

Gairloch Conservation Unit

Part 3: Deer Management Working Plan 2016 -2017



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3.1 Introduction

This Working Plan will be reviewed at least twice annually. The Working Plan sets out the most up to date information on culls, counts and population targets as well as a summary of the specific actions (detailed in Part 1) that the Deer Management Group will undertake throughout the life of the plan. Once count information becomes available, this document will contain live population models which will be subject to continuous amendment.

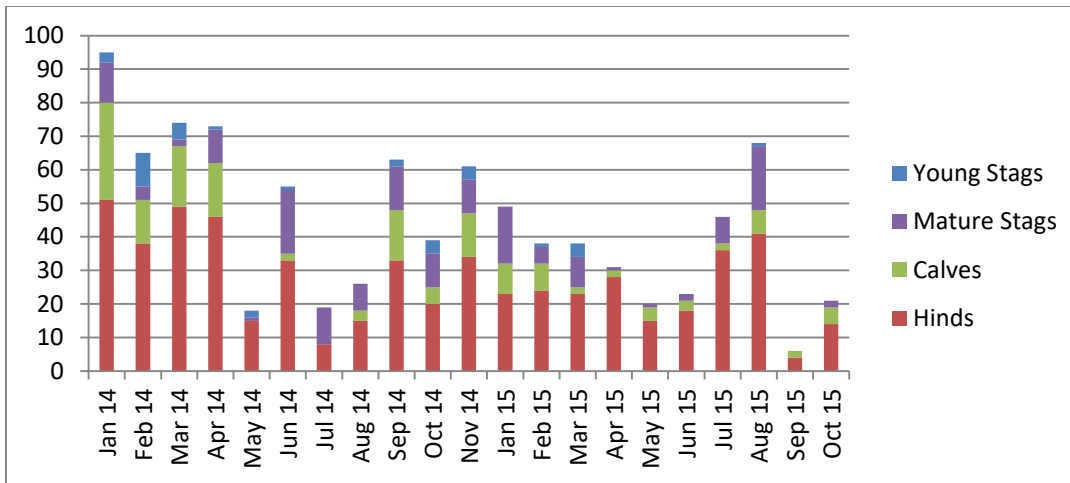
Gairloch Conservation Unit covers a total area of approximately **42,600** hectares and has 7 management units:

- SNH Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve (Scottish Natural Heritage)
- Diabaig Estate
- FCS Slattadale
- Gairloch and Conon (which includes the Flowerdale and Shieldaig Forests)
- Grudie & Talladale Estate
- NTS Torridon Estate (The National Trust for Scotland)
- Eisean Dubh (formerly known as Diabeag on map)

3.2 Counts

The last full deer count of the whole GCU area was carried out some 20 years ago, although foot counts are conducted on a regular basis on Beinn Eighe.

SNH Deer Counts						
<i>Month</i>	<i>Mature Stags</i>	<i>Young Stags</i>	<i>Hinds</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Density (Deer per Km2)</i>
Jan 14	12	3	51	29	95	2.00
Feb 14	4	10	38	13	65	1.37
Mar 14	2	5	49	18	74	1.56
Apr 14	10	1	46	16	73	1.53
May 14	1	2	15	0	18	0.38
Jun 14	19	1	33	2	55	1.16
Jul 14	11	0	8	0	19	0.40
Aug 14	8	0	15	3	26	0.55
Sep 14	13	2	33	15	63	1.32
Oct 14	10	4	20	5	39	0.82
Nov 14	10	4	34	13	61	1.28
Jan 15	17	0	23	9	49	1.03
Feb 15	5	1	24	8	38	0.80
Mar 15	9	4	23	2	38	0.80
Apr 15	1	0	28	2	31	0.65
May 15	1	0	15	4	20	0.42
Jun 15	2	0	18	3	23	0.48
Jul 15	8	0	36	2	46	0.97
Aug 15	19	1	41	7	68	1.43
Sep 15	0	0	4	2	6	0.13
Oct 15	2	0	14	5	21	0.44



	<i>Property</i>	<i>Stags</i>	<i>Hinds</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Density (Deer per Km2)</i>
2005	Torridon (Heli)	43	185	56	284	4.45
2009	Torridon (Heli)	42	182	54	278	4.35

3.3 Population Model (2016 - 2021)

The DMG will use information gathered from habitat monitoring, population census and cull reporting to agree and set culls on an annual basis using population modelling. Each management unit is committed to implementing the necessary culls to achieve this although it is accepted that there may be specific geographical areas within the DMG area where deer management requires to be focussed. This population model has been set in the first instance using current average open-range cull figures.

This population model will be implemented once the DMG has conducted a full helicopter count (scheduled for Spring 2017). Thereafter, the model will be adjusted continually as cull and count data are updated.

3.4 Culls

A helicopter count will be conducted in 2017.	Spring 2017	Secretary & DMG Members	<i>DMG will ensure adequate resources in place for helicopter count in 2017 (50% of cost) and liaise with neighbouring DMGs to coordinate count at the same time if possible.</i>
Recruitment counts will be carried out annually.	Ideally first two weeks in April but by May.	DMG Members	<i>Stalkers will undertake sample counts of groups of deer recording stags, hinds and calves.</i>
Group will carry out a review of deer movements within the DMG and contribute to wider discussions on deer movements within the wider area .	Autumn 2017	DMG Members	<i>Deer count data from 2017 will be reviewed by the DMG. DMG will liaise with West Ross DMG and South West Ross DMG to discuss deer movements. DMG boundaries will be reviewed and amended if necessary.</i>
Group will encourage representation at meetings of the local community as well as local agricultural/crofting interests.	Annually	DMG Chair. Gairloch Estate.	<i>Meeting dates and Agendas will be publically available on DMG website and circulated to community councils in advance. Gairloch Estate will seek to ensure agricultural/crofting representation.</i>

Actions for the delivery of designated features into Favourable Condition	When?	Who?	How?
<p>Loch Maree Complex SAC (including Beinn Eighe SSSI, Talladale Gorge SSSI, Coille Dhubh SSSI): Current action underway to maintain "Favourable" and "Unfavourable Recovering" Condition status of features according to management targets agreed with SNH. NTS, Beinn Eighe and Grudie to implement action to bring Dry Heaths and Wet Heathland features into "Unfavourable Recovering due to Management" status.</p>	<p>2017 and On-going</p>	<p>NTS Torridon, SNH Beinn Eighe, Grudie.</p>	<p><i>NTS to reduce the overall deer density by 10% from 2009 figures to a target density of 4 deer per km² by 2017 (55 stags, 200 hinds and calves). Culls will be concentrated where practical. SNH to maintain a population of less than 2 deer per km² which should be sufficient to meet Habitat Impact targets.</i></p>
<p>Torridon Forest SSSI: Current action being agreed to address "Unfavourable" Condition status of Subalpine Dry Heath and Subalpine Calcareous Grassland.</p>	<p>2017 and On-going</p>	<p>NTS Torridon</p>	<p><i>NTS to reduce the overall deer density by 10% from 2009 figures to a target density of 4 deer per km² by 2017 (55 stags, 200 hinds and calves). Culls will be concentrated where practical.</i></p>
<p>Management options to enhance the liverwort heath to be considered and adopted in the Beinn Eighe Reserve Habitat Management Plan</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SNH Beinn Eighe</p>	<p><i>SNH will implement agreed management options to enhance the liverwort heath as detailed in the Reserve Habitat Management Plan</i></p>
<p>In areas where Designated Sites are believed to be under threat, to foster cooperation between neighbouring estates to manage deer numbers and densities as appropriate.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All DMG Members</p>	<p><i>Deer managers will communicate on an on-going basis with regards to deer movements and identify opportunities for collaborative management.</i></p>

Properties to continue to target deer management on sensitive areas to reduce localised impacts.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Deer managers will use local knowledge to target deer management where required.</i>
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Actions to manage deer to retain existing native woodland cover and improve woodland condition	When?	Who?	How?
SNH to maintain a population of less than 2 deer per km ² which should be sufficient to achieve good condition in its native woodlands.	By 2021	SNH Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH will use their own monitoring of herbivore impacts as well as woodland population census/utilisation methodology to inform on-going management.</i>
For properties with SRDP Natural Regeneration Schemes in place, provide evidence of woodland condition in the form of an appropriate survey report if available.	Year 3	DMG Members	<i>Woodland Survey reports.</i>
To use ECAF bid to undertake a review of native woodland condition in the Group area, consolidating existing survey reports and implementing woodland herbivore impacts assessment monitoring protocols where required. See monitoring Schedule in Working Plan.	Year 3	DMG Members & Consultant	<i>Subject to successful ECAF bid, delivery of DMG Native Woodland Review Report and recommended actions.</i>
To implement management to reduce negative impacts including use of Forestry Grant Schemes where practical and appropriate.	By 2021	DMG Members	<i>Monitoring results used to inform management actions. Entry into SRDP Schemes.</i>
An additional 25-30 ha of new woodland regeneration will be created and planting of woodland links between new and existing woodland.	By 2021	SNH Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH will identify areas and inform DMG of new woodland regeneration plans.</i>
Beinn Eighe will allow for 100 ha on natural regeneration woodland expansion onto dry and wet heath habitats.	By 2022	SNH Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH will identify areas and monitor woodland expansion.</i>

Actions to demonstrate DMG contribution to the Scottish Government woodland expansion target of 25% woodland cover.	When?	Who?	How?
To inform the DMG about any future woodland proposals and incorporate in the DMP - taking account of potential implications for deer management.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Members will circulate/present proposals to DMG for discussion.</i>
DMG to use ECAF bid carry out a strategic review of potential opportunities for new woodland schemes using the Scottish Government's Forestry Strategy. Review will consider need from a DMG perspective ie shelter provision for deer population at landscape scale.	Year 2	DMG Members & Consultant	<i>Subject to ECAF bid, delivery of DMG Woodland Expansion Report and recommended actions.</i>

Actions to monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside	When?	Who?	How?
Using revised BPG Guidance undergo training, set up plots and carry out a baseline habitat impact assessment (HIA) of the current grazing and trampling impacts on blanket bog & dwarf shrub heath.	May & June 2016/ 2017	DMG Members & Consultant	<i>Training to be conducted in May 2016. Subject to ECAF bid, Consultant will work with DMG to set up random plots and to provide assistance with data analysis and the production of a report.</i>
Members with existing habitat monitoring will share results with DMG where appropriate.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Members will circulate monitoring results to DMG.</i>
Gairloch Estate to carry out monitoring of Blanket Bog	May & June 2016/ 2017	Gairloch Estate	<i>Training to be conducted in May 2016. Subject to ECAF bid, Consultant will work with Estate to set up random plots and to provide assistance with data analysis and the production of a report.</i>
Summary of habitat assessment results reported to DMG. DMG will implement a deer reduction programme to reduce deer impacts to improve overall habitat condition. Targets and management actions to be agreed.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>DMG will agree management decisions based on Habitat Impact Assessment Reports.</i>
Repeat HIA and management actions agreed.	May & June 2019	DMG Members	<i>Members will collect repeat monitoring data. Consultant will provide assistance with data analysis and the production of a report. Members will use report to inform management.</i>
Beinn Eighe will run or support at least 1 demonstration event to share best practice management for open habitats and woodland management in the absence of deer fences.	By 2021	SNH Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH will organise an event for members and other interested parties at an appropriate site.</i>

Actions to improve Scotland's ability to store carbon by maintaining or improving ecosystem health.	When?	Who?	How?
Using revised BPG Guidance set up plots and carry out a baseline habitat impact assessment (HIA) of the current grazing and trampling impacts on blanket bog and native woodland.	As per monitoring schedule in the Working plan	DMG Members.	<i>As per Actions for woodland and managing impacts in the wider countryside. Members to provide existing survey reports or conduct baseline monitoring and reports.</i>
Potential areas for Peatland Restoration identified and options for Peatland restoration or management through the Peatland Action Fund promoted to DMG Members	By end 2016	DMG Members DMG Chair and Secretary	<i>Members to use Blanket Bog monitoring results as well as assistance from SNH to identify opportunities for Peatland Restoration.</i>
Beinn Eighe will continue to remove tree and scrub regeneration from blanket bog and montane habitats above 300m and rare sub-communities of dry and wet heath.	Ongoing	Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH will implement agreed management as detailed in the Reserve Habitat Management Plan</i>
Contribute to River Basin Management Planning as appropriate	By end of 2016 and ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Subject to ECAF bid, include a review of the potential for riparian woodland improvement e.g. practicalities, landscape assessment, water quality and fisheries benefit.</i>

Actions to reduce or mitigate the risk of establishment of invasive non-native species	When?	Who?	How?
Muntjac Deer managed as per the Non-native Species Policy (Part 2 of plan).	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Members will contact local SNH Wildlife Management Officer immediately on suspected sighting of Muntjac.</i>
Sika Deer managed to prevent their establishment within the DMG area and managed as per the Non-Native Species Policy (Part 2 of plan).	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Where Sika Deer not currently established, Members will report sightings to DMG and will prevent their establishment shoot (within current legal restrictions).</i>
Feral Pigs managed according to Policy Guidelines currently being agreed by SNH.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Members will report sightings of feral pigs within DMG area. Implement Feral Pig management policy once agreed by SNH.</i>
Record invasive plants species and encourage their control, particularly the spread of Rhododendron.	Annually	DMG Members	<i>Members will inform DMG of invasive plant species at annual meetings and will report on control undertaken.</i>
Manage Feral goat management policy according to agreed DMG policy (Part 2 of the Plan).	By end 2016	DMG Members	<i>Group agreed a policy for the management of Feral Goats in 2016. Members will maintain existing populations at current levels and prevent their establishment/spread where not (taking into consideration welfare issues).</i>

Actions to protect designated historic and cultural features from being damaged by deer e.g. by trampling.	When?	Who?	How?
Identify any features within DMG area that may be impacted on by deer.	By end of 2016	DMG Members	<i>DMG members to report at Autumn DMG meeting on features identified.</i>
If features identified, ensure the appropriate management is implemented and report to DMG.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Verbal report/update to DMG.</i>
All future fencing proposals to follow Joint Agency Guidance.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>All new fencing proposals will be reported to DMG and Joint Agency Guidance on fencing followed.</i>

Assess fencing impacts across DMG with regards to the NSA.	By 2021	SNH and DMG Members	<i>SNH/DMG will provide a short report on the extent of fencing, associated impacts on the NSA and possible actions.</i>
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Actions to contribute to delivering higher standards of competence in deer management.	When?	Who?	How?
DMG will adopt the training policy statement (Part 2 of plan).	Spring 2016	DMG Members	<i>Adopted as part of DMP.</i>
Ascertain training levels among DMG Members and report on progress on an annual basis.	By Autumn 2016 & Annually	DMG Secretary and Members	<i>All members asked to provide an initial summary of staff qualifications to DMG Secretary. Verbal report at Spring meeting.</i>
Develop and implement a training programme to assist in the provision of training for DMG Members who lack the necessary qualification or for individuals who wish to enhance their skills.	Annually	DMG Chair and Secretary	<i>Annual training programme to be agreed at Spring meeting. Secretary to organise courses/events. Opportunities for CPD events to be explored by members.</i>

Actions to Identify and promote opportunities contributing to public health and wellbeing.	When?	Who?	How?
Provide information on access, CWD and health information about tick awareness to visitors/clients.	By end of 2016 and ongoing	DMG Secretary	<i>Secretary to circulate leaflets/literature at Spring/Autumn meetings for members to distribute. Information made available on DMG website.</i>
Complete relevant Access information for the Heading For the Scottish Hills initiative.	By end 2016	Secretary & Relevant DMG Members	<i>Secretary to liaise with DMG members to coordinate information to SNH and ensure information is kept up to date. Information on Access to be made available on DMG web. site.</i>
Raise awareness of threats relating to Chronic Wasting Disease and sign up to CWD Biosecurity Policy (Part 2 of plan).	By end of 2016 and ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Members to raise awareness of CWD with Clients and Visitors from USA and Canada.</i>
Investigate opportunities for awareness raising/educational events for the local community.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Members to discuss opportunities at Spring meeting. Open events to be advertised on DMG website.</i>

Provide opportunities for any concerns from the local community to be addressed. Ensure Community Council representation at meetings.	Ongoing	DMG Chair and Secretary	<i>Meeting dates and Agendas will be publically available on DMG website and circulated to community councils in advance. DMG Chair and Secretary contact details will be available on website. DMG to consider holding an annual public meeting.</i>
Explore opportunities for greater liaison/collaboration with organisations such as Scottish Mountaineering Club, Mountaineering Council for Scotland and the Ramblers Association.	By autumn 2016	DMG Chair and SMC Chair	<i>DMG and organisations to work together to improve information provision through social media.</i>
Beinn Eighe will support an annual programme for rural skills students, one work experience opportunity per year and a programme for volunteers.	Annually	Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH implement and will report progress to DMG.</i>

Actions to maximise economic benefits associated with deer	When?	Who?	How?
Investigate opportunities for membership of SQWV Quality Assurance Scheme.	By 2021	DMG Members	<i>On-going discussion at DMG meetings.</i>
Investigate opportunities for more effective collection of carcasses and negotiation of prices. DMG to investigate possible collaborative opportunities for the processing of venison/game. Members to seek opportunities to market venison locally.	Annually	DMG Members	<i>Discussion at Spring meeting. Chair & Secretary to negotiate with Game Dealers on DMG behalf. DMG to discuss opportunities associated with the development of venison processing facilities on Gairloch Estate.</i>
DMG Members to continue to monitor sustainable harvest of stags for let stalking and to investigate opportunities for cross-property letting of stalking. Opportunities to collectively market stalking also explored.	Spring 2017 and Annually.	Chair & DMG Members	<i>Population model used to monitor sustainable harvest of stags. Members discuss stalking requirements at Spring meeting. Deer movement meetings following the deer count in 2017 used to monitor deer movements/distribution across the Group.</i>

Actions to minimise the economic costs of deer, and ensure deer management is cost-effective	When?	Who?	How?
DMG to identify and quantify capital investment in deer management related infrastructure.	By end of 2015	DMG Members	<i>DMG to carry out a survey of members before autumn meeting to ascertain amount of capital investment in deer management infrastructure.</i>
DMG to consider the future costs of maintaining fences and financial provision for repairs.	By end of 2016	DMG Members	<i>Those responsible for fences report on current condition and likely repair timetable. Maintain communication with neighbouring West Ross DMG regarding state of strategic fences.</i>
Ensure local agricultural/crofting interests are consulted on DMP and invited to/represented at DMG meetings.	Spring 2016	DMG Chairman and Secretary	<i>DMG Chair will correspond with relevant parties.</i>
Set up monitoring and reporting of DVCs through website, DMG meetings and local Police contact.	Spring 2016 and ongoing	DMG Secretary	<i>Members of the public asked to report DVCs to DMG Secretary on website. Members record and report DVCs to meetings.</i>

Implement actions to mitigate against DVC hotspots including localised deer management, use of signage, fencing etc.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Where hot-spots occur, DMG to discuss appropriate actions at meetings.</i>
Report on out of season and night shooting authorisations.	Annually	DMG Members	<i>Members to inform DMG Chair/Secretary in advance of intention to apply for authorisations. Members to report numbers of deer culled under authorisation at meetings.</i>

Actions to ensure effective communication on deer management issues	When?	Who?	How?
Stakeholders consulted on draft plan.	Spring 2016	DMG Secretary	<i>Draft DMP made available on public website. Relevant stakeholders identified and invited to consult. Neighbouring Estates to the DMG and a representative from the local Community Council invited to attend a planning meeting on 27th January 2016 in Torridon.</i>
Final Plan and Minutes of Meetings will be published on DMG Website.	Spring 2016	DMG Secretary	<i>DMG Website.</i>
DMG Constitution and ADMG Principles of Collaboration adopted (Part 2)	Spring 2016	DMG Members	<i>Adopted as part of DMP.</i>
Agree and adopt a DMG Communications Policy	Spring 2016	DMG Members	<i>Adopted as part of DMP.</i>
Actions to ensure deer welfare is taken fully into account at individual animal and population level	When?	Who?	How?

Agree and adopt welfare policy (Part 2 of plan).	Spring 2016	DMG Members	<i>Implemented through every day Best Practice in deer management.</i>
Beinn Eighe will run or support at least 1 demonstration event to share best practice management for open habitats and woodland management in the absence of deer fences.	Autumn 2017	Beinn Eighe	<i>SNH will run at least one event to share Best Practice Management for open habitats and woodland management in the absence of deer fences.</i>
Provide information on welfare indicators annually. Baseline information established in year 1 of DMP and welfare indicators reported on annually. Any resulting management actions agreed and implemented by members.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Deer managers to provide information on average larder weights and annual calf recruitment.</i>
Any new fencing in DMG area will consider welfare implications in design and extent and the appropriate management undertaken.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>New fencing proposals will be consulted with DMG.</i>
Monitoring and reporting of significant levels of winter mortality.	Ongoing	DMG Members	<i>Deer managers will provide information (details including date, numbers, sex, age & grid reference) on winter mortality.</i>
Carry out a review of fencing and wintering ground and identify opportunities to open up woodland to deer.	Year 2	DMG Members & Consultant	<i>Subject to ECAF bid, carry out as part of the delivery of the DMG Woodland Expansion Report and recommended actions.</i>

3.6 Monitoring and Review Schedule

Actions	Who?	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Helicopter Deer Count	DMG Members		Count			Count	
Foot Count	DMG Members where practical	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring
Recruitment Count	DMG Members	Spring & Summer	Spring & Summer	Spring & Summer	Spring & Summer	Spring & Summer	Spring & Summer
Habitat Training	DMG Members	Spring/Summer					
Habitat Monitoring Blanket Bog	DMG Members	Summer			Summer		
Habitat Monitoring Dwarf Shrub Heath	DMG Members	Summer			Summer		
Habitat Monitoring Native Woodland	DMG Members		Summer			Summer	
Review Habitat Results	DMG Members	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Set & Agree Culls	DMG Members	Late Spring	Late Spring	Late Spring	Late Spring	Late Spring	Late Spring
Collate DMG Information & Review Working Plan Actions	DMG Secretary	Bi-annually	Bi-annually	Bi-annually	Bi-annually	Bi-annually	Review DMP - Spring
Produce Annual Report	DMG Secretary	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Review DMP - Spring