

ARRAN DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

AUGUST 2016 DRAFT

DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

2016 – 2025

Working Plan

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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OPERATION OF THE GROUP

Area & Boundaries

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

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

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

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 31st March, and to prepare annual budget in advance of spring meeting.

Deer Management Plan

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

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.

Data & Evidence gathering- Deer Counts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

PUBLIC INTEREST OUTCOMES

Develop Mechanisms to manage deer

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

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.

of younger age class trees, especially along the road sides, but rhododendrons are also very

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

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

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 carbonActions

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 programme, if applicable.

Reduce or mitigate the risk of invasive, non- native speciesAction

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

Protection of Historic and Cultural FeaturesActions

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 managementAction 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 wellbeingAction 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

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

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

Action Point

PIA 11.2 Maintain larder standards and SQWV status across the DMG area..

Minimize the economic costs of deer management

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

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

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

Population Modelling/ Five Year Cull Plan

The following model is the agreed (**INITIAL DRAFT**) deer management model to be followed by the group during the period of this plan. The main objective of this management regime is to *actively maintain the habitats, forage and shelter required to sustain a healthy, resilient and productive deer herd*, capable of supporting a sporting stag cull, and also be in keeping with the main natural heritage and woodland & crop protection objectives within the area. An agreed apportionment by Deer Management Unit of the cull for 2016-17 is also provided for each of the three sub-groups within Arran DMG.

An Excel spreadsheet version of these models is provided as [**Appendix 7, Arran DMG Five Year Population model.**](#)

Background

The starting point for an Arran population model was the 2016 spring foot count. Analysis of the population growth since 2010 (Background Information & Policies Document) suggests that there is some limited annual leakage from the DMG area, so average figures for this have been included in the population models.

Average mortality is assumed as 2% for stags and hinds, and 6 % for calves annually.

An average recruitment of 42% is used, although the actual recruitment rate during the last 5 X years appears to have varied between 34% and over 50%.

Model

Very roughly, the models suggest that for the above mortality and recruitment levels, along with some net migration from the population every year, than at annual cull of 120 stags, 150 hinds and 50 calves should be possible, and this creates a very stable deer population in each of the next 2 X five year periods leading through to 2027 or so. The stag: hind ratio converges towards 1 : 1 over that period.

This deer cull is less than 2015-16, but considerably more than the average from 2010-16. It comfortably allows for sporting objectives, with a significant buffer as well. The overall deer population suggested is approx 1900 animals, a bit less than the 2000 deer that group members view as an ideal. However, the model suggests that a lower deer density will still provide them with their deer requirements.

*The property- specific culls are outlined in [**Appendix 5, Arran DMG Target Culls 2016- 17.**](#) These are confidential to Group members and to SNH.*

**Arran DMG
(projecting
forward)**

area (km2) 186.45
 target density /
 km2 10.2
 target pop 1902

	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Density
2016 Spring Population	661	853	359	1873	10.0
2016 Summer Population	841	1033	434	2307	12.4
2016/17 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2017 Mortality	17	21	26		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2017 Spring Population	677	849	358	1883	10.1
2017 Summer Population	856	1028	432	2315	12.4
2017/18 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2018 Mortality	17	21	26		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2018 Spring Population	691	844	356	1891	10.1
2018 Summer Population	869	1022	429	2320	12.4
2018/19 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2019 Mortality	17	20	26		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2019 Spring Population	705	839	353	1897	10.2
2019 Summer Population	882	1015	426	2323	12.5
2019/20 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2020 Mortality	18	20	26		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2020 Spring Population	717	832	351	1900	10.2
2020 Summer Population	892	1007	423	2323	12.5
2020/21 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2021 Mortality	18	20	25		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2021 Spring Population	728	824	348	1899	10.2
2021 Summer Population	901	998	419	2319	12.4
2021/22 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2022 Mortality	18	20	25		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2022 Spring Population	736	815	344	1896	10.2

Arran DMG	area (km ²)	186.45
Suggested Cull 2022- 27	target density / km ²	10.2
	target pop	1902

	<i>Stags</i>	<i>Hinds</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Density</i>
2022 Spring Population	736	815	344	1895	10.2
2022 Summer Population	908	987	415	2310	12.4
2022/23 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2023 Mortality	18	20	25		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2023 Spring Population	743	804	340	1887	10.1
2023 Summer Population	913	974	409	2296	12.3
2023/24 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2024 Mortality	18	19	25		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2024 Spring Population	747	792	335	1874	10.1
2024 Summer Population	915	959	403	2276	12.2
2024/25 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2025 Mortality	18	19	24		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2025 Spring Population	749	777	329	1855	9.9
2025 Summer Population	914	941	395	2250	12.1
2025/26 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2026 Mortality	18	19	24		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2026 Spring Population	748	759	322	1829	9.8
2026 Summer Population	909	920	386	2215	11.9
2026/27 Proposed Cull	120	150	50	320	
2027 Mortality	18	18	23		
Reconciliation	27	13	0		
2027 Spring Population	744	739	313	1796	9.6
2027 Summer Population	901	895	376	2172	11.6

Habitat Monitoring

A key part of this plan will be to agree, fund and implement a comprehensive programme of habitat monitoring across the DMG, both on designated sites and in the wider countryside.

Such a programme will consist of a combination of statutory Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) by SNH, and private habitat impact assessments (HIA), a proportion of which may be carried out by contractor, or where training may be required to bring estate staff up to the necessary level of ability to do this themselves. A key part of any programme will be agency support in identifying sample plots, and storage and upkeep of information.

It is suggested that such a programme of monitoring is established by the Group in conjunction with SNH by June 2016, with sufficient information being available to allow an SRDP application to be submitted on behalf of the Group. It is suggested that between the Collaboration Fund, the Agro Environment Scheme, individual estate input and support from SNH, that it will be possible to cover the cost of development of such a habitat monitoring programme, which is expected to include provision for training as well as the potential use of contractors.

Recommended Habitat Monitoring programme

It is suggested that, in addition to the monitoring work on designated sites, that the Group monitor two habitats, blanket bog and dwarf shrub heath, to give an indication of impacts in the wider countryside.

SNH have recommended that for each habitat type, 30 sample points be developed within each property, with the same plots being monitored on an annual basis. These plots have been marked on the map **15. Arran DMG Habitat Monitoring Map**.

The above suggested schedule gives 90 blanket bog points and 90 dwarf shrub heath points. On a 3 year rolling programme, with one third of plots monitored each year, this would require 60 plots to be monitored annually across the DMG.

It is suggested that 2 X people could measure 10 X plots in a day, with perhaps 3 days required to plan for and collate information across the Group when complete.

It is recommended that the Group take on an external contractor to lead on and co-ordinate the work in the first year, tutoring group members to do the work in subsequent years, but with a reduced co-ordination input required. The Group could then apply to SRDP to cover the external costs, allowing that this would be 50% of the total.

However, given the relatively modest scale of habitat monitoring required, it may be that properties choose to deliver this programme privately, especially as some habitat monitoring work already takes place on the island, notably on NTS land.

The external cost of doing this is likely to be £2-2500 in the first year, perhaps reducing to half this in a subsequent year, to maybe £750 a year once group members are proficient in

Arran DMG**Working Plan**

carrying out their own monitoring, only then requiring some limited external co-ordination and data collation and interpretation.