

# ARRAN DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

**AUGUST 2016 DRAFT**

## **DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**2016 – 2025**

### **Background Information**

#### **PREFACE**

This Deer Management Plan has been developed for the Arran Deer Management Group (Arran DMG). The Plan is funded both by the deer group and by Scottish Natural Heritage, it runs from 2016 until 2025 and has been formally endorsed by all the Members of the Group. It has been designed to be readily updated as needs arise and will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis or as required, with a systematic review taking place at the end of the first five year period in 2020.

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Also included are recommended larder sheets for males and females.

## 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 set of actions that will identify and deliver relevant public interest and benefits throughout the area
- (d) an agreed pattern of arrangements to try and ensure that the actions are implemented and their effectiveness monitored.
- (e) a document that acts as a ready source of information for both members and the general public alike, clarifying points of contact, and setting out how communications can best be received and addressed.

### 2. Group Area

#### Location

The Arran DMG occupies the northern half of the island of Arran, lying in the Firth of Clyde and co-incides with the main open ground population of deer on the island. It is the most southerly upland deer management group in Scotland. The southern boundary of the group runs from just north of Brodick on the east coast on the island to Machrie on the western coast.

Other than the villages around the periphery of the island and the main road north to Lochranza, there are few settlements or main public roads within the DMG area itself.

For a map of the Arran DMG area, see [1. Arran DMG Location Map](#)

#### Scale and ownership

The entire area extends to just under 22,000 ha, which includes a considerable area of enclosed forestry and farmland as well as open hill. Management of deer is a primary objective on the open hill area, although for a number of members, this is mainly a management cull. It is one of the smaller DMG areas in Scotland. There are four main members of the Group, which is operated as a single unit. There are a number of communities around the periphery of the area who can be impacted by deer, and liaison with them is particularly important. Forest Enterprise are a significant landowner within the area, and there are private forests managed by woodland companies as well, with deer management undertaken by the estates who are members of the Group. The Group area is well used by hillwalkers and for outdoor recreation in general, and mountains such as Goat Fell are well known throughout the country and are a popular attraction.

The Group have maintained a very stable population of 1700- 2000 red deer for a number of years now, with good count and cull information available.

There are no other species of deer on the island. In many ways, this makes for an unusual situation within Scotland, with roe deer at least being present within virtually every other DMG area.

### 3. Group Membership

There are only four main members of the deer group on Arran at present, with a smaller number of woodland plantations also within the overall group area. Management objectives are summarized on [4. Arran Management Objectives Map](#).

On the two private estates, deer management is a primary land use objective, although on Arran Estate, management of the resource is considered to be more important than achieving any sporting cull as such. The National Trust for Scotland are managed for access provision and overall conservation value, and management of the range as a whole. Arran Estate manage deer on their ground. Forest Enterprise manage deer for woodland protection, but they do also have an arrangement whereby their land is used for shooting/ training purposes with the British Association of Shooting & Conservation (BASC).

The following table gives a summary of the management objectives of the main properties within the deer group. The properties can be located at [2. Arran DMG Members Map](#).

*Table 1 Arran DMG Members & Management Objectives*

<i>Property</i>	<i>Main Objectives</i>	<i>Size(ha)</i>
<i>Arran Estates</i>	<i>Deer Management/ farming</i>	<i>5900</i>
<i>Dougarie</i>	<i>Deer/ sporting/misc</i>	<i>8450</i>
<i>Forest Enterprise Scotland</i>	<i>Forest protection</i>	<i>2050</i>
<i>National Trust for Scotland</i>	<i>Access/ conservation management</i>	<i>2283</i>
	<b><i>Total area covered:</i></b>	<b><i>18,683* ha</i></b>

*\* There are a number of private woodland plantations within the overall boundaries of the group as well, mentioned below.*

### 3a. Member Descriptions

The following section gives a brief overview of the essential management information relating to each of the group members.

Contact details are given in a separate [Appendix 2, Arran DMG Contact List](#), which is confidential to group members only. Contact details for this group are given later in the document.

#### Arran Estates

Arran Estate is one of the two private properties within the DMG area, with deer management undertaken by Sannox Estate using local self employed contractors. The broad objective is one of overall habitat/ range management, and the deer cull is mainly a management cull, with no sporting objective as such, although income is derived from taking out guests. Increasing the heather cover of the area is a significant objective, as is trying to deliver and maintain Favourable status of the SSSI and SAC features which cover much of the DMG area.

Sannox/ Arran estate also carry out deer management on National Trust for Scotland land within the DMG area. <http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/stalk.php?s=28>

**Dougarie**

Dougarie Estate are the other private property within the group. Deer are managed as a commercial operation, with other management objectives being holiday lets and mixed winter shooting. A hydro scheme is an important part of the overall property finances.

Deer management is undertaken in-house with their own employee. A significant area of woodland planting has been undertaken over 20 years or so, with a more modest level of planting planned for the future.

<http://www.dougarieestate.co.uk/>

**Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES)**

As in other areas, the primary objective of FES on Arran is timber production, and deer are managed to provide an appropriate level of forest protection. Public access and recreation is also important, and FES undertake deer management on NTS property in the policy woodlands around Brodick Castle.

FES have an arrangement with BASC which allows for stalking opportunities for their members at both stags and hinds, throughout the island. This letting arrangement is overseen by the FES ranger, and is carried out as part of an overall management cull.

<http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/visit/arran>

**National Trust for Scotland (NTS)**

NTS manage their property for access and for overall conservation management purposes, with Goat Fell being nationally recognized as a popular mountain walk, attracting many thousands of visitors every year.

Habitats are managed so that they are in favourable condition, especially the moorland and summit heaths. Retaining the current heather cover is important. There is likely to be a modest expansion of the woodland area within the period of this plan.

The target deer population is c 80 animals, with the greatest number of animals being present during the summer months.

Other than birch woodland, the designated features on Goat Fell are viewed as being in favourable condition, with deer management undertaken by Arran/ Sannox Estate.

<http://www.nts.org.uk/arran>

Sannox Estate owns a relatively small area of land in its own right around Lochranza, Sannox and Corrie villages, but as noted above, delivers the deer management activity required for both Arran estates and the National Trust for Scotland. Sannox Estate also operates and maintains a communal larder in Brodick through which all venison produced on the island is processed and marketed.

Sannox/ Arran Estates carry out deer management in the Boguille and Corrie plantations, both of which are open to deer. They are owned by the Executors of the late Mr Alan Gee.

Highfield Forestry also own a significant plantation within the DMG area, with Dougarie carrying out the necessary deer management work there.

### 3b. Reporting Units

For the purposes of this Plan, properties within the area will be asked to report their counts and culls on the basis of reporting units.

The National Trust for Scotland will simply report information for their property as a whole.

FES will report on 4 X units, co-inciding with their management blocks within the area.

Arran estate will report on the 3 X areas that they report their deer count information on.

It is suggested that Dougarie report information on culls and counts east and west of the Iorsa Water, so that it is easier to see what is going on closer to Goat Fell.

There are 3 X other reporting units covering areas of private forestry and the Sannox estate property.

In this plan, all count and cull information will be reported at the Deer Management Unit level. (Table 2), which can be noted on **3. Arran DMG Reporting Units Map**.

*Table 2 : Arran DMG Deer Management Units (area figures are approximate)*

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
1. FCS Dougarie 1	619	Forestry	FES
2. Machrie Forest	241	Forestry	xxxxxx
3. FCS Dougarie 2	76	Forestry	FES
4. Highfield Forestry block	676	Forestry	Dougarie
5. Dougarie West	7495	Deer	Dougarie
6. Dougarie East	2490	Deer	Dougarie
7. North Coast	1821	Deer/ range	Sannox
8. Torr- South Sannox	2724	Deer/ range	Sannox
9. FE Glensannox Grazing	122	Forestry	FES
10. Sannox estate	150	Agr/ deer	Sannox
11. National Trust	2176	Access/ conservation	Sannox
12. FE Sannox/ Goatfell	1233	Forestry	FE
13. South Beat	1910	Deer/ range	Sannox
		<b>Total area:</b>	<b>21, 733 ha</b>

#### **4. Deer information required & culling operations**

The data on deer counts and culls supplied by Members to Arran DMG has always been based on their overall land holdings. Members agree, however, that for the purposes of implementing this Plan they will report counts and culls and set cull targets at the Management Unit scale (see above). This will allow a better analysis of the information provided in and around those areas of differing management objectives.

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. The agreed formats are included in [\*\*Appendix 4, Arran DMG Deer Cull Information.\*\*](#)

Recommended cull record sheets are appended to this document.

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

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.

## 5. THE DESIGNATED SITES IN THE ARRAN DMG AREA

Within the DMG area there are three different types of designation:

*Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*

*Special Protection Area (SPA)*

*National Scenic Area (NSA)*

There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Ramsar wetland sites, National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or National Parks in the area.

In addition to the national Scenic Area, 11,751 ha of the area has been classified as “wild land”.

### ***Site 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 SSSI’s, covering a total area of 1,036,000 hectares or 12.9% of Scotland.

SNH 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 Protection Area (SPA)**

A Special Protection Area (SPA) is an area of land, water or sea which has been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within the European Union. Special Protection Areas are designated under the European Wild Birds Directive and, together with SACs, form the Natura 2000 network of sites. A number of SPAs include areas notified as SSSIs and the additional SPA designation affords these areas enhanced protection.

The SSSI & SPA designations can be located on [6. Arran Designated sites Map.](#)

### **National Scenic Area**

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.

## **Arran DMG**

## **Background Information**

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

In the Arran DMG area there is one National Scenic areas, which can be seen on [7. Arran DMG Landscape Map](#). This also includes the wildland area.

Within the Arran Deer Management Group there are only 17 X designated features. Of these, only 3 are relevant to deer, with the majority either being geological or designated for breeding birds. The extensive upland assemblages are in favourable condition, but the birch woodland feature is considered to be unfavourable.

In the south of the island, outwith the main deer group, there are 16 X designated features, of which only 5 are potentially relevant to deer. Of these, only one is considered to be unfavourable, and this relates to a breeding bird population. These features can be noted on [6a. Arran Whole island Designated sites Map](#).

A full account of all these sites, their current status and what properties are involved is given in [Appendix 3, Arran DMG Designated Sites](#). In addition, [Appendix 6, Monitoring of Designated Features](#), summarizes the likely contribution of deer to these sites, and details when they were last monitored.

## Part Two - OVERALL AIMS & OBJECTIVES

### 6. 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*, and all work is carried out in accordance with *Best Practice Guides*, which continue to evolve.

- Deer populations will be managed sustainably so that their management is fully integrated with all local land uses and land use objectives.
- 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.

### 7. Strategic Objectives

The main objectives for the Group's deer management during the period of this Plan, are as follows, in all cases adhering to Best Practice Guidelines:-

- (i) To safeguard and promote deer welfare within the Arran DMG area
- (ii) To achieve an appropriate balance between deer and their habitat, and between deer and other land uses, to minimize unacceptable damage to agricultural, forestry or sporting interests, and to maintain and improve the condition of the natural heritage.
- (iii) Within the constraint of (ii) and the necessary management culls associated with this, to fulfil the annual sporting and venison production objectives of individual Members.
- (iv) To market such activity and produce to best advantage.
- (v) Without prejudice to (ii), to roughly maintain the overall size of the herd over the period of this plan, 2016-20, to bring local numbers in to line with actual sporting and other aspirations in that area, and to facilitate an overall grazing regime that will gradually improve the overall condition of the wider habitats within the DMG area. Numbers will be maintained at this level, subject to ongoing reviews of group objectives and regular habitat condition monitoring. To ensure such resources, training and monitoring capacity that is required are made available to achieve the above objectives.
- (vi) Where appropriate, to provide site specific management advice or information.
- (vii) To ensure full participation from throughout the area in the deer management group.
- (viii) To maintain and improve local employment, be that specifically in deer management, or wildlife management and agricultural activity more generally within the area.
- (ix) To ensure that an effective system of communication is in place for the internal purpose of members, for the wider community of the area and for external agencies and other interested parties. The Group will be pro-active in all their communications.

## Part Three - MANAGEMENT POLICIES & INFORMATION

### 8. Red Deer

#### Red Deer Population

Foot counts have taken place in the spring time within Arran DMG on a consistent basis over many years, and these counts have been one of the strong points about how the group operates.

The counts from 2010 are given below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Stags</i>	<i>Hinds</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Total deer</i>	<i>Density (deer/ sq km)</i>	<i>Spring recruitment rate (%)</i>
<b>2010</b>	607	708	352	1667	9.0	49
<b>2011</b>	574	475	178	1227	6.6	37
<b>2012</b>	549	628	216	1393	7.5	34
<b>2013</b>	493	588	267	1348	7.2	45
<b>2014</b>	587	719	339	1645	8.8	47
<b>2015</b>	644	728	367	1739	9.3	50
<b>2016</b>	661	853	359	1873	10.1	42

The 2016 data above is summarized on the map **12. Arran DMG 2016 Deer Density Map**.

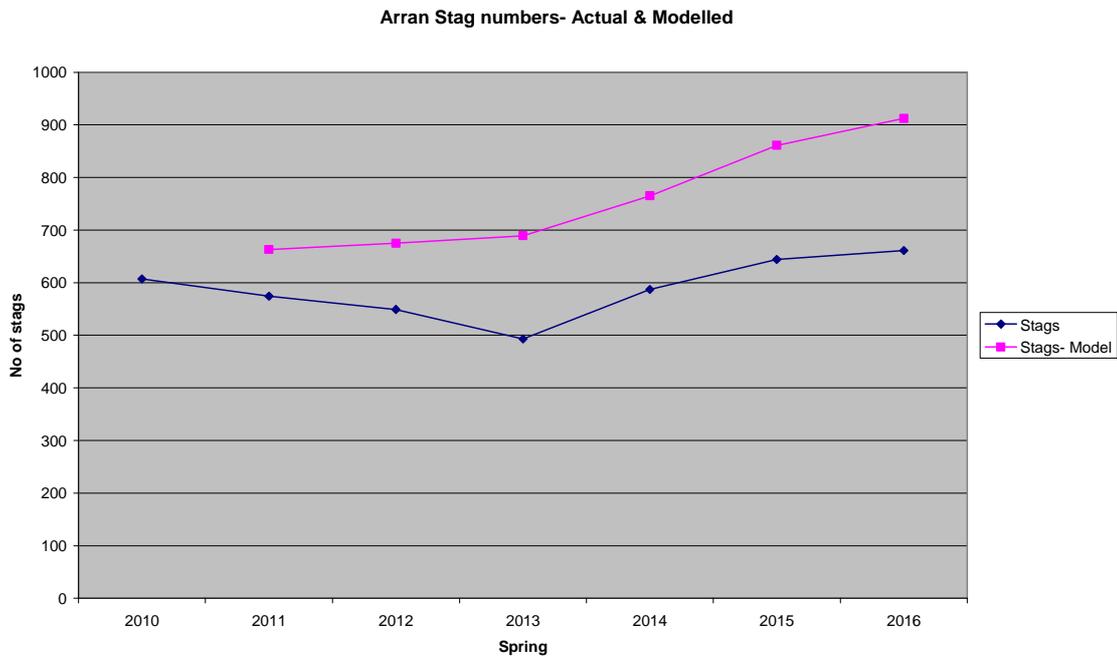
There was a very significant decline in population between 2010 and 2011, possibly in part due to the bad winter that year, although that does not show up in the recruitment count figure which would be much lower if mortality was high. From 2011, the total deer count has increased steadily through to 2016, with numbers of hinds and their attendant calves seemingly being responsible for the increase.

It is interesting to look more closely at the figures.

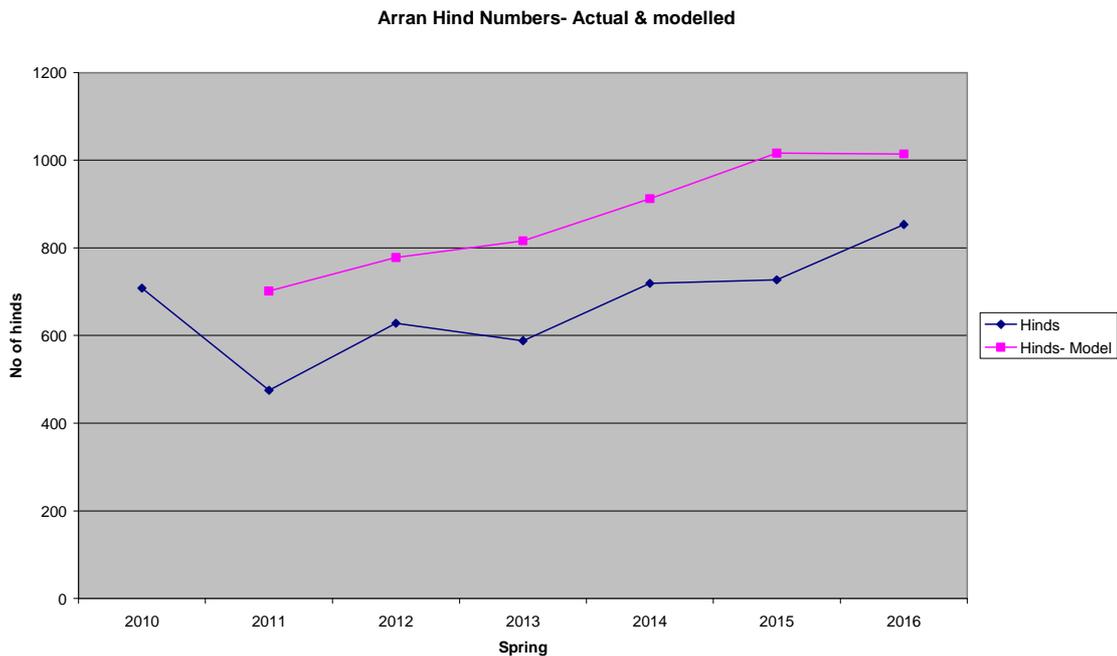
The graph below shows the counted stag population compared with the modelled population, which accounts for culled animals, estimated mortality and the apparent actual recruitment from each year. The 2010 spring population was used as a starting point.

The modelled population is fairly consistently higher than what is actually counted, with the difference being over 200 animals at the end of the period. This suggests that either mortality is higher than estimated, stag recruitment is lower, or a proportion of stags are either culled and unaccounted for, or leave the area.

Counted stag numbers decline to 2013, but have been increasing again steadily since then.



A similar pattern is shown with the hinds, see below, with a difference of approx 200 animals between counted and modelled populations. Hind numbers have been increasing steadily since 2011.



With both graphs, the initial starting population can have a lasting impact on the modelled population going forwards. To look at what might have been happening between years, the population model, below, includes additional lines to reconcile the counted population to the modelled population on an annual basis.

The highlighted “Reconciliation” figures give the difference between the counted population and the modelled population for each year.

**Assumptions: Stag mort  
2%; recruitment 42%;  
calf sex ratio 50:50**

**Arran DMG****(Recent culls)**

area (km <sup>2</sup> )	186.45
target density / km <sup>2</sup>	10.2
target pop	1901.79

	<b>Stags</b>	<b>Hinds</b>	<b>Calves</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Density</b>
<b>2010 Spring Population</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>1667</b>	8.9
<b>2010 Summer Population</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>1950</b>	10.5
<b>2010/11 Actual Cull</b>	104	165	44	313	
<b>2011 Mortality</b>	16	18	17		
<b>Reconciliation</b>	89	226	44		
<b>2011 Spring Population</b>	574	475	178	<b>1228</b>	6.6
<b>2011 Summer Population</b>	663	573	166	<b>1403</b>	7.5
<b>2011/12 Actual Cull</b>	84	29	7	120	
<b>2012 Mortality</b>	13	11	10		
<b>Reconciliation</b>	17	-95	-67		
<b>2012 Spring Population</b>	549	628	216	<b>1393</b>	7.5
<b>2012 Summer Population</b>	657	747	299	<b>1702</b>	9.1
<b>2012/13 Actual Cull</b>	79	64	16	159	
<b>2013 Mortality</b>	13	15	18		
<b>Reconciliation</b>	72	80	-2		
<b>2013 Spring Population</b>	493	588	267	<b>1347</b>	7.2
<b>2013 Summer Population</b>	626	721	303	<b>1650</b>	8.8
<b>2013/14 Actual Cull</b>	68	45	8	121	
<b>2014 Mortality</b>	13	14	18		
<b>Reconciliation</b>	-41	-57	-62		
<b>2014 Spring Population</b>	587	719	339	<b>1644</b>	8.8
<b>2014 Summer Population</b>	756	888	400	<b>2044</b>	11.0
<b>2014/15 Actual Cull</b>	73	62	26	161	
<b>2015 Mortality</b>	15	18	24		
<b>Reconciliation</b>	24	80	-17		
<b>2015 Spring Population</b>	644	728	367	<b>1739</b>	9.3
<b>2015 Summer Population</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>2076</b>	11.1
<b>2015/16 Actual Cull</b>	147	197	61	405	
<b>2016 Mortality</b>	17	18	20		
<b>Reconciliation</b>	3	-157	-103		
<b>2016 Spring Population</b>	661	853	359	<b>1873</b>	10.0
<b>Actual Spring Population</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>1873</b>	10.0

Positive figures suggest that this number of animals have disappeared from the population, either through death or emigration. Negative figures suggest that this number of animals have moved in to the population. It is quite possible that animals have been missed, either on the open hill, or those which have been hiding in woodlands during counts.

For stags, all but one of the figures is positive, with an overall average of + 27. For hinds,

## Arran DMG

## Background Information

the figures seem to alternate between positive and negative, although it is not clear if this partly a function of the modelling process. The average is + 15. For the calves, the counted number is almost always higher than the modelled number. This possibly suggests that the recruitment figure given is an under-estimate. The average difference is -34.5.

The figures suggest that the Arran DMG population is reasonably well self contained, but that there is a modest amount of leakage out of the population, or the woods hide some deer during counts. The calf figures suggest the recruitment % is under estimated.

Going forwards, these average reconciliation figures will be used in the population models.

There is no count data for Forest Enterprise on Arran, but analysis of cull figures is provided for in the next section.

### Red Deer Cull Data

This following table shows the open range cull data within the group since 2011:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Stags</i>	<i>Hinds</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Total deer</i>
<i>2011</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>313</i>
<i>2012</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>2014</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>121</i>
<i>2015</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>2016</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>405</i>

There was an obvious decline in cull between 2011 and 2012, followed by 4 X years of relatively low culls, before a large increase to 405 animals in the 2015-16 year.

The very low numbers of calves being culled in three years suggests that yield hinds were being targeted for culling in these years.

Forest Enterprise Cull data

FE cull data can be compared for their property within the DMG area and for the rest of the island.

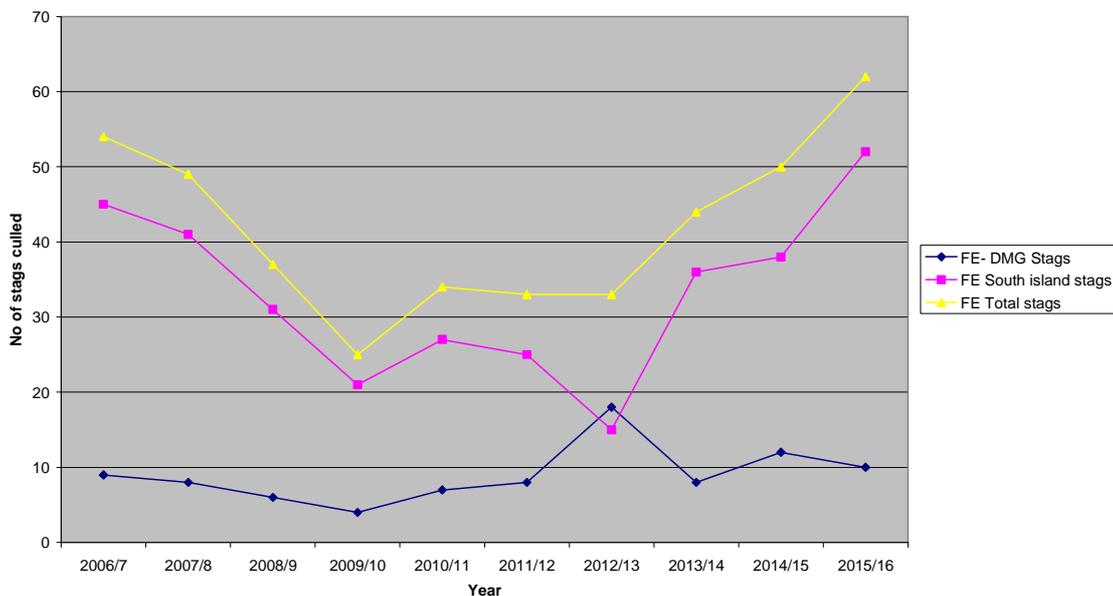
A summary since 2006 is given below. The hinds and calves are not split up.

Year	FE- DMG Stags	FE- DMG H & C	FE South island stags	FE- South Island H & C	FE Total stags	FE Total h & c
2006/7	9	14	45	93	54	107
2007/8	8	6	41	62	49	68
2008/9	6	14	31	23	37	37
2009/10	4	11	21	34	25	45
2010/11	7	12	27	41	34	53
2011/12	8	8	25	41	33	49
2012/13	18	30	15	40	33	70
2013/14	8	6	36	49	44	55
2014/15	12	10	38	63	50	73
2015/16	10	27	52	67	62	94
<b>Total:</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>651</b>

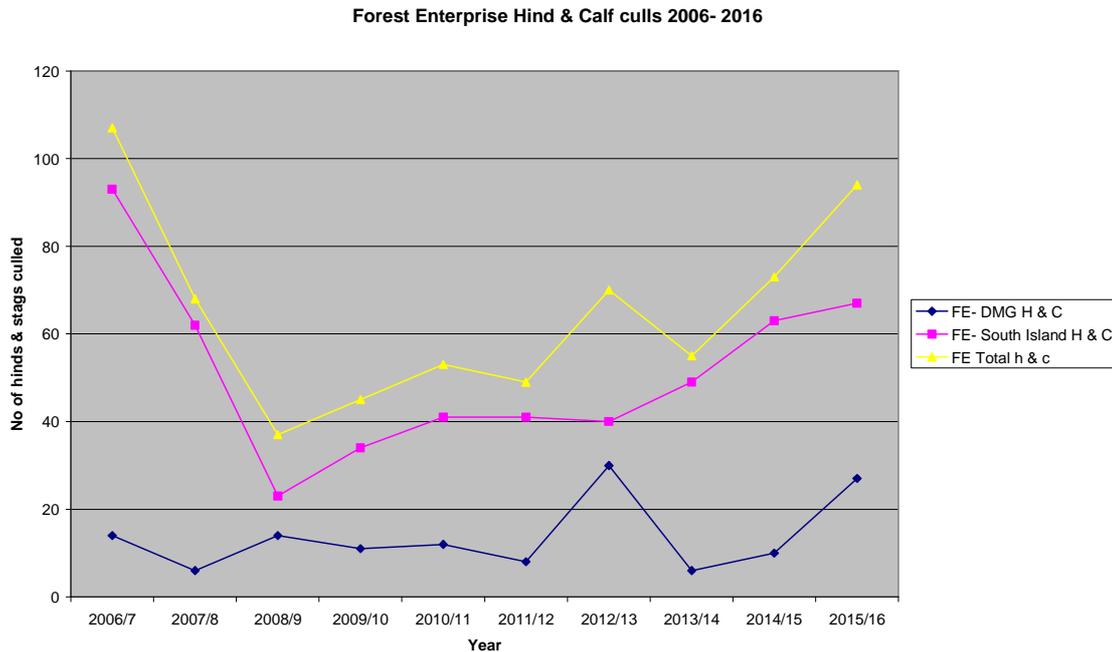
The FE cull outwith the DMG is therefore several times that recorded within the DMG area, with approx 3 X the number of both stags and hinds/ calves being taken on the south part of the island.

For stags, the data shows the cull within the DMG area fairly steady, but on a slight upward trend. Within the south part of the island, and the island as a whole, stag numbers culled fell gradually through to 2013, but have since been increasing sharply again. It is not known whether this reflects a growing population, more effort being put in, or others in the south of the island possibly culling less.

Forest Enterprise Stag Culls 2006- 2016



For hinds and calves, the culls figures, below, show a fairly steady but slightly upward trend within the DMG.



In the south of the island, and on the island as a whole, the hind cull has been increasing since 2008/9, having fallen sharply from 2006/7 to then. Hind/ calf culls have yet to reach 2006/7 levels again, but they appear to be heading in that direction.

### Red Deer Management Issues

The following factors have been identified as issues relating to red deer management within the group area:

#### *Boundary Fence maintenance*

The DMG area is effectively fenced off from the south of the island, but the maintenance requirements for this are very high, and deer do manage to get around the ends of the fences on occasion, so there is some leakage. The fence is maintained by group members. Its presence does raise the question of the relationship of the DMG area to the rest of the island.

#### *The rest of Arran*

The South part of Arran outwith the fenced area is not part of the DMG. It has been suggested that the DMG extend its boundaries to take in the whole island. That would involve taking in a large number of both owner occupied and tenanted farms, and would certainly change the nature of the Arran DMG. FE have a very large landholding in the south of the island, and cull many more deer there than within the DMG area. Very little information exists on populations south of the deer fence. There is strong anecdotal evidence of red deer causing damage to grass and crops in the south of the island, but the extent of this is unclear. A suggestion has been made that there may be more deer in the south of the island than in the north. This would seem unlikely, but there is certainly a significant population there, and the lack of any current collaborative structure there can only lead to problems and should be addressed.

*Designated sites*

Upland designated sites dominate much of the DMG area, but the broad suite of habitats are listed as being in Favourable condition, with the exception of birch woodlands. Broad deer population densities would therefore appear to be more or less in keeping with the needs of these sites, so maintaining this population at the current density or below should ensure that these sites are kept in good condition, although some fine tuning on a local level may be required in some areas.

The woodland areas will require to be addressed individually.

*Perceived conflicts in objectives*

The suggestion has been made that the objectives of the NTS are markedly different from other group members and that this is a problem within the group. However, as noted above, the broad status of habitats within the area tends to be favourable, so it is important not to over-state any differences that do exist.

*Native Woodlands*

A very high proportion of the native woodland resource in the DMG area is either highly or very highly impacted by herbivores. Several key areas have been identified, and options for dealing with these will be explored in the first five years of this plan.

*Structure of the DMG*

The Arran DMG works very well, delivering consistent counts on an annual basis, changing cull levels to reflect the population recorded, and co-operating well together to share larder facilities and market venison from the island through one outlet. It is however fairly informal in its structure, lacking a constitution and bank account, and the DMG would almost certainly benefit from formalizing the group and how it operates, especially if input from the south of the island was to develop.

**Other Deer Species**

There are no other species of deer on the island, and group policy is that this should remain the case.

There is a high density of sika deer on the Kintyre peninsula, and it is possible that they could swim across to Arran. While this has never occurred, the possibility should always be borne in mind, and rapid actions aken to deal with any animals arriving if that ever where to occur.

**9. Moorland Management**

There is no intensive moorland management within the DMG area, but the 2 X private estates do carry out muirburn as and when opportunities arise. A modest amount of moorland shooting takes place, but this is very much secondary to both deer management and wider agricultural activity.

No muirburn takes place on NTS land. Some fairly extensive efforts to control bracken have taken place in recent years.

## **10. Hill Sheep & Cattle Management**

There are approx 1600 sheep within the boundaries of the Group, with the vast majority of these being on Sannox/ Arran estates, and many of these are constrained to lower ground grazings. There is a very modest number of sheep on Dougarie estate, reduced significantly from 3000 thirty years ago.

There are no sheep on NTS ground.

### **Cattle**

There are no hill cattle reported within the DMG area.

## **11. Forestry & Woodland Management**

There are significant FE and private plantations within the DMG area, some of which are open to deer and provide useful shelter for them. The private forestry is managed by a variety of woodland companies. There appear to be few plans for significant felling and restocking in the near future.

## **12. Supplementary Deer Policies**

### SNH Authorisations

Members will be encouraged to share information within their Sub-Group on any out of season and night shooting authorizations, over some or all of the land where they carry out the deer control.

### Winter Mortality

Members will monitor and report any significant levels of winter mortality to the Group, or any significant health issues encountered. It is considered that mortality within the group is approx 2% for adults and 6% for calves in their first year, but this can increase very significantly in wet winters or after very late springs. Recruitment is approx 35-42%, varying across the Group, although this can be much less after poor weather. This is relatively high in comparison to other DMG areas, and recruitment of over 50% in some years appears to be possible as well, reflecting the relatively fertile nature of the hills within the DMG, and the fairly benign climate.

It is critical for this DMG that recruitment counts are carried out thoroughly on an annual basis in late April/ early May each year, as recruitment is easily under-estimated within a very productive area such as this.

### Deer Related Traffic Incidents

It is agreed by the Members that they will keep records of any collisions between deer and cars or other vehicles in their area together with relevant information (eg. 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>

### Deer Fences

The strategic deer fence separating the DMG area from the rest of the island is a notable feature of the group. It is relatively effective, although maintenance costs are significant. While significant numbers of deer also exist in the rest of the island, there is no suggestion

that this fence could be removed and deer managed across the island as a whole. However, better information reported from the rest of the island might better inform any future decisions on this.

#### Supplementary/ diversionary Feeding

No significant feeding takes place on the island, although a modest level of experimental feed block use has taken place on Arran estates. In general, good quality vegetation is available for deer throughout the year, with a good mixture of heather and grassland habitats.

Members agree that they will inform the Group if any significant changes are made to current practice. All deer feeding which takes place will comply with industry Best Practice guidance.

#### Venison Marketing

All venison production within the DMG is marketed through the shared larder at Brodick which is quality assured. Collaboration within the Group is therefore very good in this regard.

### **13. Non- native Species Policy**

With red deer as the only deer species currently present on Arran, the DMG will work to ensure that no other species becomes resident there. It is believed that the risk of other species getting to Arran is low, but the theoretical movement of Sika deer from the Kintyre peninsula will be guarded against.

#### Other non- native species

Sightings of any other deer species, notably muntjac, will be reported immediately to both the deer group and to Scottish Natural Heritage, and efforts made to remove such animals if they were ever to occur.

### **14. Communications Policy**

The Arran DMG 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 will be on their own dedicated website, on which all information relevant to the group can be located. This will include the deer management plan and associated maps, a constitution, minutes of group meetings, and population models.

The link for this website is: <http://arrandmg.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. Their contact details are:

### **Arran Deer Management Group**

#### **Contact**

Stephen Gibbs, Chair  
[office@dougarie.com](mailto:office@dougarie.com)

Charles Fforde, Secretary/ Administrator  
[Ccff.arran@virgin.net](mailto:Ccff.arran@virgin.net)  
Tel: 01770 302 203

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 promptly if appropriate.

For more long established or strategic issues, it may be appropriate for the issue to be brought up at a deer management group meeting, which take place at six monthly intervals. The Chairman may recommend this to you. The spring meeting will be an open meeting to which anyone is entitled to attend. Items for inclusion on the Agenda for such meetings must be submitted to the Group Chairman three weeks in advance of the meeting, otherwise they can be taken up under "Any Other Competent Business". Any item that is not deemed appropriate for discussion on the Agenda will be addressed in some other, appropriate fashion. Please respect the judgement of the Chairman if his view is that, in the first instance, an issue should be dealt with outside a formal group meeting. This may be because of time pressures, or the nature of the issue at hand.

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 and addresses 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 Scottish Natural Heritage, at any of the contact points listed here below:

#### **Scottish Natural Heritage Contact**

Jamie Hammond, Scottish Natural Heritage, Strathallan House, Castle Business park, Stirling, FK9 4TZ, Phone: (01786) 435 390 or mobile: (07795) 127 706

Email: [James.Hammond@snh.gov.uk](mailto:James.Hammond@snh.gov.uk)

[Holly.Deary@snh.gov.uk](mailto:Holly.Deary@snh.gov.uk), is also partly seconded to the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG), leading on collaborative deer management across the country

For more general deer enquiries: [wildlifeops@snh.gov.uk](mailto:wildlifeops@snh.gov.uk)

Arran DMG 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.

Arran DMG welcomes comment on all matters either directly or indirectly associated with deer management within the Group area.

### **15. Training Policy**

Arran DMG will 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 2016, all five personnel involved in deer management in the Arran DMG 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.

At March 2016, four of the five personnel involved in deer management in the Arran area held the 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. At March 2016, all five personnel involved in deer management within with area had trained hunter status.

All personnel requiring to take deer under special authorizations must be on the SNH “Fit & Competent” register. The requirement for this is to hold the DMQ Level 2 qualification, or DMQ Level 1 plus two references.

At March 2016, four of the five personnel in the Arran DMG area were on the Fit & Competent register.

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. Arran DMG 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.

## **16. Reviewing the Plan**

This Plan provides an agreed framework for a co-ordinated and co-operative approach to deer management in the area. The actual 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. Group members are therefore encouraged to report all changes in contact details, personnel or management practices that might be relevant to the group, or any potential upcoming projects that might affect deer management within the area, even if such proposals are still at a planning stage.

The population models and maps will be updated on an annual basis as required, with the former adjusted so that it is always looking five years ahead.

The Members agree that there will be a more systematic review of the Plan and its provisions during autumn 2020 and thereafter, 2025, and, if considered necessary, the production of a revised edition of the Plan will be actioned at these points.

## Part Four - OPERATION OF THE GROUP

Arran DMG has been assessed against the DMG Benchmark document developed by the Association for Deer Management Groups. In this section of the plan, an account is given of how the Group currently meets the recommended operating criteria and, where appropriate, correcting or amending actions are listed.

### Area & Boundaries

The boundaries of the current Group are well defined, with the DMG area being separated from the rest of the island by a deer fence.

However, there is a strong case for extending the Group area to cover the whole island, as a very significant red deer population exists outwith the DMG. One of the main recommendations of this plan is that the Arran DMG area is extended to cover the whole island, and that options for doing this should be pursued. The process is likely to take place gradually over a number of years. It is likely that properties in the south of the island should be recruited as “reporting members” first, becoming full members as they become comfortable in doing so.

The location of the group is shown on the **1. Arran DMG Location map**.

### Action Point

*1.1 Options are explored for extending the DMG area to cover all of the island of Arran.*

*1.2 FE to report on their holdings in the south of the island from 2016-17 onwards.*

### Membership

There are a number of plantation areas within the DMG that do not report to the group or consider themselves as members. It is suggested that these properties are recruited as “reporting members” and encouraged to circulate deer culls and future management plans to the Group as appropriate. These properties, along with full members, can be seen at:

**2. Arran DMG Members map.**

### Action Point

*2.1 During 2016/ 17, recruit all properties within the DMG area as Reporting Members of Arran DMG.*

*2.2 Collate 2015-16 cull data for these properties, and add them to the SNH statutory return database.*

### Meetings

The group already meet twice annually. Attendance at meetings is generally good. SNH & FE attend meetings, and group have demonstrated an ability to take forwards business between meetings.

### Action Points

*3.1 As above, look to encourage wider community participation, including invitations to community councils to attend meeting. All such groups to be given the opportunity to*

*contribute to the agenda of meetings.*

*3.2 Group to consider options for extension to the rest of the island, and to open up communications as appropriate.*

### **Constitution & Finances**

There is no existing constitution, but this has been addressed as part of this management planning process. The Group has operated without the need for a bank account in the past, but has opened up an account to deal with this DMP process. If the Group takes on additional work or expands to take in the rest of the island, then accounts and annual budgeting will become important.

#### Action Points

*4.1 A constitution to be adopted at either the Spring 2016 or autumn 2016 group meeting.*

*4.2 DMG to provide accounts annually to 31<sup>st</sup> March, and to prepare annual budget in advance of spring meeting.*

### **Deer Management Plan**

No recent plan has been in place for the Group as a whole. A Steering Group that has included group members and SNH have ensured that all the relevant elements of an approved plan are in place now, and it is planned to endorse the plan at the spring 2016 group meeting. A full range of local interests have been consulted on deer management issues within the area, including community councils and the local authority.

#### Action Points

*5.1 Endorse DMP at spring 2016 meeting following consultation on the draft plan.*

*5.2 Ensure a system of communications is in place whereby local interests have access to the plan, and can input to future development of it. To achieve this, the Plan will be published on a dedicated DMG website. The ethos behind this plan is that it will be regularly updated, perhaps twice a year, and therefore it is impracticable to circulate hard copies of the plan.*

### **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 Points

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

*6.2 At all subsequent meetings, group members will have the opportunity to raise any issues relating to deer welfare issues or other problems that they are aware about within the Group. In all cases, members are encouraged to bring the issue up with those responsible in the first instance, or to seek the advice of the Group Chairman.*

### **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 Knoydart DMG constitution.

### **Wild Deer 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.

### **Data & Evidence gathering- Deer Counts**

Deer counts take place within the Group on a very regular and systematic basis, and good information exists for a number of years. Reconciliation of count results with population modelling shows that count details can be considered to be broadly accurate and fit for the purpose of deer management planning within the DMG area. It is recommended that this pattern of counts be maintained, but that consideration is also given to doing a recruitment count in the early summer each year.

#### Action Points

- 9.1 *Continue with current deer counting practice.*
- 9.2 *If possible, look to undertake another helicopter count within the period of this plan, but it is noted that such counts in the past have not been particularly effective on Arran as the deer are used to helicopters and do not get up and move in response to them.*
- 9.3 *Group members need to carry out thorough and consistent recruitment counts on an annual basis to inform the population model. Such counts should take place in the final week of April/ first week of May, and the recruitment % is the no. of calves expressed as a proportion of the no. of hinds, two years or older.*

### **Data & Evidence Gathering- Culls**

Good cull data exists for the DMG area, but it is not always clear what areas are being reported on, and hind and calf cull data have not been distinguished within FE culls. It is therefore recommended that culls are given on a more consistent basis, and given on the reporting units described earlier in this document.

**Action Point**

*10.1 Update the population models and target culls on an annual basis, using recruitment and mortality data collected, as well as actual culls from the previous year.*

*10.2 All cull data to be collated at end of season promptly, and forwarded to all members well in advance of spring meeting.*

*10.3 Cull data to be obtained for all reporting units within the DMG area.*

**Data & Evidence Gathering- Habitat Monitoring**

Habitat monitoring activity is mixed within the DMG area, with very few personnel involved in this. This is an area of weakness that should be addressed during the period of this plan, and it will involve a period of training for estate staff.

**Action Points**

*11.1 A schedule of habitat and designated site monitoring will be provided in the Working Plan.*

*11.2 The Group will investigate taking forwards an ECAF/ SRDP application to fund part of this, and to co-ordinate the interpretation of the data collected.*

*11.3 Updated sheep information will be attained from group members for 2020 and 2025, in line with the data gathered on a five-year basis since 1995.*

**Competence**

Of the 5 personnel involved in deer management within the Arran DMG area, the following qualifications are held:

DMQ Level 1:	5
DMQ Level 2	4

All 5 X personnel hold trained hunter status, and 4 X personnel are on the SNH “Fit and Competent” register. Note: in this latter case, personnel only need to be on the register if they are applying to cull deer under authorization at night or out of season.

Office bearers from the DMG have attended courses ran by the Association of Deer Management Groups in relation to operation and leadership within local groups.

**Action Point**

*12.1 DMG members will seek to ensure that DMQ Level 1 and Trained Hunter status are retained as the now accepted industry standard within the area, and encouragement will be given to all professional stalkers to achieve DMQ level 2.*

*12.2 Training or support in higher level qualifications will be encouraged where that is appropriate.*

### **Training**

A Training Policy is included earlier in this document.

#### Action Points

*13.1 Promote and facilitate the uptake of appropriate deer management qualifications..*

*13.2 Be aware of the ongoing development of Best Practice Guidance and any new techniques or standards that arise from that.*

*13.3 Review training needs on an annual basis.*

### **Venison Marketing**

All venison from within the DMG area is marketed through a shared larder facility at Brodick, and all venison is quality assured.

Current arrangements might need to be reviewed should additional venison become available for other parts of the island.

#### Action Points

*14.1 Maintain current arrangements re: venison marketing from the DMG area.*

*14.2 Liaise with others re: larder facilities should the Group area be extended to cover the whole island.*

### **Communications**

A Communications policy is included in an earlier section of this document.

The annual communications strategy will involve making all relevant documents available through a dedicated DMG website and also the ADMG website, including the opportunity to contribute to the Agenda of meetings, holding one open meeting a year, answering all requests for information from the media and arranging open days and demonstration events where these are appropriate.

All local stakeholders, including the local community council will be consulted on the development of this plan.

#### Action Point

*15.1 Implement the communications strategy as agreed, and ensure a mechanism is in place for dealing with business and issues between meetings.*

## Part Five - PUBLIC INTEREST OUTCOMES

Arran DMG has been assessed against the DMG Delivery of Public Interest document developed by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Association for Deer Management Groups. In this section of the plan, an account is given of how the Group currently delivers public benefit and, where appropriate, correcting actions are listed.

### **Develop Mechanisms to manage deer**

Arran DMG has completed both the Benchmark and Public Interest assessments.

A series of actions have been identified to be taken forward in a Working Plan, and roles for implementing this have been assigned.

A forward looking deer management plan is in the process of development, and is expected to be endorsed in spring 2016. The plan plus associated documents, maps and minutes of meetings will be published on a dedicated DMG website space <http://arrandmg.deer-management.co.uk>.

#### Action Points

*PIA 1.1 Publish and endorse the new Arran Deer Management Plan in spring 2016.*

*PIA 1.2 Re-assess the Group against both the Benchmark and the Public Interest criteria once DMP has been endorsed, and then annually thereafter.*

*PIA 1.3 Review the Working Plan on an annual basis and minute progress and changes.*

### **Delivering Designated Features in to Favourable condition**

Designated sites and features within the DMG are documented with [Appendix 3, Arran DMG Designated Sites](#).

Almost all of the designated features relating to deer on Arran are currently in Favourable condition, with the only exception being the SSSI designated native woodlands within the overall complex of designated habitats. In the short term, the 4 X largest woodland cluster lie outwith designated sites, and it is intended to focus on these first. These are mentioned in the next section of this document.

#### Action

*PIA 2.1. Maintain deer densities at or below current levels to protect the range of upland designated features.*

*PIA 2.2 Investigate options for regenerating native woodland areas within the designated areas and devise a possible working plan by 2018.*

**Manage Deer to retain existing Native Woodland cover and improve woodland condition in the medium to long term.**

There are approx 3176 hectares of woodland within the Arran DMG area, covering just less than 15 % of the area of the Group (National Forestry Inventory, NFI). This is slightly low compared to the national average of c 18.5 %, but it reflects the very large area of moorland interior within the group. The woodland is concentrated mainly around the periphery of the Group, and woodland connectivity is in fact relatively good. The 3176 ha includes all recently planted woodland, and Forest Enterprise woods, although a significant area is in private hands as well.

Of this area, 663 hectares or 21 % is composed of native or nearly native woodland (NFI).

Of the total woodland area, only 1.6 hectares is under an agreed management regime through an SRDP Forest Plan or Management Plan since 2008. There were 244 hectares under an SFGS management plan from 2003-7. Given the high proportion of woods in this area within FE ownership, and the fact that much of the woodland area is still fairly young, this is a relatively high level of woodland under active management in the 2003-7 period.

Only 1 ha has been under a felling licence 2012-14, and 1327 ha from 1998- 2011. (Woodlands covered by a Forest Plan do not require a separate felling licence).

Of the total native woodland area of 663 ha (NWSS), the following herbivore impact levels are currently given:

*Low: 148 ha or 22 %*

*Medium: 63 ha or 10%*

*High: 280 ha or 42%*

*Very High: 172 ha or 26%*

Only 32% of native woodlands therefore show low or medium herbivore impact levels., with 68% being at high or very high impacts. These areas are shown on [10. Arran Woodland Herbivore Impacts Map.](#)

As a comparison with the whole island, the following herbivore impacts are given:

*Low: 614 ha or 35 %*

*Medium: 252 ha or 15%*

*High: 615 ha or 35%*

*Very High: 252 ha or 15%*

Of the 1733 ha of native woodland on the whole island, including the Arran DMG area, the area is split exactly 50:50 between low/ medium and high/ very high impacts. These areas are shown on [10a. Arran Woodland Herbivore Impacts Map.](#)

In the Arran DMG area, within the 402 ha of woodland that are outwith designated sites, have more than 90% native species, 50% canopy and less than 10% invasives, the following herbivore impacts are given:

*Low: 85 ha or 21%*

*Medium: 33 ha or 8%*

*High: 197 ha or 49%*

*Very High: 86 ha or 21%*

Therefore, only 29% of these woods that are otherwise in “satisfactory condition” outwith designated sites show low or medium herbivore impacts. This is one of the lower levels in the country, and is in comparison to the 60% of such woodlands which Wild Deer- A National Approach (WDNA) envisage being in such condition by 2020.

There are 4 X clusters of woods at high/ very high impacts, shown on the **11. Arran Key Woodland Sites map**.

Area 1 is approx 60 ha, and is centred around a young broadleaved planting/ regeneration scheme, which has only been partially successful in the past, but the resultant mixture of planted trees, regeneration and open ground comprises a very nice native woodland of varying structure. Deer are present within the area, and damage to some regeneration is evident, without it being sufficient to put the future of the wood in danger. Dougarie estate are currently working with the Forestry Commission and have agreed a plan of actions to rectify any problems with this site, and bring it fully up to standard.

Area 2 lies to the north of the island, on the hill above the village of Lochranza. It extends to almost 100 ha or thereabouts, and is open to deer, although pockets of pole stage birch and willow and also some younger regeneration is also in evidence. In general, the age profile of the wood is mature, but seemingly not over- mature. There is a very significant level of rhododendrons throughout this area, although the NWSS mapping does not record this as being 10% or more. It is however obvious from site inspection, that in terms of threats to this woodland, that the invasive species threat is more important in the short to medium term than herbivore impacts, and deer control/ exclusion by itself will not result in these woods moving in to satisfactory condition. At c 100 ha, this area is the largest area of native woodland on the island in unsatisfactory condition.

Area 3 lies on and around Sannox Estate, with a number of different occupiers. The woods are complex and fragmented in some areas, and it is understood that options for regeneration have been explored for implementation. Rhododendrons are also in evidence, but possibly only as a small proportion of the whole. No extensive survey was carried out in this area, which extends to c 40 ha or so.

Area 4 lies to the south of Sannox, and extends to c 45 ha. Like Area 2, there is a good deal of younger age class trees, especially along the road sides, but rhododendrons are also very extensive, although they are not reflected in the NWSS mapping for that area. As with Area 2, reduction of herbivore impacts in this area will not therefore result in the woodlands coming in to satisfactory condition, unless the rhododendrons are also tackled as well.

Overall therefore, it is suggested that in the short to medium term, that an extensive plan to eradicate rhododendrons from the north part of Arran is a greater priority than herbivore reductions in these areas, especially as significant levels of pole stage trees already exist.

Actions

*PIA 3.1 Dougarie Estate to work FCS to regenerate/ establish the young woodland area on their property to the required standard. Agreement has recently been made to do this.*

*PIA 3.2 Investigate options for sheep reduction in woods around Sannox, and implement as required.*

*PIA 3.3 In the short to medium term, investigate options for eradicating rhododendrons from the native woodlands and the north of the island. Improvements in the status of these woods will not be possible unless this can be achieved, they being a greater threat to these woods than current levels of herbivore impacts.*

**Demonstrate DMG contribution to woodland expansion target**

There has been only a very modest increase in woodland area within the DMG over the past 20 years or so, with 71 hectares being established under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) since 2008, 46 hectares being established under the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) since 2003, and 115 hectares being established under the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) since 1994. See [9. Arran DMG Woodland Creation Map](#).

This woodland expansion amounts to 232 hectares in total, or 7 % of the woodland area today, which includes the extensive FE area. The % increase is therefore relatively small as well. Of the most recently planted woodland under SRDP, all consisted of native woodland planting.

Looking ahead, the private owners within the Group and NTS have suggested that they could plant up to 50 ha of new native woodland within the period of this plan, although indications have also been given that some of the native woodlands stands will be protected, and initial scoping work has been done on some of this..

Actions

*PIA 4.1 DMG members to take forwards applications for approx 50 ha of new planting.*

**Monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside**

Outwith the designated sites within the DMG area, it is considered that there are the following areas of a range of broad habitat types, taken from the LCS88 dataset. A full summary of the habitat types can be found in the Excel spreadsheet: [Appendix 8: ArranDMG Broad Habitat Data](#). This is a relatively good set of data for this area, with 971 hectares or 5% of the area obscured by cloud across the whole area. However, the data is now over 25 years old.

The main habitats in the wider DMG area are:

*3320 ha of blanket bog, covering 18% of the DMG.*

*6935 ha of heather moorland, covering 38% of the DMG.*

*3458 ha of montane habitats, covering 19% of the DMG.*

*1404 ha of improved pasture, covering 8% of the DMG*

*3266 ha of upland grasslands, representing 18% of the DMG area.*

*Finally, there are about 138 ha of miscellaneous areas, including 60 ha of open water, 35 ha of built up areas, 12 ha of golf courses, 2 ha of quarries, 10 ha of maritime grasslands, 16 ha of rhododendrons and 4 ha of caravan parks.*

#### Action Point

*PIA 5.1 An agreed monitoring programme for these habitats will be devised during the early part of 2016, to be endorsed and included in the Working Plan by June 2016.*

#### **Improve Scotland's ability to store carbon**

Within the Group area there are approx 3172 hectares of woodland and 3320 hectares of peatlands.

It has already been noted that a high proportion of the native woodlands within the Group are in unsatisfactory condition, with only 32% of all native and nearly native woodlands being at low or medium herbivore impact levels.

There is scope for creating up to 50 ha of new woodlands within the period of this plan, although this might increase significantly as options for dealing with some of the native woodland areas are explored.

The 3320 ha of peatlands are, at 18% of the area, a significant proportion of the DMG. The limited habitat surveys that have been done suggests that the majority of this is in favourable condition, and while the current densities of 9- 10 per 100 ha would normally be too high for such sites, there is little evidence for this impacting on the current resource. However, a more widespread and structured monitoring programme needs to be put in place to check the condition of the peatlands over the DMG as a whole, and to monitor these over a period of time.

To date, no requests have been made to the Group to contribute to River Basin Management Planning within the DMG area

#### Actions

*PIA 6.1 Put in place a habitat monitoring scheme to determine the current status of blanket bogs within the area, and take action necessary to lower impacts on these should that be required.*

*PIA 6.2 Implement the woodland creation and native woodland restoration schemes mentioned previously.*

*PIA 6.3 Discourage any burning that might impact on peatland sites.*

*PIA 6.4 Contribute to River Basin Management Planning as appropriate when requests to do so are forthcoming.*

*PIA 6.5 Consider taking any priority peatland sites forwards under the Peatlands Action*

### **Reduce or mitigate the risk of invasive, non- native species**

A non- native deer policy is included earlier in this plan. There are no deer species other than red deer on the island.

#### Action

*PIA 7.1 Maintain vigilance against sika deer accessing the island from Kintyre.*

### **Protection of Historic and Cultural Features**

The following sites of cultural or archaeological interest are present within the DMG area. It is not thought that deer are causing any damage to the sites, but this will be kept under review. If anything, light grazing by deer will be beneficial to such sites:

- Cnoc a'Chlochair fort & Field system at west end of An Tuna
- Salt Pans & Coalpits, Laggan
- Laggantuine deserted settlement
- Torr an Sean Fort, North Sannox
- Deserted Settlement North Sannox
- An Cnap Vitrified Fort Mid Sannox
- Chambered cairn, South Sannox

#### Actions

*PIA 8.1 The DMG will maintain communication with the local community and look to address any issues that are identified with regards to sites of cultural interest and herbivore grazing.*

*PIA 8.2 As required by Forestry Commission, all potential woodland creation projects, including natural regeneration schemes, will be assessed by the applicants for any negative impacts on cultural or archaeological sites.*

### **Delivering higher standards of competence in deer management**

A training policy and audit is provided earlier in this document.

Of the 5 X personnel who are involved in deer management, all have DMQ Level 1, four have DMQ Level 2, and all have trained hunter status. Four personnel are on the Fit & Competent register.

Staff within the DMG area have a wide variety of other qualifications and certificates covering other aspects of their work. FE work with BASC to provide stalking opportunities for their members on FE land, and this is regarded as an opportunity for the wider stalking community to develop and exercise stalking skills and develop Best Practice skills. There does appear to be quite a strong ethos of training and staff improvement across many of the properties within the DMG.

Action Point

*PIA 9.1 Continue to monitor qualifications held by estate and FE staff, and promote a culture of continued professional training more widely.*

**Contribute to Public Health and wellbeing**

While Deer Vehicle Collisions are reported as being an issue around some of the settlements within the DMG area, there are only a small number of incidents reported, see **13. Arran Deer- Vehicle Collisions Map**. No feedback has yet been received from community groups on the island.

Food safety and meat hygiene is best maintained through appropriate training and facilities, and all personnel within the Group have Trained Hunter status. All properties operate their larder facilities to Best Practice standards, and all Group members carry the SQWV status.

The Trained Hunter training allows personnel to be able to identify any notifiable diseases in deer found in the area. It is not thought that any such problems have been identified in recent years. In any incidences that do occur, the carcass will be held back from the food chain and a veterinary surgeon asked to inspect.

Members are aware of the threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer being imported from North America, and ADMG and BDS guidance on this has been circulated to the Group.

All members are reminded to be aware of the risk of tick borne diseases, especially Lyme's Disease, and to communicate such risks to guests and members of the public who might frequent their land through suitable channels.

There are relatively few access/ deer conflicts within the Group area, although communication has yet to be received from the Arran Access Trust.

Access provision to Goat fell is good, and the mountain is widely regarded as being a key asset to the island of Arran.

A number of Group members promote access and provide good information for the public

Action Points

*PIA 10.1 Maintain communication with local Community Council re: DVCs and look to implement any mitigation which may be deemed helpful in reducing local risk. Information on accidents should be sent to [www.deercollisions.co.uk](http://www.deercollisions.co.uk)*

*PIA 10.2 Remind DMG members on an annual basis about the dangers of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and individual members to ensure safety precautions are taken by anyone who has had recent contact with deer or habitats in North America.*

*PIA 10.3 DMG to highlight the risks of ticks and Lyme's Disease to their guests and the public more generally through all appropriate channels.*

*PIA10.4 Group members and DMG to all promote a positive and welcoming message to all those visiting the area throughout the year.*

**Maximize Economic benefits associated with deer**

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 Arran DMG area is approx £32,000 annually.

A proportion of the hind cull is taken with sporting guests, the value of which might be £15,000 annually.

In both cases, extra value will be obtained from a number of estates through letting of accommodation and other ancillary services, and this can reasonably be expected to be equivalent to the letting fees outlined above. In total therefore, the sporting value of deer stalking in the area is likely to amount to approx £100,000.

Based on a cull of 157 stags, 224 hinds and 61 calves (approx 2015-16 cull, including FE), it is estimated that the total value of venison produced within the group area is approx £47,000 annually. This does not take account of the fact that a number of properties market a proportion of their venison directly within the area.

The total direct economic value of deer management within the Arran DMG area is therefore likely to be in the region of £150,000 annually, this before any economic multipliers are considered. The sporting estates will also consider their overall capital value to be related to the numbers of stags that can be culled.

Farming, forestry, let property and low ground shooting and letting property are other valuable sources of income within the area, and employees involved with deer stalking will often be involved with this wider range of activities.

Within the DMG area, there are currently 5 X personnel that are either fully or partially involved with deer management, of which only 3 X are full time employees, the other two being regularly employed contractors. 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 most significant other interest is management of livestock.

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.

This cost will however largely be expressed in terms of wages spent in the local area.

Opportunities to add value to deer management

The greater part of venison leaves the island, but the tourism economy of the island is well developed, and a proportion of venison does go to local sources. Wildlife tourism is particularly well developed on Arran, and red deer are a key part of that.

Action Points

*PIA 11.1 Develop any opportunities for adding value to deer as they arise, be that in relation to venison, deer/ wildlife watching, or any other opportunity.*

Larder/ infra- structure sharing

There already is good use made of shared larders within the DMG, and the quality of larders

is very good, with SQWV status applying to all venison produced.

### Action Point

*PIA 11.3 Maintain larder standards and SQWV status across the DMG area..*

### **Minimize the economic costs of deer management**

For virtually all of the properties within the DMG area, deer management is just one of many activities that they are involved in, and the costs of employing staff, maintaining houses and estate infra-structure will be spread across a number of different enterprises or interests, with staff undertaking different activities at different times of year. The proportions of time spent on different activities, including deer management, will vary between properties. No-one spends all of their time on deer. Indeed, few, if any, spend most of their time on deer, but the overall infra-structure of staff, housing, roads and equipment must be maintained to allow deer management to be undertaken and to be effective.

There is no accurate data reflecting the costs of providing this within the DMG, nor should we anticipate that properties would try and differentiate out their costs relating solely to deer management in this way. Many larger businesses and organizations struggle to attribute their overheads in any significant manner between enterprises or areas of interest, and it would not be realistic to expect small, highly integrated rural businesses to do so.

At a DMG level, there are 5 X personnel directly involved in deer management as a key part of their job. Terms and conditions will vary, but if an average cost of employing a staff member of £40,000 is used (to include vehicle costs etc), then a broad brush cost of £200,000 could be attributed to maintaining the very basic infra structure of staff and equipment within the area, necessary for allowing deer management to be delivered to a satisfactory level. In addition to this, in any one year, there will be very significant investment in upgrading buildings or facilities, to be used in conjunction with deer management or for other activities.

The cost of maintaining staff or contractors within the area is likely to be greater than income brought in from deer alone (£200,000 vs £1500,000, see above), but this does not account for income from other sources. The broad figures do not allow for economic multipliers within the local economy, and having a resident and reliable point of contact in these properties helps with overall maintenance and security and therefore protects the capital value of the properties as assets.

Almost all of the members of the DMG will regard the cost of employment and maintaining infra-structure as the necessary price that has to be paid to manage these properties, and that income from deer is an important part of the funding equation that allows these people in particular to remain. With other sources of income, some will certainly be running as profitable businesses. Others will accept a net annual cost as being necessary to maintain or improve their overall asset.

Within the DMG group members, there are a number of properties where deer management would be regarded as more of a cost than an opportunity, but even here, the distinctions may not be clear cut.

*Forest Enterprise* maintain full time staff, and extensive perimeter deer fences must be maintained against deer. There will be a considerable net cost to doing this, but FE also provides a recreational asset that is not replicated anywhere else on the island, and it would be accepted that there is no other way of maintaining this, and that deer are a natural part of

## **Arran DMG**

## **Background Information**

a forest ecosystem and need to be managed. Having a ranger on site allows a number of other activities to be promoted and maintained.

*The National Trust for Scotland* have an arrangement with Sannox estate for managing deer on their property, and this seems to work relatively well. There will be a net cost to doing this.

*Sannox/ Arran Estate* do not have a sporting objective as such, and see their cull as a management cull only, although the cost of achieving this is paid for by venison and paying guests.

### Action Points

*PIA 12.1 DMG to assess the current PACEC survey in to the value/ costs of deer management and extract information from Arran DMG in order to inform more fully the above narrative. Complete and adapt if necessary by spring 2017. It is not clear if any information relating to Arran properties are included as yet.*

### **Ensure effective communication in deer management issues**

The Deer Management Plan, minutes of meetings and other relevant information is being made available through the Group's own dedicated website at <http://arrandmg.deer-management.co.uk> .

Local community council to be added to circulation list as appropriate, and one meeting per year to become an open meeting. These local groups will all be notified of meetings in advance and given the opportunity of contributing to Agenda.

All the local B & Bs, holiday cottages and pubs carry a good level of information about the local area and its wildlife, including deer.

### Action Point

*PIA 13.1 Take forwards those actions outlined in the Communications Policy/ Working Plan by spring 2016*

### **Ensure Deer welfare at individual and population level**

It is not thought that there are any issues relating to deer welfare at the moment, although a number of people have highlighted the high mortality that can occur among calves after wet winters or late springs.

More widely, achieving a deer density that allows habitats to move in to favourable condition is likely to produce a more versatile and resilient natural food supply throughout the year. All group members place an emphasis on natural feeding for deer, as they do with their sheep stocks as well.

Training and levels of competence within the Group are generally very good.

### Action Points

*PIA 14.1 Focus on maintaining natural habitats in favourable condition status, as measured by targets agreed with SNH, and maintain the minimum deer densities required to meet owner's objectives.*

*PIA 14.2 Liaise locally on significant woodland management operations where these affect shelter for deer.*

*PIA 14.3 Collect deer information within the Group as per agreed recommendations. This will provide animal- specific data which can be monitored and compared to identify potential welfare issues within the area*