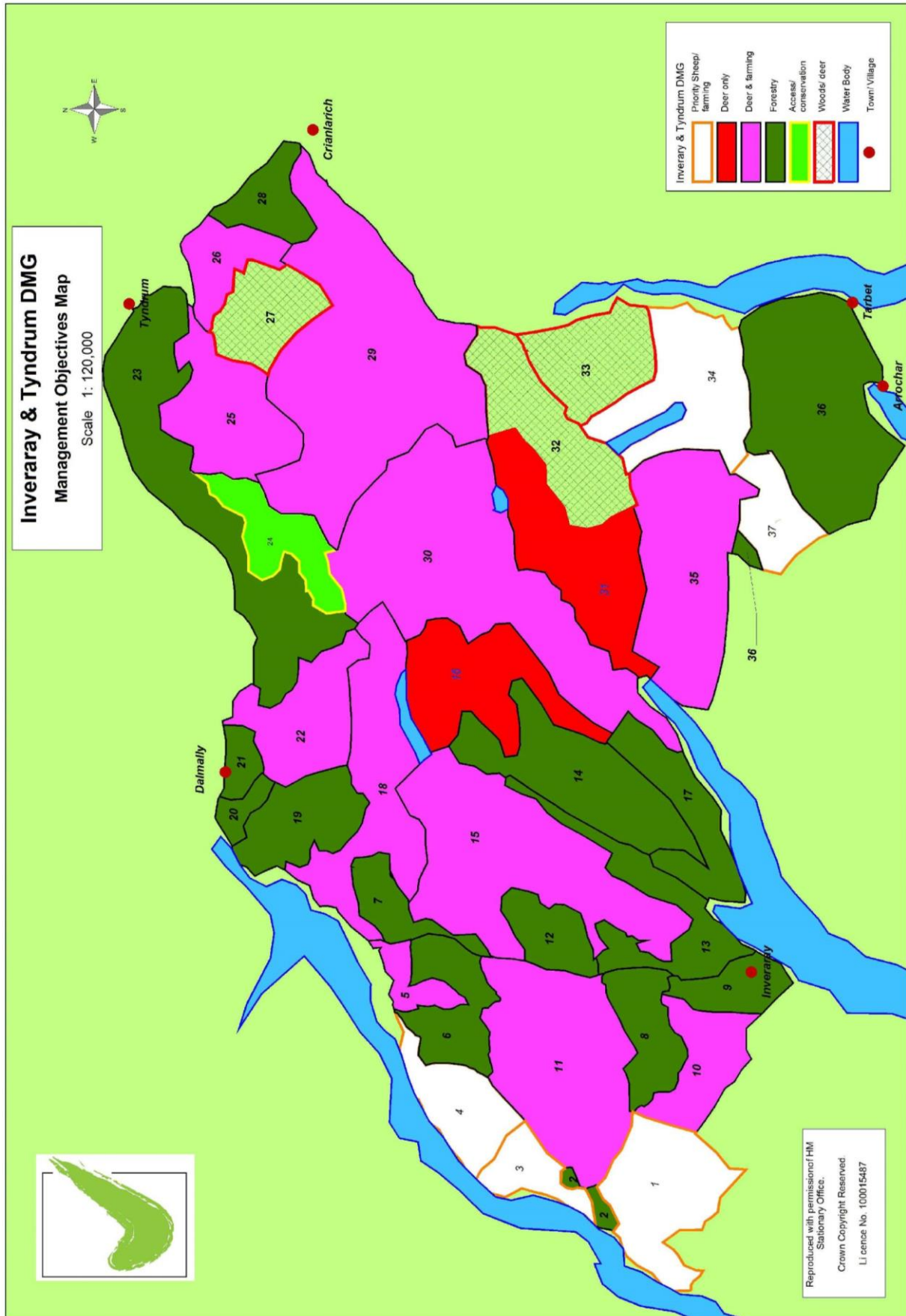
Discussions during the production of this plan suggest that while there are a range of management objectives within the Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG, there was no need to treat any part of the area as an individual sub-group, although deer populations to the west of the A819 running north from Inveraray are very much lower than those to the east. FLS, Scottish Woodlands and Tilhill will report on different units as they have scattered blocks throughout the DMG area.

The following table gives a summary of the management objectives of the properties within the deer group.

Table 1: ITDMG Members & Management Objectives

Property/Member	Main Objectives	Size (ha)
<i>Achadunan</i>	<i>Deer</i>	<i>1947</i>
<i>Achlian (prev Cladich Estate)</i>	<i>Livestock/ Deer</i>	<i>1337</i>
<i>Ardchnonnel</i>	<i>Livestock/ Deer</i>	<i>1550</i>
<i>Ardkinglas</i>	<i>Livestock/ deer/ woodlands</i>	<i>4850</i>
<i>Argyll Estates</i>	<i>Deer/ woodlands/ sheep</i>	<i>12109</i>
<i>Auchreoch</i>	<i>Livestock/ Deer</i>	<i>612</i>
<i>Balliemeanoch</i>	<i>Livestock</i>	<i>2300</i>
<i>Ben Lui- NatureScot</i>	<i>Conservation</i>	<i>950</i>
<i>Brackley</i>	<i>Livestock/ Deer</i>	<i>1650</i>
<i>Blarghour</i>	<i>Livestock</i>	<i>850</i>
<i>Cononish</i>	<i>Deer/ Sheep</i>	<i>1750</i>
<i>Dunderave</i>	<i>Forestry</i>	<i>1230</i>
<i>Garabal</i>	<i>Woodland/ deer</i>	<i>1760</i>
<i>Glencroe Farm</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>825</i>
<i>Glenfalloch</i>	<i>Deer/ livestock</i>	<i>6000</i>
<i>Forestry & Land Scotland</i>	<i>Timber Production</i>	<i>6627</i>
<i>Inveruglas</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>1820</i>
<i>Keppochan</i>	<i>Sheep/ Deer</i>	<i>600</i>
<i>Scottish Woodlands</i>	<i>Woodland Management</i>	<i>1129</i>
<i>Strathfillan/Acharn</i>	<i>Deer/ trees</i>	<i>1214</i>
<i>Strone</i>	<i>Deer/ woodlands/ sheep</i>	<i>2800</i>
<i>Stuckendroin</i>	<i>Deer/ Woodlands</i>	<i>1600</i>
<i>Tilhill – various forestry</i>	<i>Forestry</i>	<i>5290</i>

Total area covered: 60,800 ha



Map 2: ITDMG Management Objectives Map (see Table 2 for numbered landholdings)

Table 2: Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Units (area figures are approximate)

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
1. Ardchnnell	1550	Sheep	Ardchnnell
2. Ardchnnell Forest	200	Forestry	FLS
3. Blarghour	850	Livestock	Blarghour
4. Balliemeanoch	2300	Livestock/ Deer	Balliemeanoch
5. Keppochan	600	Livestock/ Deer	Keppochan
6. Cladich Forest	1022	Forestry	Tilhill
7. Tullich & Bovuy	568	Forestry	Tilhill
8. Three Bridges	876	Forestry	Tilhill
9. Argyll- Inveraray	602	Forestry	Argyll Estates
10. Argyll- SW	1001	Livestock	Argyll Estates
11. Argyll- NW	3050	Livestock/ Deer	Argyll Estates
12. Ladyfield	665	Forestry	Argyll Estates
13. Argyll Estate Woodlands	1240	Forestry	Argyll Estates
14. Glen Shira Woodlands	1646	Forestry	Tilhill
15. Argyll- Mid	3720	Livestock/ Deer	Argyll Estates
16. Argyll- East	1831	Livestock/ Deer	Argyll Estates
17. Dunderave	1230	Forestry	Tilhill (464ha), Argyll Estates (644ha), Ardkinglas (122ha)
18. Achlian	1337	Livestock/ Deer	Achlian
19. Ardteatle/Dychliemore	1129	Forestry	Scottish Woodlands
20. Kinachreachan	229	Forestry	Tilhill
21. Dalmally	288	Forestry	Tilhill
22. Brackley	1650	Livestock/ Deer	Brackley
23. Dalmally South	3166	Forestry	FLS
24. Ben Lui	950	Access/ Conservation	Glenfalloch
25. Cononish	1750	Conservation	Cononish
26. Auchreoch	612	Livestock/ deer	Auchreoch
27. Strathfillan/Acharn	1214	Deer/ trees	Strathfillan/Acharn
28. Ewich	661	Forestry	Tilhill
29. Glenfalloch	6000	Deer/ livestock	Glenfalloch
30. Ardkinglas	4850	Deer/ Livestock	Ardkinglas
31. Achadunan	1947	Deer	Achadunan
32. Garabal	1760	Trees/ Deer	Garabal
33. Stuckendroin	1600	Trees/ Deer	Stuckendroin
34. Inveruglas	1820	Livestock	Inveruglas
35. Strone	2800	Deer/ Livestock	Strone
36. The Cobbler	3261	Forestry	FLS
37. Glencroe Farm	825	Livestock	Glencroe Farm
Total:	60,800 ha		

MEMBER DESCRIPTIONS & OBJECTIVES

The following section gives an overview of the essential management information relating to each of the group members of the Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG. Confidential contact information is kept in Appendix 2: Contact List & Sporting Requirements, for group members' use only.

Achadunan

The estate aims to have a balanced and healthy population of deer on the hill ground whilst maximizing the sporting interest. Over the next few years they plan to plant about 63 hectares of new native woodland. This area will be deer fenced. Some of the area is to replace conifer plantations which have been felled recently. This may make a negative impact for the next decade but it is designed to have a long term positive impact.

Due to the relatively small area of ground at Achadunan they have to consider their neighbours and how they are treating the deer population. They have three much larger estates as neighbours and are therefore very influenced by their deer management policies.

Achlian (prev. Cladich Estate)

All the land is tenanted, grazing both cattle and sheep. Sufficient deer are maintained to keep the property grazed, but not overgrazed.

Ardchonnell

Livestock grazing is predominant. There is a strong wish to see deer stocks on Ardchonnell recover to levels of some 30 years ago, but management policy on nearby FLS land does not allow numbers to build up.

There are ongoing habitat monitoring surveys on higher ground, and an agri-environmental scheme on the lower hill.

Ardkinglas

The objective of their deer management activities is to maintain a healthy herd consistent with their other activities (forestry, native woodland creation, ancient woodland conservation, sheep farming, tourism, river improvement and fishing). In order to do this, they intend to maintain the number of stags and hinds at approx. existing levels.

Argyll Estates

There are several different land use types within the estate. These include:

- Mixed Conifer / Broadleaf Woodland
- Primarily Commercial Sitka spruce forest, including open ground
- Open Ground - primarily within forest / woodland
- In-hand Open Hill Ground
- Tenanted Grazing Land
- Other Land – e.g. Castle Grounds / Golf Course / Caravan park etc.

There is ongoing commercial forest restructuring, with large areas of clear felling being carried out over the next 10 years, followed by restocking within five years of the areas being clear felled. It is not intended that areas being restocked with commercial Sitka spruce will be deer fenced, which will result in an increased cull to allow young trees to become established.

A significant area of Argyll Estates comprises forest and woodland, representing some 38% of the land area, including associated open ground. Only one area of broadleaf woodland, amounting to 31 hectares, is secured by a deer proof ring fence.

Auchreoch

Within this holding there are 40 hectares of mature commercial forestry and 100 hectares of ancient Caledonian Pine forest. Focus has been to limit the deer numbers in the Caledonian forest to help with regeneration. Priority is during snow lying periods when larger numbers come to shelter with the Caledonian forest.

Balliemanoch

Balliemanoch Farm is primarily interested in livestock production, carrying mainly sheep and a few cattle. Deer are managed (which includes feeding), and there is a regular cull of old hinds and weak calves.

Ben Lui

Their objectives are to optimise the ecological condition of the land's biodiversity interests, especially its nationally and internationally important upland habitats. Some of these habitats are grazing dependent and some are highly sensitive to grazing and trampling. They therefore want to maintain herbivore grazing pressure within a density that balances the grazing needs and sensitivities of these habitats over time whilst ensuring that deer are managed in such a way as to contribute to the wider objectives of the Deer Management Group.

Under the deer management agreement between NatureScot and Glenfalloch, all deer control operations on Ben Lui land must be carried out under the direct supervision of Glenfalloch stalker.

Blarghour

Blarghour is focused on the farming of sheep and cattle, and there are no sporting aims as such. Deer are managed in line with national and ITDMG guidelines, taking biodiversity and a healthy ecology on the hill into account, along with consideration for neighbours.

Brackley

Their objectives are to maintain the current livestock farming enterprise with appropriate stocking densities of sheep and cattle, and to achieve a species-rich environment and other environmental benefits. Objectives for deer are to cull ageing stags and hinds in poor condition, and calves which appear to be under-nourished. There are a number of fenced regeneration areas and small woodlands.

Cononish

Their objective is to retain a fit and healthy deer herd and to shoot occasionally for home consumption.

Dunderave

The sporting rights are divided between Tilhill, Argyll Estates and Ardkinglas.

Garabal

This landholding was recently taken over by new owners. Information on their objectives will be added soon.

Glenfalloch

Their primary objective is to manage the red deer herd to achieve a healthy herd at a level consistent with retaining and enhancing bio-diversity. Where possible they aim to increase the quality of the stags and hinds whilst keeping a close watch on overall numbers.

In order to achieve this they monitor numbers and impacts on the open hill habitat. They have established a number of enclosures (working in conjunction with NatureScot, FLS and the LLTNPA) for regeneration/re-establishment of native broadleaf woodland. Their preference is always to cull weaker beasts/poorer head stags where possible, although overall cull numbers are more important (especially with hinds). They are part of the East Loch Lomond Woodlands Research Project investigating the management of woodlands at a landscape scale.

They do not have any commercial forestry, although a woodland management scoping plan has been prepared which does include some elements of commercial woodland. Their overall cull is driven by observations on grazing impacts on the non woodland habitats and in order to meet the overall targets agreed by the DMG. The methodology for observations was initially established with advice from NatureScot. Having removed sheep from a large part of the hill in 2007, they are already seeing signs of improvement to the vegetation cover (heather cover in particular is significantly increased) and they will continue to take account of changes to the habitat when setting their cull numbers.

Forestry and Land Scotland

The main objective of deer management within deer units Dalmally South/Ardconnel/Cobbler is to regulate deer impacts at a level compatible with their land management objectives. Their main aim will be to prevent unacceptable damage to productive tree crops and to protect, maintain or enhance other habitats. This will be done in a professional and humane way, ensuring the welfare of the remaining deer populations within the forest boundaries. Venison income will be optimised and opportunities to offer accompanied stalking and deer management permissions will be taken, but only where these do not compromise the over-riding issue of impact limitation.

Glencroe Farm

The farm is generally too popular with walkers to be stalked, and no deer are culled. Deer management is therefore a minor consideration, and there are no particular issues with them. The FLS cull on neighbouring ground tends to control numbers in the general area.

Inveruglas

Sheep farming is the priority objective on Inveruglas, with deer numbers dictated primarily by activity on neighbouring units. Hind numbers are comparatively low, and only 1-2 stags are taken each year for home consumption. The upper ground on Ben Vorlich is an SSSI and is monitored by NatureScot. Hinds are rarely culled.

Keppochan

The estate's objectives are to:

- Reduce the deer count but not eliminate deer;
- Improve grazing for sheep and cattle by reducing bracken, reducing rushes, draining excessively wet areas;
- Continue black game programme;

- Enhance riparian zones;
- Encourage native woodland (oak mostly) regeneration.

Scottish Woodlands

On Scottish Woodlands managed and owned properties they proactively manage deer in order to protect the establishment of growing timber crops and to maintain biodiversity through control of browsing. They do this by a combination of leased stalking, professional stalking contractors, ongoing monitoring of deer numbers and damage as well as improving forest design to allow for more active management e.g. deer lawns.

Strathfillan/Acharn

Strathfillan Woodland is under woodland management. 50% of the land area is mature commercial forestry. Deer management objectives are to: monitor deer numbers through counts and recruitment numbers, carry out HIAs and manage cull under best practice guidelines.

Strone

Strone Estate comprises of 7500 acres of largely open hill and high ground. They have two areas of natural regeneration and some small plantations of commercial forestry as well as areas of planted native trees. They aim to plant three more areas of native trees on the fringes of the high ground. They maintain a flock of black face sheep and a herd of cattle. Stock figures are higher on one third of the estate than on the rest, on which they have a higher proportion of their deer.

They aim to maintain a healthy population of deer whilst improving biodiversity on the estate. They intend to cull those poorer beasts from the hill, concentrating on the improvement of the herd, however, the cull figure is always a priority. Strone has a good population of deer and they have increased cull figures over the last three years to aid the improvement of biodiversity.

All of the stalking on the ground is undertaken by the owner occupier, who acts as the stalker. All the stalking is let (stags and hinds) and all guests are accompanied onto the hill.

Counting of the population is undertaken in the spring along with the rest of the ITDMG, and they also do a summer count in August. Cull figures are largely influenced by the results of the counts and observation throughout the year.

Stuckendroin

Their objectives are to gradually build up the deer and sheep densities. The estate was purchased as an investment by a Danish owner. There are virtually no sheep at present, and deer numbers have been very low in recent years due to policies on neighbouring estates. This is starting to change now.

Tilhill Forestry (Cladich Forest, Three Bridges, Kinachreachan, Dalmally, Dunderave, Glenshira, Ewich)

To keep deer numbers at a level whereby they are able to achieve the objectives set out in their forest plan.

The stalking is let on Cladich Forests, Glenshira Forest, Dunderave Forest, Kinachreachan Forest and Dalmally Forest. All forests are in a felling and restocking phase of their long term

sustainable management, with the sporting tenants being directed that the principle objective of the deer cull carried out is to be focused on crop protection rather than sporting. Three Bridges Forest is slightly different in as much as Argyll Estates have a sporting lease for 99 years, but with the forest owner having concurrent rights. Three bridges is also in a felling, restocking some new woodland creation phase of its long term sustainable management where crop protection, rather than sporting, is the forest owners priority objective for the deer cull carried out.

5. DEER MANAGEMENT STATISTICS

Deer count statistics are available back as far as 2002, and again in 2006, both with input from the Deer Commission for Scotland. Due to 30% of ITDMG area being woodland, counts are only done on open range. This provides an extra challenge for the Group. ITDMG are considering investigations into woodland counts, including a potential training day on dung counts.

Consistent cull data has been collated since 2003-4, although there are some omissions in some years. FLS have provided information on additional blocks since 2007, and Cononish, Keppochan and Stuckendroin started reporting to the Group in 2008.

The data on deer counts and culls supplied by Members to ITDMG is based on their overall land holdings.

Members will agree on the deer management records that will be kept by all Members for sharing with the Group, including count and cull data, and the format in which these sets of data will be presented.

Culling Operations

All ITDMG members agree to make sufficient resources available to carry out the culling programme outlined in this plan.

It is anticipated that most properties involved should be able to achieve this. However, for reasons of personnel available or general estate geography, help may be required in certain areas.

All members are asked to provide the Group with an up to date assessment of their current capacity, and whether they may need some assistance with agreed culling activities.

Over and above these considerations, it is anticipated that a collaborative approach may be required to achieving an appropriate cull in some remote locations. In such a situation, a Group member will be the appointed co-ordinator for that process.

All culling operations will be conducted in a low-key manner, and priority always given to spreading activity throughout the normal seasons using existing resources.

Cull Information Required

- All cull information to be provided to ITDMG as per estate/holding.
- Information will be provided twice yearly, in March and October.

- All information to be forwarded to ITDMG at least one week before Spring and Autumn meetings.
- In March, cull return sheets will be issued to group members, requesting hind/calf cull figures from the previous season and stag cull targets for the coming season. In October, cull return sheets will be issued requesting stag cull figures from the previous season and the hind/calf cull targets for the coming season.
- ITDMG will devote resources to analysing this information for the group twice yearly.
- Deer weights should be those weighed in to larder, and be recorded in kg.
- Stag hill weights should not be forwarded to DMG. Any deer or calves not returned to larders due to poor condition should be recorded as such.
- Numbers of roe deer should be appended to main cull information, and any information relating to other species, especially suspect Sika animals.
- All deer related traffic incidents should now be reported through cull returns.
- ITDMG members are encouraged to submit their stag information to the ADMG/Shooting Times/Knight Frank Stag Season Review. Finlay.clark@bidwells.co.uk

Count Operations

A Group count will be carried out in Spring each year, on a date set at the Autumn group meeting, weather permitting. Each Group member should endeavour to arrange for a count to take place on the arranged date, and count figures should be forwarded to the co-ordinator on the day of the count.

6. BIODIVERSITY & NATURAL HERITAGE INTERESTS

Introduction

The Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG area is moderately heavily designated, containing a number of high profile sites of national importance. In total, these sites extend to 4952 ha or 8.2% of the group area. Much of this area is included in the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA for golden eagles which covers 21,770 ha of the Group. The SPA can affect important deer management decisions, particularly with regards to forestry and planting schemes. All sites except one are in favourable or recovering condition.

Designated upland sites within the group include three large or medium sized sites which extend to over 4600 ha, 7.6% of the total ITDMG area. This is significantly less than many DMGs of a similar size. They all carry the SSSI designation, and Ben Lui also carries an SAC designation as well. In addition to these, the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA right at the heart of the DMG overlaps with a number of other sites.

There are four sites classified for their woodland interest or woodland flora in the ITDMG area; three broadleaved woodlands (219 ha) and one native pinewood (129 ha). There is also a National Scenic Area, several areas of ancient woodlands and a Wild Land Area. In addition, part of the DMG lies within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park area.

The DMG is notable for the amount of ancient and ancient semi-natural woodland within the Group area, some 3586 ha in total, or 5.9% of the total area. Some of this area will be included in the designated sites, above, but this still represents a very significant resource.

A full account of these sites and their current status is given in Appendix 3: Designated Sites in the ITDMG Area.

Different Designations and their Classifications

Within the ITDMG area there are five different types of designation:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

National Scenic Areas (NSA)

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

National Park

(Ben Lui National Nature Reserve was declassified in 2016)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) represent the best of Scotland's natural heritage. They are 'special' for their plants, animals or habitats, their rocks or landforms, or a combination of such natural features. Together, they form a network of the best examples of natural features throughout Scotland, and support a wider network across Great Britain and the European Union.

Scottish Natural Heritage chooses sites after detailed survey and evaluation against published scientific criteria. SSSIs can include freshwater, and sea water down to the mean low water mark of spring tides, as well as land. At 31 March 2008, there were 1,456 SSSIs, covering a total area of 1,036,000 hectares or 12.9% of Scotland.

NatureScot designates SSSIs to protect the best of our natural heritage by making sure that decision-makers, managers of land and their advisors, as well as the planning authorities and other public bodies, are aware of them when considering changes in land-use or other activities which might affect them.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 provides the legislative framework around which all SSSI sites are administered.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are areas designated under the European Directive commonly known as the 'Habitats' Directive. Together with Special Protection Areas, which are designated under the Wild Birds Directive for wild birds and their habitats, SACs form the Natura 2000 network of sites. Most SACs on land or freshwater in Scotland are also underpinned by notification as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The additional SAC designation is recognition that some or all of the wildlife and habitats are particularly valued in a European context.

National Scenic areas (NSA)

National Scenic Areas are Scotland's only national landscape designation. They are those areas of land considered of national significance on the basis of their outstanding scenic interest which must be conserved as part of the country's natural heritage. They have been selected for their characteristic features of scenery comprising a mixture of richly diverse landscapes including prominent landforms, coastline, sea and freshwater lochs, rivers, woodlands and

moorlands.

There are currently 40 NSAs in Scotland, covering a total land area of 1,020,500 ha and a marine area of 357,900 ha.

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive, which came into force in April 1979. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex I of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory species.

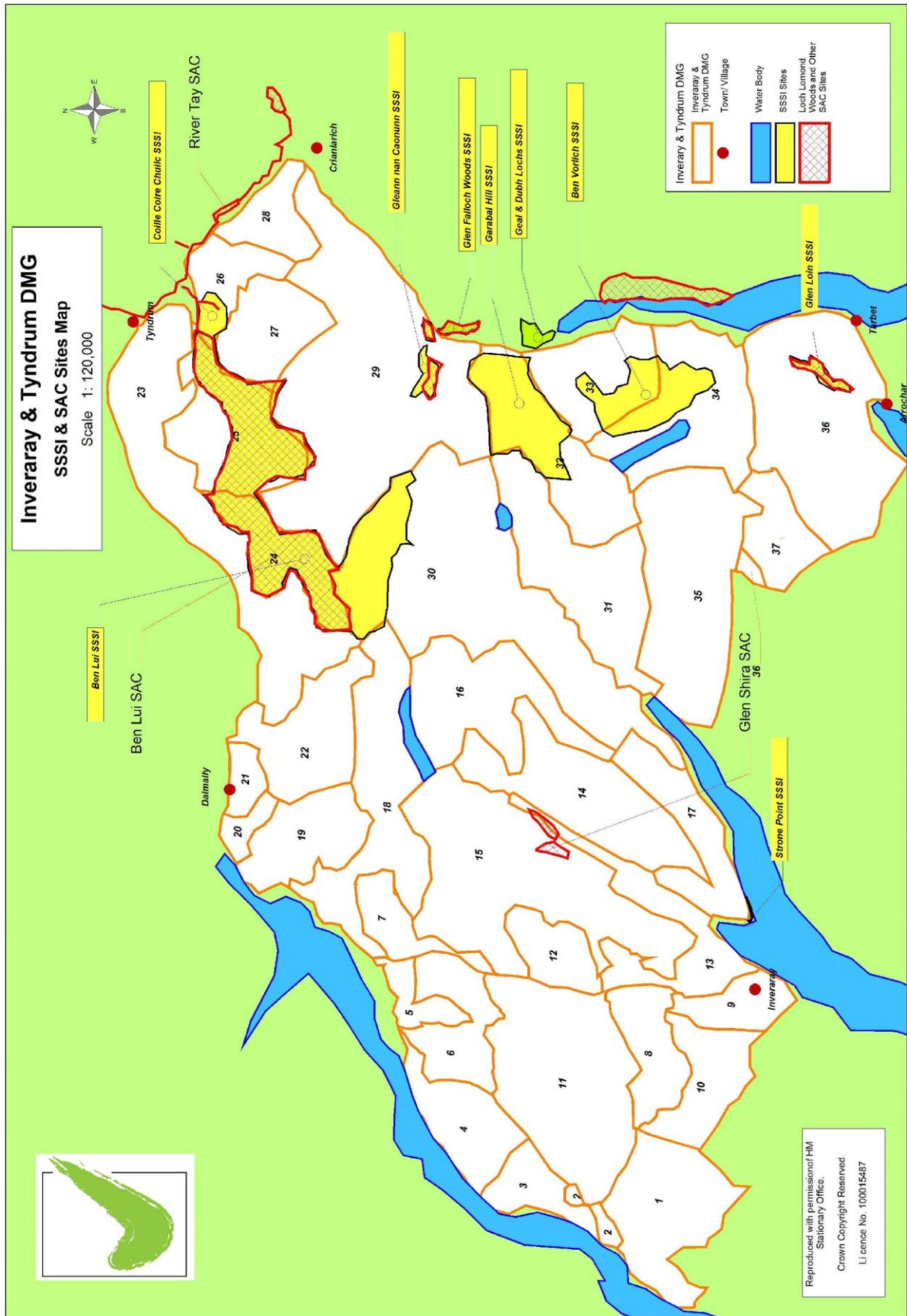
In the UK, the first SPAs were identified and classified in the early to mid 1980s. Classification has since progressed and a regularly updated UK SPA Summary Table provides an overview of both the number of classified SPAs and those approved by Government that are currently in the process of being classified (these are known as potential SPAs, or pSPAs).

National Park

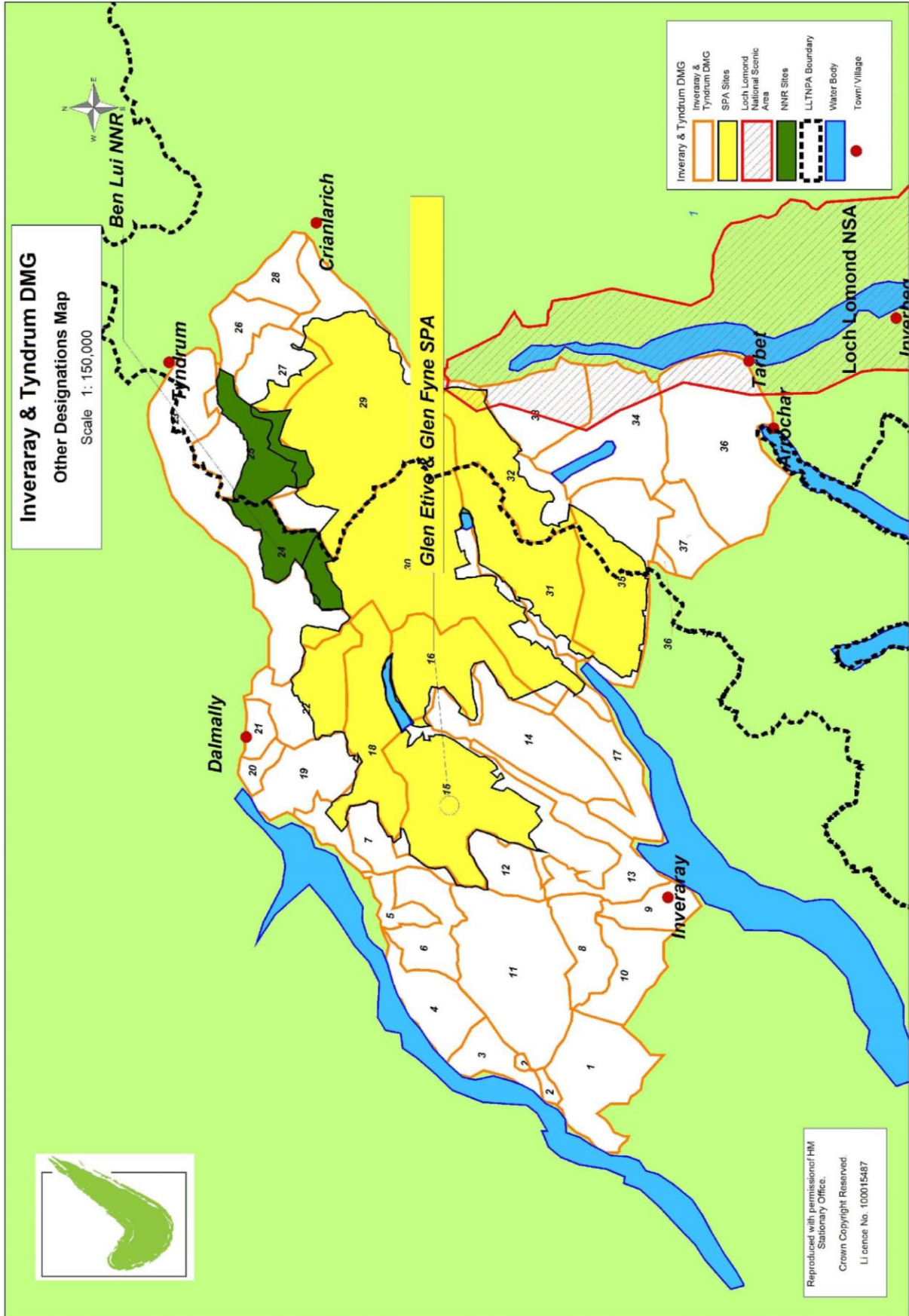
Scotland's national parks are areas of the very highest value for their landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage. They provide positive management and additional resources to safeguard and enhance these areas special qualities for the long term. They also provide opportunities for the public to enjoy the special natural and cultural heritage. There are two national parks in Scotland - Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, established in 2002 and covering 186,500 ha, and the Cairngorms, which covers 452,800 ha and was established in 2003.

Non-designated sites of note

These include nationally important sites which do not have statutory designations, including Wild Land Areas and Ancient Woodlands.



Map 3: ITDMG SSSI & SAC Sites Map



Map 4: ITDMG Other Designations Map (note: NNR was declassified in 2016)

7. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FEATURES

The ITDMG area has many historic and cultural features. Deer are not considered to be a threat to these features since individual group members are aware of their importance and ensure land management activities do not negatively impact upon such features.

With regards to historic features, there are many listed buildings in the group area, ranging from grand houses to small ruins, bridges, monuments, power stations and school houses. Scheduled monuments include nationally important archaeological sites and monuments such as a castle, lead mine, medieval cross and crofts. In addition there are hundreds of other monuments such as crannogs, cairns, cup marked stones and more. There is also a designated designed landscape.

Culturally, the group contains several champion trees, along with museum collections of armoury, tapestries, porcelain and costumes.

Built heritage sites

These include:

1. Listed Buildings
2. Scheduled Ancient Monuments
3. Gardens & Designed Landscapes
4. Sites recorded on local authority sites and monuments registers
5. Locally Important sites, groundworks, structures, ruins, field patterns etc.

Cultural (non-built) heritage sites

These include:

1. Iconic Trees
2. Sites associated with legends, folk stories and traditions
3. Museum collections etc.

A full account of the features within the DMG is given in Appendix 4: Historic & Cultural Features in the ITDMG Area.

PART TWO - MANAGEMENT POLICIES

8. DEER

Red Deer Population

The Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG traditionally count every spring, with a good participation rate in most years. Weather conditions in recent years have made spring counts more difficult. As a result, an additional deer count was done in October 2020.

An open range helicopter deer count funded by NatureScot was undertaken in February 2017. This count covered a much larger area than the annual foot counts, but the results show a similar deer density to the foot counts.

The following table summarizes the deer population data for the ITDMG area from 2002:

Year	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Deer	Area Counted (ha)	Deer per 100 ha counted
2022	693	1643	748	3084	46,895	6.58
2021	Incomplete count due to weather conditions					
Oct 2020	648	1316	599	2563	41,084	6.24
2020	Incomplete count due to weather conditions					
2019	Incomplete count due to weather conditions					
2018	619	1500	640	2759	33,935	8.13
2017	754	2173	956	3883	53,233	7.29
2016**	591	1407	582	2580	38,143	6.76
2015**	535	1111	363	2009	34,421	5.84
2014**	872	1572	602	3046	38,118	7.99
2013**	869	1862	822	3553	31,564	11.26
2012	478	1344	225*	2047	24,142	8.48
2011	264	1331	84*	1679	19,070	8.80
2009	470	1573	0*	2043	23,250	8.79
2008	504	1851	11*	2375	28,779	8.25
2007	360	1915	172*	2447	32,696	7.48
2006	544	1789	910	3243	33,926	9.56
2002	711	1844	577	3132	36,926	8.48

*Calves have not been consistently distinguished in counts, 2007- 12.

** Only some estates distinguished hinds/ calves in these counts, and may well have included some young stags within an Unclassified total as well. Therefore, 15% of the total unclassified total was included with the numbers of stags (this might be an over-estimate) and the remaining total was split up as per the hind:calf ratio on those estates that were able to distinguish hinds & calves separately.

A very significant proportion of the DMG area is afforested and cannot be included on count days. It is therefore supposed that a considerable proportion of the deer population is not counted. The deer densities listed are remarkably consistent over the period of time covered,

and are relatively low compared to DMGs to the east. The higher 2013 density would suggest that a number of higher density areas within the DMG were not counted in the past. Such a density is relatively not that high, although deer do share the range with a considerable sheep stock in many areas, and the higher deer densities are constrained to only part of the overall DMG area. The DMG notes the importance of gathering Herbivore Impact information to assist with setting cull targets and delivering a sustainable deer population.

In 2016, NatureScot produced a 'Deer Management in Scotland' report which incorrectly stated that density in ITDMG had increased substantially and that present density was estimated at between 12.7 to 16 deer/km². Our foot count figures showed densities of less than 8 deer/km² for the three preceding years. ITDMG wrote to NatureScot and although the scientific paper by James Hutton Institute which their report had referenced was later corrected, they did not correct their report. They did acknowledge that they had incorrectly used the ITDMG foot count data from 2013 when they should have only used official NatureScot counts.

In 2019, NatureScot published a report, 'Assessing Progress in Deer Management', which stated that ITDMG deer population had increased by 38% between 2000 and 2019. This increase is not shown in the group's foot count figures for this period. The report referenced work by JHI which has overestimated the area counted in the 2002 official NatureScot count and incorrectly included the ITDMG 2013 foot count again, producing a totally inaccurate result. At a time of significant pressure to keep deer populations under control, it is potentially very damaging to falsely identify in a national report that a deer group has had a large increase in its deer population. Furthermore, the group has worked closely for many years with the local NatureScot Wildlife Management Officer on population modelling and cull targets to ensure that deer populations are kept under control. ITDMG reported these concerns to NatureScot in late 2019 and received a response in July 2020 acknowledging the incorrect use of ITDMG foot count data and recognizing that the wording in both the 2016 and 2019 reports may have provided unnecessary negative focus on the group that could detract from the positive approach that ITDMG have for managing deer.

Red Deer Cull Data

The following table outlines the ITDMG cull since the 2003-4 season.

Year	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Deer Cull
2021-22	551	515	277	1343*
2020-21	508	564	332	1404
2019-20	547	646	335	1528
2018-19	536	655	294	1485
2017-18	358	682	353	1393
2016-17	363	526	315	1204
2015-16	363	454	235	1052
2014-15	387	507	294	1188
2013-14	434	532	350	1316
2012-13	457	463	291	1211
2011-12	410	420	215	1045
2010-11	340	507	275	1122
2009-10	399	495	247	1141
2008-9	404	477	298	1179

2007-8	392	536	295	1223
2006-7	451	559	277	1287
2005-6	305	391	199	895
2004-5	276	666 (inc calves)		942
2003-4	297	715 (inc calves)		1012

* Some culls not yet reported for 2021-22.

The increase in numbers between 2005-6 and 2006-7 probably reflects the group acquiring a number of new members around this time, notably FE.

Code of Practice on Deer Management

ITDMG should attempt at all times to manage deer in accordance with the terms of the code of practice on deer management. www.nature.scot/code-practice-deer-management

Deer Management Matters

There is a clear division between open range and woodland management objectives within the DMG area, although it appears that all but a few members can work with the present situation. This is partly because the majority of group members give greater priority to livestock than deer.

Looking forwards, plans to restructure a number of woodland areas will increase the pressure on deer stocks. This is especially the case with the former FLS Glen Shira block on Argyll Estates, where it is planned to restock over 500 ha within the next 10 years without the use of deer fencing. This block lies immediately adjacent to the areas of greatest deer density within the DMG, and the proposals here might realistically be expected to reduce those densities by 5-10 animals per 100 ha, removing possibly 500 animals from the hill population. This might be the equivalent of 30-40 less sporting stags annually, lost to Argyll Estates and immediate neighbours.

The full consequences of this can only be ascertained as restocking operations begin, but it is certain that sporting expectations in the centre of the DMG will have to be reduced, or managed to utilize a different type of guest taking stags in woodland surroundings. To this end, it is proposed that additional reporting units be devised for Argyll estates, so that it is more obvious where deer culls are taking place. It may well be appropriate for dung counting to take place within this area. This is certainly a very significant proposal right at the heart of the DMG and is likely to dominate Group discussions for some years.

Deer populations west of the A819 are low, seemingly because of the dominance of commercial forestry objectives to the SW of the group on that side, and the number of scattered private forestry plantations within the northern part of that section of the Group. However, it does appear that other members in that part of the group have adjusted their expectations to suit. It is unlikely that properties on this side of the group could operate a red deer sporting enterprise along the lines of those properties to the east, and will have to operate opportunistically with the population that currently exists. It is not just FLS culls which moderate the population there, but the presence and locations of private woodland interests as well.

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on deer management in several ways:

- Some staff were furloughed for several months in forestry holdings in 2020 & 2021.
- Several members have seen large increases in the number of people accessing their land for leisure, with some causing problems due to discarded waste and inconsiderate

parking. Deer may have been disturbed more due to higher numbers of walkers.

- Venison dealers lost most of their demand due to restaurants and the food service sector being closed and were operating at reduced capacity due to safety measures so the price being paid for carcasses fell to only £1 per kg, less than half what it was before the pandemic. In 2022, prices have still not returned to pre-covid levels.
- Some members had guests cancel stalking due to movement restrictions, particularly for overseas clients.

Winter Mortality

Members will monitor and report levels of winter mortality to the Group, or any significant health issues encountered. It is considered that mortality within the group is approximately 2% for adults and 6% for calves in their first year. The winters of 2013-14 and 2018-19 saw significant mortality due to unusually high rainfall. Mortality is also expected to be higher for 2020-21 due to a cold winter and spring.

Recruitment Rates

The 2017-8 culls suggest 60% of hinds in woodlands had calves, and 52% of hinds culled on the hill had calves. (This assumes hind: calf combinations are taken). Cull records in previous years suggest a calf: hind ratio of 0.50-0.66, and the February 2017 deer count suggest a ratio of 0.44. This is higher than some adjacent DMG areas and suggests that possibly a high proportion of deer are getting access to shelter and/ or that range conditions are particularly good. It certainly does not suggest a deer population that is over-grazing the range available.

There is a lot of variation in these figures. It is therefore recommended that recruitment counts are carried out in late April/ early May each year, after any natural mortality has taken place. Such counts simply involve stalkers counting the numbers of calves and hinds in groups that they see over a two week period and keeping a note of these numbers. There is no need to co-ordinate with neighbours, and no need to go out especially to do this. An accurate figure for recruitment is fundamental to any population model going forwards. Recruitment counting should be undertaken on individual landholdings when the weather permits.

Other Deer Species

Small numbers of roe deer are culled by Group members, some of whom are keen to encourage their numbers and use them for sporting purposes. They are, however, very much secondary to red deer in terms of both economic significance and impacts within the group area. 152 roe deer were reported culled within ITDMG in 2020/21, including FLS culls.

About half of group members reported seeing Sika deer on their properties, with virtually everyone saying that they did not wish to encourage this species. 29 animals were culled in 2020/21, mostly on Argyll Estates. At present, all estates encourage the policy of shooting all Sika deer on sight, when in season.

Any non-native invasive species within the group should be managed according to current national policy.

Out of Season NatureScot Authorisation

Members will be encouraged to share information within the Group on any out of season and night shooting authorisations from Nature Scot. The DMG see this open and transparent

discussion as critical to ensure a long-term approach to deer management can be taken.

Deer Related Traffic Incidents

It is agreed by the Members that they will keep records of any collisions between deer and vehicles in their area together with relevant information (e.g. location, species of deer, fate of deer, damage to vehicle, human injuries), while also recording dead deer in their annual cull returns and where appropriate, larder sheets. Members may also wish to contribute to the national project collating RTA reports which can be accessed at <http://www.deercollisions.co.uk> Members recognise that deer related traffic accidents are receiving more attention nationally and that there may be places in the Group area where deer can be a particular hazard. Group members supply NatureScot with details of deer related traffic incidents through their cull returns.

The group use data on reported Deer Vehicle Collisions (DVCs) to map recent incidents within the group area so that any hotspots can be identified (data available from <https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/natural-spaces/index.jsp>). The findings are discussed at group meetings and necessary mitigating actions decided upon.

Supplementary Feeding

An increasing number of estates within the group are feeding deer during the winter or providing supplementary mineral blocks/licks to aid the deer during the winter months.

Deer Fences

There are very few deer-proof fences present within the DMG area, with original fences having fallen in to disrepair in many areas. Virtually all the significant woodland areas across the DMG area are accessible to deer, and in some cases, to sheep as well.

It must therefore be assumed that deer have access to the greater part of the woodland area. While woodland resident animals will be present throughout, many deer culled in the woodlands will be hill animals. The woodland cull figures tend to bear this out.

The only secure deer fences tend to be those around smaller woodland plantings, not mapped at a DMG scale.

Group members will take account of the Joint Agency Fencing guidelines where fences are required in the future.

Venison Marketing

Larder provision within the group is generally regarded as being fairly basic, with only a very few estates having SQWV status. Some estates believe that SQWV status is not financially rewarding enough, particularly for small estates, compared to the annual cost of being part of the scheme.

Group members share a commitment to high standards beyond the larder door, right through to the sale of the carcass or else its use locally. As a matter of general principle, Members also support the local consumption of locally shot, high quality venison.

A wide range of game dealers and processors are used by group members, with no one organization having a dominant role.

9. Habitats

a) Habitat Impact Assessments (HIA)

i) Implementation and monitoring

It is recognized throughout the group that HIA fulfills part of the obligation to manage deer in the public interest. It is also important to acknowledge that deer are not the only herbivore within the group, and that the impacts from domesticated and other wild herbivores should also be considered when monitoring the condition of habitats.

A group monitoring programme was carried out between 2018 and 2021, involving 14 landholdings: Achadunan, Achlian, Ardchonnell, Ardkinglas, Argyll Estates, Balliemeanoch, Blarghour, Brackley, Cononish, Dunderave, Inveruglas, Keppochan, Strone and Stuckendroin. The aim of the programme was to set up plots and train representatives from the landholdings so that they could continue their own monitoring in the future. ITDMG contracted an independent consultant to set up and assess 300 individual plots (200 dwarf shrub heath, 100 blanket bog), and to train landowners/representatives from the holdings involved in HIA methods. The holdings continued with HIA every year or two, recording their data and sharing this with the group. The consultant then returned in 2021 to reassess 100 of the original 300 plots to check consistency of ongoing monitoring. We are grateful to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority for providing funding for 50% of the cost of the group HIA programme. We are also grateful to NatureScot for granting £1800 towards group HIA training and support.

Auchreoch, Glenfalloch, Strathfillan, Strone and Ben Lui carry out their own HIA monitoring.

The forestry members of ITDMG - FLS, Tilhill and Scottish Woodlands - carry out their own damage assessments to monitor deer impacts on trees.

Several HIA training days have been held over the past few years for ITDMG members. One was run by NatureScot in June 2017. Another was held in April 2019 by the contractor who set up the group HIA project.

Woodland HIA training methods are being developed to allow land managers to monitor their own woodland impacts. The group will help members to implement these once available.

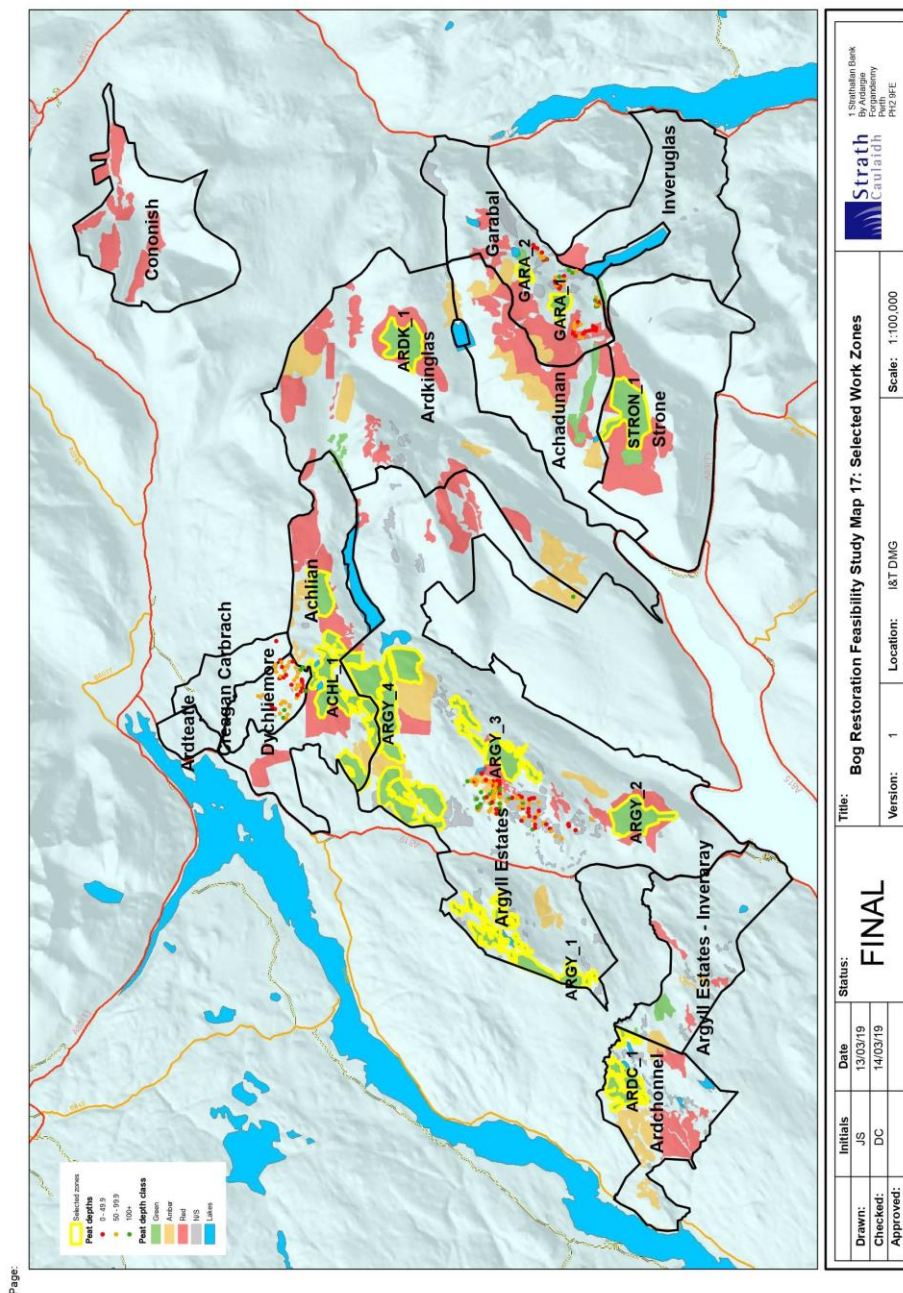
ii) Results

The group is still in the early stages of implementing HIA and setting a baseline from which to monitor trends. The assessments carried out within the group since 2018 show a range of impacts both within and across landholdings, from low to high impacts. Deer managers will use these results to inform their cull planning, depending on their management objectives. The HIA results are also being used in livestock planning in some areas of the group, particularly around designated sites.

b) Peatland Restoration

In 2018-19, a peatland restoration feasibility study was carried out across nine landholdings within the group. It was funded by Peatland Action and undertaken by Strath Caulaidh. The final report identified around 200 ha of eroded peatland and 800 ha of drained peatland that could potentially be restored (see map below).

Members have not yet taken forward the restoration proposals. In some cases, the land is tenanted and landlords do not want to affect the farmers. Some members are reticent to apply for Peatland Action funding due to the very short timescales involved - applying for funding and having to complete work within one financial year. ITDMG have written to the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform and the Scottish Government's peatland group to suggest that all Peatland Action projects be given multi-year funding to allow longer timescales for work to be undertaken.



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10. SHEEP & CATTLE

Livestock are very important within the DMG area, with only one estate not having an interest in keeping sheep. While there has been a fall in sheep numbers in recent years, this reduction has not been at the levels experienced in some other areas.

Any significant changes in members' sheep numbers or policy should be communicated to the DMG on an annual basis.

The following table summarizes the approx numbers of sheep present in each of the sub-areas, in both 2008 and 2013.

Sheep Numbers within the ITDMG Area

<i>Breeding ewes in 2008</i>	<i>Breeding ewes in 2013</i>	<i>Change in numbers</i>
19,250	14,815	-4435

The above figures suggest a fall in sheep numbers of 22% in the ITDMG area.

Sheep numbers may change significantly due to CAP reform. The changes being introduced with the new Basic Payment Scheme may well have other consequences for group members in future.

There are approx 250 hill cows plus followers grazed within the DMG boundaries as well.

It is recognized that by implementing herbivore impact assessment across the DMG we will be gathering a complete picture of herbivore impacts. By having accurate information on livestock numbers and distribution this will allow the group to partly distinguish between livestock and deer impacts and therefore set appropriate cull targets.

11. FORESTRY

As previously noted, forestry is a major land use within the Group area, covering up to one third of ITDMG, and providing shelter and habitat for deer, but also creating vulnerable restock crops or regeneration which can require rigorous deer control.

Much of the woodland area within the group is accessible to deer, and woodland culling does reduce deer densities on adjacent ground. There is a particularly intimate mixture of woodland and open hill ground within the ITDMG area, and this will be especially the case once the Glen Shira woodland block is restructured. Other large areas of commercial woodland will also need to be felled over the coming years. This is likely to create a significant reduction in hill deer densities in the centre of the Group area, and sporting aspirations will require to be adjusted to allow for this. Some owners have recently planted large areas of native trees, which have had to be deer fenced.

There are a number of designated woodland sites within the Group area, mainly in unfavourable condition, as well as a very extensive cover of ancient and ancient semi-natural woodlands. Group members should be aware of the current condition of any such woodlands on their property and how they might best be improved.

It should be regarded that while there will be different hill and woodland populations of deer within the group, that there will be a considerable overlap, and these different populations should not be regarded separately. Many hill deer will use the woodland area for at least part of the year, and the deer cull figures from the various forested areas do suggest at least some hill animals are being culled there.

The woodland area creates a significant problem for counting deer, and many are certain to be unaccounted for. For this reason, a case can be made for a separate late summer count, to record animals in their settled locations. Such a count will still not pick up resident woodland deer.

12. COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

The ITDMG is committed to the transparent communication of all relevant information to its members, to government agencies and to the public more widely, with the caveat that some sensitive data will be distributed to group members only.

The primary source of information about the Group is the ITDMG website. This includes the deer management plan and associated maps, a constitution, and minutes of group meetings. The link for this information is:

<https://inverarayandyndrumdmg.deer-management.co.uk/>

All enquiries to the Group should be made through the Group Secretary via email, or if necessary, via phone to the Group Chairman or vice Chairman. Their contact details are:

Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Group

Group Secretary

Mrs Helen MacIntyre
97 Lord Lyell Drive
Kirriemuir
Angus
DD8 4LF
Mobile: 07915 610086
helentmacintyre@gmail.com

Chairman

Mr Falcon Frost
Glenfalloch
Tel: 07966 768477
falconfrost@gmail.com

Vice Chairman

Mr David Lowes
Managing Partner
Glenfalloch Lodge

Ardlui
G83 7DZ
Tel: 07785 702957
david@dlowes.com

The contact details for individual properties will not be available as a matter of course through the Deer Group or website, although the Secretary can put you in touch with the relevant people if appropriate to do so. No cull information on individual properties will be made available outwith the membership of the Group.

Every effort will be made to deal with non-emergency issues within 10 days. More pressing issues will be dealt with as appropriate. In the first instance contact should be made with the Secretary, Chairman or vice-Chairman. For more long established or strategic issues, it may be sufficient for the issue to be brought up at a deer management group meeting. These take place at six monthly intervals.

The spring meeting will be an open meeting which anyone is entitled to attend. Items for inclusion on the Agenda for such meetings must be submitted to the Group Chairman 28 days in advance of the meeting. Other matters may be taken up under "Any Other Competent Business", at the Chairman's discretion.

All local Community Councils and other relevant interests will be made aware of meetings in advance and invited to contribute to the agenda for these.

Local input on the continuing evolution of the group Deer Management Plan is welcomed and encouraged. Email contacts for local community councils are included in Appendix 2. These details are not being made public through the website but are available on request to Group members and community interests as required.

Any queries about the running of the DMG can be addressed to Nature Scot (previously Scottish Natural Heritage), at any of the contact points listed here below:

Nature Scot Contact

Jimmy Irvine
NatureScot
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness
IV3 8NW
01463 725281
07990 561960
James.Irvine@nature.scot
For more general deer enquiries: wildlifeops@nature.scot

ITDMG will seek to respond to any requests from media sources or the local public for information, and individual members may arrange, from time to time, appropriate open days and information events if these are requested or deemed to be useful.

ITDMG welcomes comment on all matters either directly or indirectly associated with deer management within the Inveraray & Tyndrum area.

13. TRAINING POLICY

ITDMG encourage and facilitate the attainment of all qualifications and training necessary for the delivery of effective deer management within their area of operation, and support continuing professional development through the adoption of Best Practice Guidance and other relevant courses.

The recognized and recommended industry standard for culling deer is that all those personnel involved in deer management should attain level of Deer Management Qualification (DMQ) Level 1 or equivalent. As at March 2015, all of the personnel involved in deer management in the ITDMG area have obtained this qualification.

The DMQ Level 2 qualification is increasingly held as the de facto industry standard for professional stalkers, which requires the identification, stalking, dispatching and larding of deer under supervision. Some members of ITDMG have all their personnel involved in deer management trained to DMQ Level 2 qualification.

For those expected to larder deer and prepare them for the human food chain, industry requirements are that they have attained Trained Hunter status. This is the equivalent of any DMQ course passed after 2006, or an upgraded version of DMQ1 passed before that time.

All personnel within the area are encouraged to be proficient in First Aid, manual handling, ATV driving and maintenance and other tasks which are central to their job. ITDMG will monitor the level of skills among staff in the DMG area, and undertake to facilitate any such courses or training that may be necessary to put right any deficiencies that are identified. All estates will support their staff in attaining the agreed standards.

Group members are encouraged to bring forward any suggestions for suitable training that might be of relevance to the Group as a whole, or to ask for support in arranging training for their staff. The most relevant training going forwards is likely to be in relation to habitat surveying and monitoring work. While many group members are already capable of doing this, others will require some structured training, and the management of such activity across the area will be an important function for the group to be able to undertake.

PART THREE - OPERATION OF THE GROUP

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

Membership

Membership of the Group is open to and encouraged by all landowners, occupiers or managers with a deer management interest over land within the Inveraray & Tyndrum area. All except one of the 23 land holdings within the ITDMG area are members of the Group.

Some group members rent out land to tenant farmers, who do not participate in the group and not all are required to report their livestock numbers to their landlords. This makes it difficult to monitor the livestock grazing pressure within the Group.

Action Point

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

Executive Committee and Sub-Groups

It was agreed at the 2017 Autumn meeting to set up an executive committee which could meet more frequently than the whole group and help speed up the progress of the group. The committee is made up of the Chair, Secretary and any members of the group who wish to volunteer. There are currently four members.

Sub-groups were also set up to concentrate on certain issues and report back to the executive committee. A sub-group was set up to focus on the Deer Management Plan and Habitat Impact Assessment, and has three volunteer members. A stalkers sub-group was also set up, having two volunteer members. Group members are encouraged to volunteer for either sub-group if they would like to get involved.

Constitution & Finances

Inveraray & Tyndrum Deer Management Group is constituted as a stand-alone DMG, this being adopted in 2013 as part of this deer management plan process. The ITDMG constitution can be found in Appendix 1.

Annual subscriptions paid by group members are based on the stag, hind and calf cull in the preceding year, as reported to the Group Secretary, as per the ADMG subscription rates. The current rates are: £4 per red or sika stag, £2 per red or sika hind or calf, and £1 per head for roe and fallow deer. There is a minimum subscription of £10. Since 2015, all group members now pay double the subscription amount calculated from cull figures, and the additional amount is used to pay for the group secretary, Helen MacIntyre. The subscription was increased by 10% in 2019 to cover printing costs for meetings and build up a small cash reserve.

The finances are managed by Jean Maskell at Ardkinglas Estate Office. Accounts are reported to group members at group meetings and annual budgets are also produced to help plan group finances for the year ahead.

The Group aims to be efficient and effective, while having a relatively informal character and seeking to operate on a consensus basis. Significant changes to its operation and associated arrangements will require the support of a majority of the Members.

The Members of the Group are committed to being represented at the Group's principal meetings and to participating in the related business of the Group.

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

Meetings

The Group holds two meetings a year, one in Spring and one in Autumn. Agendas are circulated in advance for these meetings and minutes produced soon afterwards, with the minutes circulated to all Members in draft. Summary minutes are available through our website: <http://inverarayandyndrumdmg.deer-management.co.uk/>

The main business of the Spring meeting is to undertake a systematic review of the previous season and to indicate sporting/cull requirements for that coming season. This includes:

- 1 An analysis of culls achieved against cull targets set at the previous meeting
- 2 An analysis of remaining deer numbers, based on spring counts and such indirect monitoring as might be carried out by members
- 3 A review of any current problems in the sub-area, based upon evidence gathered from monitoring procedures used by individual members. If necessary, these should be prioritised and a plan of action agreed upon.
- 4 The setting of approx. sporting requirements for the coming season.
- 5 The spring meeting shall also be considered to be the Group AGM, and deal with accounts, office bearers, other necessary Group administration and any other business.

Members will submit their cull data to the Group in advance of the Spring meeting in the format agreed by the Group. This is important so that Group members have time to digest count and cull information in advance of the meeting.

The main business of the Autumn meeting will be the agreeing of cull targets amongst the membership for the coming winter/spring, taking into account the results of any recent information that might be relevant. Specifically, all information relating to habitat condition gathered during the previous season will be reviewed and, if applicable, target culls adjusted accordingly. The Autumn meeting will also provide the traditional opportunity to undertake a review of the past stag season.

Attendance at meetings is generally good from most members.

Representatives from the five Community Councils that lie within ITDMG attended the Autumn 2015 meeting with the aim of encouraging greater community participation and understanding of deer management issues in the area. They are aware that they can attend group meetings and can contact us regarding any deer-related issues in their communities.

Action Points

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.

Dispute Resolution

All Group members are encouraged to deal with disputes in the first instance with those parties concerned, be they other Group members, external parties or Government Agencies. It is important that management considerations are discussed in Group meetings, in the hope that transparency will prevent future disputes.

Failing that, the Chairman of the Group will seek to facilitate an agreement. This may involve the opportunity to air relevant issues at a meeting of the Group. A request to do this should be made in writing at least two weeks prior to any such meeting. Any dispute involving the Group chairman will be considered by the vice-Chair of the Group. All Group members are entitled to receive Group support in dealing with such issues. ITDMG reserves the right to suspend the membership of any member if it is judged that they are working against the interests of the Group as a whole. The views of ADMG and NatureScot will be sought in any instances where disputes prove to be intractable.

Reviewing the Plan

This Plan provides an agreed framework for a co-ordinated and co-operative approach to deer management in the area. The ongoing implementation of the Plan will be decided on an ongoing basis at the Group's Spring and Autumn meetings, with scope for the Membership to adjust and adapt the Plan to meet changing circumstances. This Plan, with its attendant maps and databases will be circulated along with the Agenda to all group members prior to meetings, any changes actioned, and the revised plan included with the minutes of that meeting, or at a suitable time thereafter. The Members intend to update the plan as often as is necessary and on an ongoing basis.

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

The code has been endorsed in both this plan and in the constitution of the Group. The terms of the Code will be delivered through implementation of this plan, and the Code will guide all actions taken by the group and by individual members.

Action Point

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

ADMG Principles of Collaboration

The ADMG principles of collaboration are accepted and endorsed by the Group and by individual members, namely:

- We acknowledge what we have in common, namely a shared commitment to a sustainable and economically viable Scottish countryside.
- We make a commitment to work together to achieve that.
- We accept that we have a diversity of management objectives and respect each other's objectives.
- We undertake to communicate openly with all relevant parties.
- We commit to negotiate and, where necessary, compromise, in order to accommodate the reasonable land management requirements of neighbours.
- Where there are areas of disagreement we undertake to work together to resolve them.

These principles are also referenced in the ITDMG constitution.

Best Practice Guidance

All deer management within the group area will be carried out in accordance with Best Practice guidance, and group members will input to this process and seek to influence it as it continues to evolve.

PART FOUR – PUBLIC INTEREST ACTIONS

In July 2014, Inveraray and Tyndrum DMG undertook assessment against the DMG Delivery of Public Interest document developed by NatureScot and the ADMG. Reassessment took place in 2016 and 2019 and showed that the Group has made significant progress since the initial assessment. These assessments can be found on the Group's website (<http://inverarayandyndrumdmg.deer-management.co.uk/dmg-business/>). The following section of the plan looks at how ITDMG currently delivers benefit to the public and where action is necessary to improve on this.

2017 updates are given in green, 2018 updates are given in blue, 2019 updates in orange, 2020 updates in purple, 2021 updates in red, 2022 updates in brown.

Developing Mechanisms to Manage Deer

The primary tool for ITDMG to develop its mechanisms for deer management is the ITDMG Deer Management Plan. The DMP was originally developed in 2013 by Victor Clements with a view to future updating to reflect changes in management priorities.

The DMP is available on the ITDMG website, which has been created in collaboration with ADMG. Confidential information, such as contact details, are kept in a separate appendix that is not available publicly. See <http://inverarayandyndrumdmg.deer-management.co.uk/>

Action Points:

1.1 Ensure that continued assessment is undertaken of ITDMG against the benchmark in collaboration with NatureScot. ADMG health check was completed in August 2018. NatureScot 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. Count and cull data for 2021-22 have been added to the Plan.

Delivering Designated Features into Favourable Condition

Appendix 3 (Designated Sites in the ITDMG Area) describes the designated features within the site with a traffic light key to denote their current status. Any actions that need to be undertaken are also highlighted here.

Action Points:

2.1 Continue to liaise with NatureScot regarding the condition of Coille Coire Chuilc SSSI (the only designated site in Unfavourable condition). There is ongoing discussion between NatureScot, LLTNPA and land managers regarding some of the designated sites and neighbouring estates (Ben Lui SSSI/SAC, Coille Coire Chuilc 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. The Covid-19 crisis in 2020 has prevented most members from carrying out HIA. Group members are carrying out HIA in Spring 2021. Some group members have carried out HIA in 2022.

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

There are approx. 17,568 ha of woodland within the ITDMG area, this covers 29% of the total area, a significantly high proportion of woodland for a DMG (national average of 18.5%). The majority of woodland within the group could be considered commercial conifer crops. Seven properties list woodland management as their primary objective on at least part of their holding.

The National Forest Inventory of Woodlands showed the forest area is split as follows:

Assumed Woodland	1146 ha
Broadleaved	1514 ha
Conifer	10435 ha
Felled	1007 ha
Ground Prep	239 ha
Interpreted Open Area	379 ha
Low Density	3.5 ha
Mixed Mainly Broadleaved	86 ha
Mixed Mainly Conifer	33 ha
Young Trees	993 ha

The above figures are in a constant state of change due to extensive felling and restocking programmes particularly of conifer woodlands across the ITDMG area.

Extensive planting has been undertaken within the ITDMG area since 1991 and can be divided under those schemes under which it was planted below:

WGS 1 Scheme 1991 -92	302 ha
WGS 2 Scheme 1993 – 94	5329 ha
WGS 3 Scheme 1995 – 04	2903 ha
SFGS Scheme 2005-06	1280 ha
SRDP Woodland Creation 2007-13	412 ha

The above woodland creation and woodland area shows a considerable area of land under active woodland management.

Deer will have a grazing impact over the native woodland in particular. Native woodland herbivore impacts measured in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (2006-2013) are shown below:

Low HIA	395 ha
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Medium HIA	1499 ha
High HIA	385 ha
Very High HIA	231 ha

The grazing levels above show that in the ITDMG native woodland area, 25.5% of the woodland has High or Very High herbivore impact levels.

ITDMG can extrapolate from the above and from the map shown in Appendix 5 – Herbivore Pressure on Native Woodland those areas that should be concentrated on for improved deer management regimes. Due to the high percentage of woodland within the DMG, it would be useful to investigate methods of counting deer in woodland. A workshop for group members would be beneficial.

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 identify and help reduce deer impacts. **We are waiting for guidance from NatureScot 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

ITDMG has seen considerable woodland expansion over the last twenty-five years. A total of 10,226 ha of woodland has been created under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP 2007-13) and before this under Scottish Forestry grant scheme (SFGS 2005-06), and Woodland Grant Schemes (WGS 1991-95). A breakdown of the hectares planted under each scheme is shown below.

WGS 1 Scheme 1991 -92	302 ha
WGS 2 Scheme 1993 – 94	5329 ha
WGS 3 Scheme 1995 – 04	2903 ha
SFGS Scheme 2005-06	1280 ha
SRDP Woodland Creation 2007-13	412 ha
	<u>10,226 ha</u>

The above woodland expansion shows the commitment of land managers to tree planting within ITDMG. Much of the planted area above will be timber restock following felling. However, there are also considerable areas of new planting, particularly of native woodland. The lower levels of planting under the SRDP Woodland Creation Scheme is reflective of the risky financial undertaking that it entails.

New planting schemes are discussed at ITDMG meetings and the influences that they may have on deer management are a priority. Much of the suitable planting ground within ITDMG has been used and as such a lesser number of schemes may be seen over the next few years.

Conversation is more likely to be driven by commercial restocking of timber and the subsequent high levels of deer management required, due largely to a lack of funding for deer fencing.

Action Points:

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

The following habitats are all present within the ITDMG area:

2200 ha of Blanket Bog and Peatlands
2402 ha of Bracken
984 ha of broadleaved Woodland
142 ha of cliffs
6970 ha of Coarse Grassland
4258 ha Coniferous Plantation
29 ha Estuary
21208 ha Heather Moor
918 ha Improved Grassland
0.5 ha Maritime Grassland and Heath
442 ha Mixed Woodland
5123 ha Montane Vegetation
5024 ha Open Canopy Young Plantation
3745 ha Recently Ploughed Land
2902 ha Smooth Grassland
439 ha Water

A group-wide HIA project was set up in July 2017, with 14 group members signing up to take part. A proposal was put out to tender for a contractor to set up HIA plots across the participating members and train local staff to carry on with monitoring the plots on their holdings. 300 plots were set up and an initial assessment done by the contractor during Spring 2018, and the data were analysed and presented in a report to the group in November 2018. Group members will continue with HIA annually, with the data being collated and analysed centrally in the group. In 2021, 100 of these plots will be reassessed by the contractor to check that individual members are correctly carrying out their HIA.

Five group members already carry out their own HIA monitoring or plan to start this year. The group plans to pull together their individual results along with the group HIA data to look at impacts on a group-wide scale.

The three forestry members of ITDMG carry out their own damage assessments to monitor deer impacts on trees.

Glenfalloch Estate was part of the NatureScot SWARD Pilot scheme, which was set up to allow deer managers to input deer and habitat information to help with management decisions. However, it is understood that SWARD is now going to be replaced by different NatureScot

software.

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. 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. Ben Lui have shared their HIA data with the group. Auchreoch & Strathfillan have shared 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

Within ITDMG there are 15,835 ha of woodland, 2200 ha of blanket bog and peatlands, 2902 ha of smooth grassland, 21,208 ha of heather moor and 6970 ha of coarse grassland.

Peatland areas in particular will need to be protected from overgrazing and trampling by deer and sheep. Unfortunately, recent CAP reforms have meant that it is likely that sheep numbers will increase across the group. It will therefore be important to make sure deer numbers are kept relatively low on peatland areas. Fortunately, there is very little if any heather burning within the group and this will enhance the ability for peatland to recover and improve.

Two landowners within the group (Brackley and Strone) have applied for significant Peatland regeneration schemes. Unfortunately, both had to decline the offers that were made to them. Strone Estate will be looking to apply again having found the initial offers to be constrained in the time scale in which regeneration works were to be undertaken.

In 2018-19, nine group members took part in a feasibility study looking at potential peatland restoration. The study, carried out by Strath Caulaidh and funded by Peatland Action, identified several areas that had potential for restoration, including around 200 ha of eroded peatland and 800 ha of drained peatland.

Native woodland areas should be assessed on a site by site basis and management of deer and sheep browsing should be restricted to allow regeneration.

River basin management planning (RBMP) is intended to protect and improve Scotland's water environment in a way that balances costs and benefits to the environment, society and economy. There is no local RBMP, just a Scotland wide plan, but through work of the Argyll Fisheries Trust, Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board, Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust, Tay Foundation and Tay District Salmon Fishery Board, DMG members who are involved in local fisheries management will be delivering many actions of the national RBMP. Key local actions include improving water quality, flood prevention, improving riparian woodlands, restoring river habitats, and protecting wild fish populations.

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

Non-native species are at a low level across the group area. Sika deer are the only non-native species that are present, albeit at a very low level. A slightly higher number of Sika deer are encountered around the South West of the Group near to Inveraray, which is due to a much larger population of Sika in the Kintyre peninsula.

A general groupwide policy is followed within ITDMG of the culling of Sika deer as soon as they are encountered. There has been no evident spread of Sika deer across ITDMG, but wandering stags are encountered from time to time and invariably controlled.

Currently there are no wild Muntjac deer in Scotland, with Scottish Government aiming to ensure populations do not become established. Evidence from England suggests that issues relating to Muntjac populations greatly outweigh any positives of having the deer present, with significant damage costs borne by all. ITDMG members will ensure no populations of Muntjac are established in the area. Current protocol is as follows: if Muntjac are seen then ensure animals are shot ASAP. In Scotland, Muntjac can be culled 24hrs a day 365 days a year – they are not offered protection by the Deer (Scotland) Act. Clearly high animal welfare standards should still be followed. Any sightings (whether dead or alive) should be reported to NatureScot.

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. Data on culled sika deer were collected with 2021-22 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

ITDMG has a number of cultural and historic features within the area, these are referred to in Appendix 4 – Historic & Cultural Features. It is unlikely that deer grazing will have a negative impact upon such features. Unfortunately, old planting schemes of conifer woodlands are far

more likely to have had a negative impact. Planting schemes now have to be aware of any historic or cultural features that need to be protected and flagged prior to planting or re-stocking.

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 in 2020. No concerns have been raised in 2021. No concerns have been raised so far in 2022.

8.2 All new planting schemes will be assessed for any negative impacts.

Delivering Higher Standards of Competence in Deer Management

It is understood that all those undertaking deer management within ITDMG have undertaken DMQ level one and many have attained DMQ 2.

There are a wide variety of other deer management related qualifications and certificates held by deer managers. These include ATV, First Aid, Chainsaw and Water Bailiff.

During 2013, the Forestry Commission in conjunction with ITDMG hosted a training day on the use of dogs during deer management. This was felt to be particularly useful for those deer managers with high levels of woodland where dogs can be particularly useful for deer management.

As mentioned previously in the plan, ITDMG has held two training days for HIA. This was undertaken with the support of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park and NatureScot. These training days have encouraged a number of managers to undertake HIA.

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

ITDMG recently invited the Chairs and Secretaries of all Community Councils within the Group area to a Group meeting. This has been seen as extremely positive, both by Group members and Community Council representatives, and is hoped that this will help forge close links between the two and help promote deer management to the public and provide a useful dialogue and avenue for consultation.

All of the members of the Group manage their larder facilities to Best Practice Standards. No notifiable diseases have been encountered within the group area and all members are aware

that if there are any suspicions over deer behaviour prior to culling or of disease once culled then these carcasses will be held back from the food chain and a veterinary officer alerted immediately. A group visit to the Forestry Commission's Glenbranter larder was held in December 2018 which included a talk on carcass contamination and a tour round the facilities.

Members have been made aware of the threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). This threat is potentially from America. BDS guidance has been circulated by ADMG to all members.

Members of the group are all aware of the dangers of tick-borne diseases to humans. Members should make all visitors to the hills and incoming stalkers aware of the dangers.

Vehicle collisions with deer can be a potentially serious problem within ITDMG. The A82, A83 and A819 are all situated within the Group area. All members are aware of their responsibility to report any increases in collisions and to record all incidences. One of the best ways to prevent this is to make sure that deer densities are lower around main roads. This can sometime be a challenge due to the transient nature of upland deer populations and the influence of weather on where deer may be situated, particularly snow. Fencing siting and the nature of planting and its proximity to roads is now closely monitored by the Forestry Commission in order to prevent deer being trapped on roadsides. NatureScot ask all members to record collisions on cull returns.

ITDMG is situated very close to heavily populated areas. Glasgow is one hour by car. Whilst this provides very good access to the land for public use it can also provide potential conflict between access to the hills and deer management interests.

Increasingly, members of the Group are reporting an inability to undertake an effective cull, particularly during the late stag season (September and October) due to disturbance by walkers. The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park have offered help with appropriate signage for land managers to warn walkers that stalking is being undertaken. Unfortunately, some members report these signs being taken down or defaced.

ITDMG is contributing, through a representative from Glenfalloch, to the National Park Authority's new strategy to replace their Outdoor Recreation Plan, particularly with regards to interactions between visitor access and the deer herd and how these can be managed.

Glenfalloch also represent ITDMG on the National Park Authority Access Forum.

ITDMG members are encouraged to promote and identify certain routes on the hill in the hope that walkers will feel happy to use these during the short stag cull.

The Heading for The Scottish Hills website (HFTSH) is now operational and those members that have decided to use it have seen an increase in the public contacting estates to ask about stalking activity. It is hoped that a greater awareness of this tool will help interaction between Deer Managers and walkers.

Some members have reported an increase in vandalism and fly tipping, these incidences continue to be reported to the Police. This problem has been particularly severe during the Covid-19 crisis as lockdown restrictions start to be eased. Members of the group have contacted LLTNP, NatureScot and their MSPs to try to find a solution.

Having invited all Chairpersons/Secretaries of local Community Councils to a recent ITDMG meeting, it was recommended by these representatives that they could help promote responsible access to the hills. ITDMG members felt that this would be extremely helpful.

Action Points:

10.1 Continue communication between Community Councils and ITDMG.

10.2 Remind and update all members 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 NatureScot, 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

During 2013/14 the direct sporting value of the deer cull within ITDMG was approximately £100,000. Stag stalking accounted for 80% of this income whilst hind stalking accounted for 20% of the income from stalking.

Venison sales contribute an equally important part of land management income. Based on a cull of 370 stags, 400 hinds and 200 calves (2013/14), it is estimated that the value of venison produced within the group area is £120,000 annually.

The total direct economic value of deer management within ITDMG is therefore in the region of £220,000 per annum. This figure does not include the amount of money brought to the area by visiting guests, for example spent in guest houses, hotels, pubs and shops.

Within the ITDMG area there are currently approximately 10 full time jobs that are either fully or partly involved with deer management. It is important to stress that most of these jobs are largely viable due to the income directly derived from stalking income. Extra work is brought into the ITDMG area through seasonal jobs such as ghillieing and support staff dealing with accommodation, bookings and other services.

ITDMG is notable compared to many DMGs for the reason that several owners carry out their own deer management. This is a little unusual but is reflective of the fact that many estates rely on a variety of land uses to survive, ranging from stalking to forestry and farming. Stalking is therefore not always the sole contributor to estate income. There are also a number of self-employed contractors that undertake stalking duties within the group.

During 2015, a questionnaire was circulated amongst the group to help identify many aspects of deer management, including the economic benefits and impacts of deer management.

Areas in which there may be opportunities to increase the value of deer in the area include:

- Deer watching: There are no formal deer watching activities within the group, however at least one estate is looking at selling formal deer watching trips.
- Deer ranching/farming: One estate has started farming deer, initially using the native wild stock on their low ground and supplementing with stags from outside the area.
- The value of deer stalking: When compared to other sporting activities for example pheasant or grouse shooting, stalking red stags and particularly hind stalking is relatively cheap. It could be argued that stag prices could be increased on a group-wide basis.
- Added value from venison: It may be useful to look into a group-wide deal with a venison producer to see whether it is possible to demand a slightly higher value for ITDMG venison as a whole.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reduced the income from deer management due to cancellations of paid stalking for some of our members and a drop in the price of venison to £1 per kg for all. Furthermore, SQWV accredited members are not being paid extra per kg this year.

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

ITDMG is not unusual in that deer management constitutes only part of the management regime for an estate/land holding. The economic costs of deer management will be spread across many other activities and can be a 'grey area' to define. Staff costs for example are often spread over several roles, for example, stalking, fishing, livestock, forestry, property maintenance, hydro maintenance, and many other job types. To specify the costs of employment is very difficult.

Within ITDMG it is extremely difficult to quantify the exact costs associated with deer management. During 2015, an ITDMG questionnaire was circulated to help identify/quantify many areas of deer management. However, it has become clear that to directly attribute costs to deer management is difficult, and some members are not willing to share financial information with the group for confidentiality reasons.

It is likely that across the group the costs of maintaining staff for deer management outweigh the income brought in by deer. It is likely that this is one of the reasons for some landowners within the ITDMG area undertaking their own deer management, thus making it economically viable.

The Scottish Government has recently introduced sporting rates for deer culls. This increased taxation could become one of the biggest costs going forward and could have adverse consequences for deer management. Whilst appeals are still in progress, it is unclear the impact sporting rates will have on the costs of deer management for ITDMG members.

Although many industries benefitted from rates relief during the Covid-19 pandemic, the country sports sector, which includes deer management, has not been granted rates relief.

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

ITDMG has tried to increase the communication across the group area by inviting Community Council representatives to the group meetings. This has been seen as beneficial to the group. Community representatives will be encouraged to contribute going forward. Whilst no immediate deer-related dilemmas were highlighted by community representatives, it will become a useful tool in keeping abreast of any potential deer management issues and in enabling deer managers to consult the wider community.

ITMG has recently started to discuss the potential to get members into the local classrooms to attempt to help educate children about deer and their habitat.

Strone Estate is currently looking into a way to invite formal walking groups to the estate and hold a tour of the hills to highlight what it is that deer managers do and why interaction between hill walkers and stalkers is so important.

ITDMG has its own website, hosted by ADMG. This allows information to be shared publicly and keeps others abreast of how ITDMG manages their deer population.

Action Point:

13.1 ITDMG should attempt to draft a communications policy during 2018. *Done – see section 12 (P31) of Plan above.*

Ensuring Deer Welfare is Safeguarded at Individual and Population Level

When stalking, all estates are encouraged to safeguard deer welfare by following the Code of Good Practice. DMQ level 1 should be attained by anyone one undertaking deer management within the group.

An increasing number of estates within the group are feeding deer during the winter or providing supplementary mineral blocks/licks to aid the deer during the winter months.

By maintaining a sustainable deer population that is not overgrazing the land, deer welfare will be helped in all but very extreme winter conditions.

Deer managers will strive not to push deer into areas that are unfavourable to them during severe snow. This is mentioned in the Code of Good Practice and followed by all members. Increased walking activity during the winter months has seen deer being moved by walkers, particularly from low glen areas where they need to be to find grazing. ITDMG needs to look at a way of communicating to walkers the dangers of pushing deer off those areas on which deer need to graze during severe weather.

Action Points:

14.1 Continue to strive to bring natural habitats into favourable condition. There is ongoing discussion between NatureScot, 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, 2019, 2020 and 2021. 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.