

SOUTH PERTSHIRE DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

AUGUST 2016 DRAFT

DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

2016 – 2025

Background Information

PREFACE

This Deer Management Plan has been developed for the South Perthshire Deer Management Group (SPDMG). 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 replaces a previous plan from 2010 which only covered part of the area. 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

The South Perthshire Deer Management Group (SPDMG) lies at the south eastern edge of the main red deer range in Scotland, adjacent to the fertile farmland of Glen Almond and Strathearn, and just to the north west of Perth. The broad boundaries of the area are:

- in the east: the A9 running from Bankfoot to Ballinluig
- in the south: the A85 running from Lochearnhead to Crieff, and then following the edge of the hills and Glen Almond to Bankfoot
- in the west: the road leading from Lochearnhead up to Lix Toll
- in the north: the road from Lix Toll to Killin, and then along the south side of Loch Tay to Kenmore, and following the A827 through Aberfeldy and Grandtully back to Ballinluig

Towards the east, there are a number of properties who do not contribute to the group and therefore, the actual working group boundary is not an exact fit within this overall boundary. Other than the village of Amulree, there are no settlements within the DMG area itself, but a number of well known towns and villages lie around the periphery including Crieff, Comrie, St Fillans, Lochearnhead, Killin, Acharn, Kenmore, Aberfeldy, Dunkeld, and Bankfoot. The City of Perth lies a short distance away.

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

Scale and ownership

The entire area extends to 83,609 ha, which includes 10,555 ha of enclosed forestry. There are 38 full or reporting members of the Group, which is split in to 3 X sub- areas. Broadly speaking, the interior of the group is dominated by hill and upland terrain, grazing both red deer and sheep, with red grouse also being locally important. The balance of these objectives varies between ownerships, ranging from mixed properties supporting all three, to owner occupied sheep farms and a number of properties who have excluded deer completely to concentrate on grouse moor management. Around the periphery of the group and to the east is concentrated a significant area of forestry, both coniferous and native woodland, and fertile farmland lies to the south. There are a significant number of both tenanted and owner occupied farms within the area and in the wider vicinity. Forest Enterprise Scotland are a significant landowner within the area, and there are large windfarm developments at Griffin and Calliacher. A detailed

breakdown of management objectives is given in the next section.

The boundaries of the Group are considered to be well defined, and while there is some interaction of deer with adjacent ground, the DMG area is widely recognized as a coherent entity.

Other neighbouring Deer Management Groups are the Glenartney DMG to the south west, the Balquidder DMG to the west and the Breadalbane DMG to the north across Loch Tay. At present, there are no deer management groups to the south or east of South Perthshire DMG.

3. Group Membership

There are a range of main management objectives within the group area, summarized on [5. SPD MG Management Objectives Map](#). The mixtures of objectives are often very intimate and varied, and deer management in itself is only the dominant or over riding land use on only two properties.

- Eight properties covering 22,867 ha or 27% of the area are primarily interested in mixed farming and deer, and all but two of the smaller properties are also interested in management for grouse within this overall mix. Several owners refer to this mixture of enterprises as the “three legs of the stool” of upland management in Perthshire.
- Nine properties covering 18,798 ha or 22% of the area are principally involved in farming, and give priority to that. Three of these properties do have some deer interests but at a lower level, and one property is also interested in grouse management.
- Eight properties are primarily interested in grouse moor management, and several of these are fenced off and have no deer at all. This area may well expand further in future. These properties cover 18,111 ha, also approx 22 % of the area. Three of them also have a significant interest in deer.
- Five properties have a range of miscellaneous objectives. In relation to the above, habitat management and low ground shooting are significant objectives. These properties cover 9739 ha or 12% of the area. Two of them also have a significant deer interest.
- Eleven properties covering 10,555 ha or 13% of the area are primarily managed for forestry. These properties include Forest Enterprise, who have 4 X holdings within the area.
- Only two properties covering 1908 ha or 2% of the area are primarily interested in deer, with none of the other above objectives.
- Finally, one property is managed for habitat only, around the SSE Griffin windfarm area. This covers c 0.6% of the group area.

The following table gives a summary of the management objectives of the properties within the deer group. All are either full subscribing or reporting members of the group. Reporting members report deer culls to SPDMG once a year and receive all Group communications. The properties can be located at [2. SPDMG Members Map](#).

Table 1 South Perthshire DMG Members & Management Objectives

Property	Main Objectives	Size(ha)
Abercairny	Grouse/ farming	1816
Ardeonaig*	Priority farming	1802
Ardtalnaig	Priority farming	3188
Auchnafree	Sheep/deer/grouse	4680
Ballinloan Farm*	Farming	1510
Balmuick Farm*	Sheep/woodlands	400
Cambusurich*	Farming	1045
Carroglen	Sheep/ deer	809
Creag Ghlas*	Forestry	1765
Dall*	Farming	1035
Drummond Estates	Sheep/deer/grouse	3952
Dunira	Deer/ misc habitat	1437
Dunira Woodlands	Deer	400
Fordie	Deer/sheep/ grouse	2303
Forest Enterprise	Woodland management	1939
Garrows	Grouse/ sheep	1865
Glen Ogle (East)	Sheep/Deer	628
Glenalmond	Sheep/ Grouse	2042
Glenquaich	Sheep/ deer/ grouse	2661
Glenturret	Sheep/grouse/ deer	2236
Griffin Estate	Forestry/ sporting	4157
Highfield Forestry*	Woodland Management	766
Invergeldie	Sheep/grouse/deer	4215
Kinnaird*	Farming/ Forestry/ sporting	1805
Kinnell/ Acharn Hill	Deer	1456
Lochan	Farming/ forestry/ sporting	3803
Logiealmond	Farming/ Misc	7032
Milton of Ardtalnaig*	Sheep	269
Monzie	Sheep/ grouse/ deer	1452
Murthly & Strathbraan	Farming/ forestry/ misc	3532
Remony	Sheep/deer/ grouse	2936
SMH Holdings	Grouse/deer/ misc habitat	1690
SSE Griffin	Habitat management	500
Tullybeagles	Farming/ low ground shooting/ misc	2920
Urlar	Grouse/sheep/cattle	3272
West Glenalmond	Sheep/ grouse	2524
Wester Tullich	Farming	501
Other TBC		
	Total area covered:	83,609 ha

* These properties are reporting members only within SP DMG, reporting deer culls and receiving Group communications, but not paying a subscription to become a full member of the Group.

In addition, two properties to the south of the existing group near Comrie have indicated their wish to join the group as members. Dalchonzie is managed by SMH Holdings who are already a member of the group via their property at Glenbeich. Aberuchil Estate lies next to Dalchonzie, and would become a new member of the Group.

Perth & Kinross Council, who own and manage the Birks of Aberfeldy have also indicated an interest in becoming a member of the Group.

All three of these properties can be located on **17. SP DMG Potential Extension areas map**.

If a decision is taken to extend the Group across the A9 or south of the Almond, then a wide range of other properties will potentially become members of a larger group, although a number of these are already members, with their landholding within the area becoming enlarged. At this stage, details of these landholdings will not be included in this document.

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, SP DMG Contact List**, which is confidential to group members only. Contact details for this group are given later in the document.

Abercairny

Abercairny Estate comprises three separate hill farms, two of which lie within the SP DMG area. The priorities for the estate lie in grouse moor management and farming, and deer are viewed as being in conflict with both these activities.

Connachan – Tenanted. Let as sheep/ cattle farm. Much was reseeded post war. Part of grouse moor. V. large numbers of red deer attracted by improved pasture. Both tenant and landlord want significantly less or preferably no red deer.

Fendoch – In hand. Mainly heather moorland. Estate does not want deer as conflict with habitat for both sheep and grouse. Considerable numbers move on with east wind. Objectives are hill farm/ grouse moor. Far too small to ‘host’ red deer as well.

Ardeonaig*

Ardeonaig is primarily an upland sheep farm which grazes some cattle and is focused on making the best use of natural forage. Some limited use is made of the deer population, and there is a modest sporting stag and hind requirement.

Ardeonaig have not traditionally reported to SPDGMG, and will be regarded as a reporting member only in the initial period of this plan.

Ardtalnaig

Ardtalnaig Estate is managed primarily as an upland sheep and cattle farming enterprise. Deer are present on the property, and stags in particular seem to be located on this property, but no sporting use is made of them, and the hind cull is purely a management one.

Auchnafree

Priorities are to run a profitable sheep farm in harmony with grouse and deer; maintain employment numbers, enhance the landscape and the environment, and to develop hydro-electric power generation. Auchnafree is one of the larger properties in the Group.

<http://www.auchnafree.com/>

Ballinloan Farm*

Ballinloan Farm is one of a number of properties which lie within the area formerly known as Drummour. Details and objectives for the other properties will be obtained as this plan is taken forwards through consultation. Livestock production is the priority management consideration, but conservation schemes are also important, and deer control on the property is also an important consideration.

Ballinloan should be regarded as being a reporting member of the Group.

Balmuick Farm*

Balmuick is primarily a sheep farm, but horse stabling and grazing are also important, and there is a significant area of native woodlands planted in recent years.

The deer stalking is leased for a small rental plus venison, and management of numbers on both the open hill and in plantations is important.

Balmuick Farm should be seen as a reporting member of the Group.

Cambusurich*

Cambusurich is managed primarily as a sheep farm. There are few deer on the property, and no management of them takes place. The Cambusurich Wood SSSI lies fully within the property. The greater part of the wood is fenced off for regeneration, and is regarded by SNH as being in Recovering condition.

Cambusurich should be regarded as being a reporting member of the Group.

Carroglen

Carroglen is managed for a combination of deer stalking and both sheep and cattle grazing. Cattle are grazed in the summer only.

Martin Robb is the current Chair of South Perthshire Deer Management Group.

<http://www.carroglen.com/>

Creag Ghlas & Breaclaich*

Creag Ghlas & Breaclaich is a large forested property, and deer management for woodland protection is the primary consideration.

They should be regarded as being a reporting member of the Group.

Dall*

Dall is primarily a n upland sheep farm, which also grazes a considerable number of cattle. Deer are only present occasionally in very small numbers, and while a small number of animals are sometimes taken, they are not viewed as being a significant consideration on the property.

Drummond Estates

The Drummond Estates property at Lochearnside is managed primarily for sheep and grouse, but deer are an important if secondary consideration. The sheep are managed by a tenant farmer.

Drummond Estates provide the administrative capacity for the deer management group.

<http://www.countrysportscotland.com/provider-228-drummond-estates/>

Dunira

Dunira is managed for a number of miscellaneous but integrated objectives, with deer, lowground shooting, forestry and farming all having an important part to play. Ongoing habitat improvement schemes and woodland creation are a feature of the property.

<http://duniraestate.com/>

Dunira Woodland

This is a commercial woodland operation, although the property has a wide variety of wooded and open ground habitats, and deer stalking is an important activity within the whole. The fences are largely porous, and deer can get access to the area. Felling activity will be taking place within the period of this plan, but restock areas will be deer fenced. The property is currently putting together a 20 year Forest Plan.

Fordie

There are a number of miscellaneous and integrated land use objectives on Fordie, including forestry, shooting, farming and habitat creation, with deer stalking being an important economic activity within the whole. Accommodation provision is also important.

<http://www.chasse-ecosse.eu/>

Forest Enterprise

The value and impact of deer on the National Forest Estate and the links to our deer management effort to the three key objectives in Scotland's Wild Deer: a National Approach is fundamental. We manage the NFE as a multi-benefit resource to deliver a range of environmental, social, and economic benefits in a range of situations.

Where possible we set management strategies at a landscape scale to determine how best to integrate management objectives and maximize benefit delivery. An example of this would be Craigvinean Forest where we aspire to increase the environmental value of our planted forests through restructuring and diversification of continuous cover and natural regenerating forests. Managing habitats and associated deer populations in conjunction with SSE at Griffin, Perth & Kinross Council and the National Trust at the Hermitage is at the heart of delivering sustainable and effective deer management at a local level.

Garrows

Garrows is managed primarily for grouse and its flock of Blackface sheep. It is one of a number of properties who fenced out red deer from their ground in the recent past in order to reduce overall grazing pressure and promote recovery of moorland and other associated habitats. There have been very positive results obtained by doing this.

Glen Ogle (East)

Glen Ogle (East) is part of a larger property which extends in to the neighbouring DMG area to the west. The property is managed for sheep and deer, although they have a very modest sporting requirement.

Glenalmond

Glenalmond is now managed primarily for grouse and low ground shooting, and its own in-hand sheep farm. Woodland creation and management is important on lower ground. The property has been deer- fenced to the east in 2015 to prevent access to deer from that direction, and this has been largely successful. There is no sporting requirement for red deer, and management is concentrated on reducing/ removing the internal population so that ticks on the hill can be reduced.

Glenquaich

Glenquaich is operated as a mixed upland sporting estate to include grouse and pheasant shooting together with stalking. These objectives sit alongside an in hand sheep farm and a general desire to promote biodiversity and conservation.

<http://www.sportinglets.co.uk/locations/glenquaich/>

Glenturret

Glenturret is managed as a fairly traditional property, with an emphasis on grouse moor management an sheep farming, but with deer being an important but secondary component. The property also grazes Highland cattle. The grouse component is likely to become more important in the period of this plan.

Griffin Estate

This property is focused primarily on forest management, with Sitka Spruce dominating the crops. The age profile is such that deer are not a threat to the woodlands, and management of deer as a sporting resource is also an important current consideration. To this end, the sporting rights have been leased out. 2000 hectares of the property have been leased to SSE to establish the Griffin Windfarm. Griffin Estate still shoot over much of this property, although SSE are responsible for deer control on c 500 ha.

Highfield Forestry*

Highfield Forestry manage 4 X plantations within the SPDMG area, all in the west sub group area. They are Derry Wood and Ardveich Wood on the north side of Loch Earn,, the Dogwood Plantation at the west end of Loch Tay and the ex- Forest Enterprise wood at Kepranich on Loch Tay side. Woodland management objectives take precedence, but dee control is an important aspect of this.

Highfield Forestry should be considered as a reporting member of the Group.

<http://www.highfieldforestry.com/>

Invergeldie

Invergeldie is managed for agriculture, deer stalking and game shooting. Each enterprise is of equal importance and management is tailored in order to best compliment each other and the land that they occupy.

Agriculture- Blackface ewes

To maintain and develop a profitable and sustainable but extensive Blackface hill flock, which works in conjunction with the other estate enterprises and compliments habitat management.

Deer Stalking- Red Deer

Maintain a sustainable and healthy deer population whilst optimizing sporting income through let stag and hind stalking.

Game Shooting- Red Grouse

Improve and maintain habitats suitable for grouse, whilst also managing predators, disease and parasites.

Kinnaird*

Kinnaird Estate is managed for a variety of management objectives, including farming, forestry and both low ground shooting and deer stalking, with the latter being a modest part of the whole.

The estate should be regarded as a reporting member of the group.

Kinnell/ Acharn Hill

Managed primarily for its deer stalking, there are no sheep on the ground, and other forms of shooting are secondary in importance to deer.

Lochan

Lochan is an agricultural and sporting estate with significant forestry and renewable energy interests.

With a programme of heather burning, controlled grazing and habitat management, the tick burden has been greatly reduced and Louping Ill has been defeated. As a result the hill is able to carry increased sheep numbers resulting in the employment of an extra shepherd. Cattle are also grazed on the hill and controlled with additional fencing. These fences also protect new mixed woodlands which have been established.

In addition the renewable energy we generate has allowed the estate to employ extra person to help with habitat management. All these improvements have had the effect of increasing the red and black grouse numbers.

<http://www.bandirran.co.uk/lochan-shooting>

Logiealmond

The Logiealmond hills are principally managed for sheep farming with some cattle. There is active management of culling red deer but with a percentage of this cull being conducted with stalking clients (mostly stags). This letting is to obtain a contribution to costs. The deer numbers are acceptable with the aim of retaining the status quo. Although there is no focus on grouse management and shooting, the farming is conducted in a grouse friendly manner

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to enable them to co-exist and thrive if possible. This is to fulfil SRDP obligations. Heather burning and extensive vermin control is conducted.

Milton of Ardtalnaig*

Milton of Ardtalnaig is a small sheep farm on the south side of Loch Tay. Deer are only present on an occasional basis, and although there can be some animals culled from time to time, stalking activity on the property is minimal. There is no conflict between deer and sheep numbers. The property can be considered as a reporting member of the Group.

Monzie

Management objectives on Monzie are to sustain and develop a productive grouse moor and hill sheep flock. Deer are managed and culled to a level consistent with these above objectives.

Murthly & Strathbraan

Murthly and Strathbraan estates have a very wide range of forestry, farming and sporting interests. Forestry is the most important overall activity, with over 5000 ha of woodlands to be managed. There are both in- hand and tenanted farms. Within the sporting interests, fishing and low ground shooting take priority, but deer stalking also takes place, and three species of deer (red, roe and fallow) are all utilized. The population of fallow in particular is very large, and is detrimental to some of the wider activities. There is a particular focus on this at the moment.

<http://www.murthly-estate.com/>

Remony

A balanced portfolio of farming, woodland, sporting and the environment is maintained. Blackface ewes are out wintered, mostly on the open hill, but are gathered in for tugging and lambing. Grouse shooting and moorland management combine with deer stalking to fulfill tourism commitments. Woodlands are primarily shelter belts and below and inside the electric fence which runs along the hillside at around 1000ft a.s. The economic principle of the three legged stool guides our drive towards maximum financial returns in the chill of managing a highland estate; while ensuring that the estate continues as a viable entity for future generations not just of the family, but also the wild life that live upon it.

www.lochtaylodges.co.uk

SMH Holdings

SMH Holdings own Glenbeich Estate, and also Dalchonzie Estate who it is proposed join the SPDMG. Glenbeich is managed for grouse and wider habitat management, which is likely to involve significant woodland regeneration within the period of this plan. Deer are considered an important part of the whole. There are no longer any sheep on the property.

Dalchonzie lies to the west of Comrie. While it is well forested, there will be relatively little management required in the period of this plan, and the focus there will be on managing the open ground/ hill habitats, and deer management will be an important part of that.

SSE Griffin

SSE manage c 500 ha of ground around part of the Griffin windfarm for particular habitat improvement purposes, with a focus on control of deer numbers. Part of the windarm area is leased to Griffin Estate, who stalk this area in conjunction with their own wider holding in the area.

<http://sse.com/whatwedo/ourprojectsandassets/renewables/Griffin/>

Tullybeagles

Tullybeagles is managed for a wide variety of wildlife, farming and low ground shooting. There is no sporting interest in deer, with numbers being controlled so that they cannot conflict with any of the above mentioned priorities. Red, roe and fallow deer are all present, and active management of all three species takes place.

Urlar

Urlar is principally an agricultural and sporting estate with additional renewable energy interests. Red deer were excluded from the land east of the Kenmore/Amulree public road (Urlar) in 2005 using a 'double' mains electric stock fence. The intention being to let degraded habitat recover and to reduce a heavy tick population in favour of sheep and grouse.

Limited numbers of deer remained on the land west of the road (Tombuie) and following the erection of a 'single' mains electric fence on the Garrows and Remony marches in 2006/7 only occasional deer are now seen on the Urlar hill.

As a result of red deer exclusion, the habitat has recovered, tick and infection by Louping Ill have been severely reduced and both sheep health and grouse numbers have improved. Estate policy is to manage any red deer as and when they appear on the estate, deer tend to appear when the rut breaks out.

West Glenalmond

Managed primarily as a sheep farm, grouse are also an important management consideration, although the ground is not managed intensively like some of the estates to the north. Deer management is focused on control of numbers, and there is no sporting interest. Fishing is also important, but very much secondary to sheep production and grouse.

<http://www.countryhousescotland.co.uk/the-estate-local-area/shooting.aspx>

Wester Tullich

Managed primarily as a sheep farm, deer are rarely present on the property, and there is no sporting interest in them. Control of numbers rarely needs to be undertaken. Wester Tullich are one of a number of properties along Loch Tay side where deer are only very rarely in evidence. Some cattle are also grazed on the property, and there are a variety of woodland areas and young plantations.

In addition to the above mentioned properties, two others have indicated an interest in joining the DMG during the process of developing this plan.

Aberuchil Estate

Aberuchil lies just to the west of Comrie, and is a neighbour of Dalchonzie who also wish to be a part of the Group. Aberuchil Estate are primarily a low ground shooting estate, but with a significant sheep enterprise, and also a varied woodland resource, including a sizeable area of recent new plantings, including native pinewoods. There is a significant open hill area. The property have a modest stag sporting requirement, and control of hind numbers is also undertaken to keep numbers in check.

Perth & Kinross Council (PKC)*

PKC, the local authority, own and manage the Birks of Aberfeldy on behalf of the Aberfeldy Common Good Fund. The site is designated as an SSSI. PKC have recently undertaken to deliver pro-active management of deer around a number of properties, including the “Birks”, as the area is known. In practice, this is likely to involve the culling of a small number of roe deer annually to reduce browsing pressure within the SSSI. Non- native trees species, principally beech, are a key pressure on the SSSI area, more so than deer. The Birks lies within a wider potential extension zone to SPDGM. PKC will, in the first instance, be regarded as a reporting member of SPDGM.

<http://www.visitaberfeldy.co.uk/component/sobipro/2120-Birks-of-Aberfeldy?Itemid=0>

3b. Reporting Units *(For most properties, these refer to entire estate as before)*

For the purposes of this Plan, most properties within the area will be asked to report their counts and culls on the basis of their full property, although there are a small number of exceptions to this: Forest Enterprise will report on the 4 X management units which they have within the Group area. Highfield Forestry will report on their 4 X woodland blocks, which are all discreet from one another. West Glenalmond and Auchnafree Estates are split by the river Almond, and it is considered useful to their neighbours if they would report north and south of the river. Abercairny Estate has an internal deer fence separating the tenanted farm of Connachan from the rest of the property, and these 2 X areas will be reported separately. Lastly, the low ground at Remony has been reported separately in the past to the hill ground, and this will continue to be the case.

In this plan, all count and cull information will be reported at the Deer Management Unit level. (Tables 2-4) . In the past, South Perthshire DMG was split in to 3 X sub areas, which can be noted on **3. SP DMG Existing Sub- areas Map**. However, due to changes in land management policies and fragmentation of the overall deer range, it is now recommended that the area be split in to West, east and South central areas (**4. SP DMG Proposed new Sub- areas map**), and the tables below are compiled on that basis. The same Reporting Units are defined on both maps.

The Eastern Sub- area of SPDGM is not yet fully operational so, in the short term, the three “grouse” estates of Urlar, Garrows and Lochan will continue to attend meetings of the west group.

Table 2 : SP DMG Deer Management Units (area figures are approximate)- West Group

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
1. Glen Ogle (east)	628	Sheep/deer	Glen Ogle
2. Kinnell/ Acharn Hill	1456	Deer	Kinnell
3. Creag Ghlas & Breaclaich	1765	Forestry	TBC
4. Dogwood Plantation	104	Forestry	Highfield Forestry
5. Cambusurich	1045	Sheep	Cambusurich
6. Ardeonaig	1802	Sheep	Ardeonaig
7. Dall	1035	Sheep/ cattle	Dall
8. Wester Tullich	501	Sheep	Wester Tullich
9. Ardtalnaig	3188	Farming	Ardtalnaig
10. Milton of Ardtalnaig	269	Sheep	Milton
11. Kepranich	474	Forestry	Highfield Forestry
12. Remony Low Ground	672	Farming	Remony
13. Remony Hill	2261	Farm/ deer/ grouse	Remony
14. Auchnafree North	2546	Farm/deer/grouse	Auchnafree
15. Auchnafree South	2157	Farm/deer/grouse	Auchnafree
16. Glenquaich	2661	Farm/deer/grouse	Glenquaich
17. Fordie Estate	2303	Farm/ sporting/ misc	Fordie
18. Carroglen	809	Farm/ deer	Carroglen
19. Balmuick Farm	400	Sheep/ woods	Bob Smith
20. FE Laggan woods	60	Forestry	FE
21. Dunira	1437	For/ deer/ game	Dunira
22. Dunira Woodlands	374	For/ deer	Dun Woods
23. Invergeldie	4215	Farm/deer/ grouse	Invergeldie
24. Lochearnside	3952	Farm/grouse/deer	Drummond
25. Derry Wood	88	Forestry	Highfield Forestry
26. Ardveich	100	Forestry	Highfield Forestry
27. Glenbeich	1690	Grouse/deer/game	SMH Holdings
50. Dalchonzie	687	Deer/game	SMH Holdings
51. Aberuchil Estate	1328	Game/ For/farm	Aberuchil
		Total area:	38, 134 ha

Reporting Units in *purple* are yet to officially join SPDMG.

Table 3 : SP DMG Deer Management Units (area figures are approx)- South Central Group

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
28. Glenturret	2236	Sheep/grouse	Glenturret
29. Monzie	1452	Sheep/ grouse	Glenturret
30. Connachan	843	Sheep/ grouse	Abercairny
31. Fendoch	963	Sheep/grouse	Abercairny
32. Glemalmond	2042	Grouse/sheep/game	Glenalmond
33. West Glenalmond South	931	Sheep/grouse	West Glen
34. West Glenalmond North	1585	Sheep/grouse	West Glen
		Total:	10,062 ha

Table 4 : SP DMG Deer Management Units (area figures are approx)- East Group

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
35. Garrows farm**	1865	Grouse/sheep	Garrows
36. Urlar Farm **	3272	Grouse/sheep/renewables	Urlar
37. Lochan**	3803	Sheep/cattle/grouse	Lochan
38. TBC	1505	Forestry	TBC
39. Griffin Estate	4157	Forestry/deer	Griffin Estate
40. FE Grandtully	587	Forestry	FE
41. Kinnaird	1805	Farm/for/game	Kinnaird
42. FE Craigvinean	1719	Forestry	FE
43. SSE Griffin	500	Habitat	SSE Griffin
44.			
45. Ballinloan Farm*	1510	Farming	Ballinloan
46. FE Ladywell	173	Forestry	FE
47. Murthly & Strathbraan	3532	For/farm/game	M & S
48. Tullybeagles	2920	Farm/ game	Tullybeagles
49. Logiealmond	7032	Farm/game	Logiealmond
52. Perth & Kinross Council	52	Amenity	PKC
		Total:	35,413 ha

* This area will be split up to include another property. **Boundary issue still to be resolved on map involving units 39, 43, 44, 45**

** These properties will continue to liaise with the Western Group until the eastern sub-area is fully operational.

Reporting Units in purple are yet to officially join SPDMG.

4. Deer information required & culling operations

The data on deer counts and culls supplied by Members to SPDMG 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, SPDMG Deer Cull Information.](#)

Recommended cull record sheets are appended to this document.

All SPDMG 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 SOUTH PERTHSHIRE DMG AREA

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

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

National Scenic Area (NSA)

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (LLTNPA) occupies a small proportion of the DMG area towards the west of the Group.

There are no Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar wetland sites or National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

None 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 Area of Conservation (SAC)

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

The SSSI & SAC designations can be located on [8. SP DMG 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

South Perthshire DMG

Background Information

selected for their characteristic features of scenery comprising a mixture of richly diverse landscapes including prominent landforms, coastline, sea and freshwater lochs, rivers, woodlands and moorlands.

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

In the SPDGMG area there are 2 X National Scenic areas, the River Earn (Comrie to St Fillans)NSA and the River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA. They cover a small proportion of the Group area. The area covered by scenic areas and the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park can be seen on [9. SPDGMG Landscape Map](#)

Within the South Perthshire Deer Management Group there are only 12 X SSSI sites, covering a total of 19 designated features. Of these, only 8 are relevant to deer. There are a number of pressures on some of these sites, including sheep browsing, invasive species and non- native tree species. It is not thought that deer pressure is the over-riding concern on any of these features, although they may contribute to the total pressure on some.

The 2 X SSSI sites that are partially impacted by deer lie just outwith the current boundaries of the DMG, and this is a good reason to try and include these sites in this plan. The sites are the Birks of Aberfeldy SSSI, and the Bolfracks SSSI.

There are also 2 X SAC sites, covering 7 X designated features. This includes the River Tay SAC which runs through the area. Only 1 X SAC feature may be impacted by deer, although SNH consider grazing by sheep and non- native broadleaves to be the most significant pressures in this area.

A full account of all these sites, their current status and what properties are involved is given in [Appendix 3, SP 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 South Perthshire 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.
- (vi) To ensure such resources, training and monitoring capacity that is required are made available to achieve the above objectives.
- (vii) Where appropriate, to provide site specific management advice or information.
- (viii) To ensure full participation from throughout the area in the deer management group.
- (ix) To maintain and improve local employment, be that specifically in deer management, or wildlife management and agricultural activity more generally within the area.
- (x) To sure 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

Historically, counting in some parts of the Group has been very good in the past, with many of the estates in the existing West and North Groups counting in both spring and August, but participation in recent years has been more patchy, with some properties counting and others not, and it is difficult to make comparisons between different years.

Scottish natural Heritage (SNH) conducted a helicopter count of the whole Group area in December 2010, and this is the best information we have regarding deer densities in the Group. There have been management changes in this period, so the overall situation will have changed somewhat, but the broad picture as depicted here below gives a good indication of what was going on at that time. However, it is likely that many deer within the Group area will be hiding up in woodland areas around the periphery of the Group. This is especially likely to apply to stags.

Property (Whole Group)	Area (ha)	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Density
Abercairny	1816	12	88	31	131	7.21
Ardeonaig	1802	0	17	4	21	1.17
Ardalnaig	3186	230	34	7	271	8.51
Auchnafree	4680	20	60	19	99	2.12
Balmuick Farm	400	0	0	0	0	0.00
Cambusurich	1045	1	0	0	1	0.10
Carroglen	809	4	6	3	13	1.61
Creag Ghlas	1765	5	12	4	21	1.19
Dall	1035	0	0	0	0	0.00
Drumour	1987	6	105	38	149	7.50
Drumour Woodland	1038	0	12	3	15	1.45
Dunira	1437	137	294	83	514	35.77
Fordie Estate	2303	94	130	33	257	11.16
Garrows farm	1865	12	12	2	26	1.39
Glen Ogle	628	27	33	9	69	10.99
Glenalmond	2042	1	5	2	8	0.39
Glenbeich	1690	231	132	46	409	24.20
Glenquaich	2661	50	406	118	574	21.57
Glenturret	2236	2	10	3	15	0.67
Invergeldie	4215	38	312	106	456	10.82
Kinnell	1456	0	19	5	24	1.65
Lochan	3803	4	0	0	4	0.11
Lochearnside	3952	46	410	139	595	15.06
Logiealmond	7032	63	82	25	170	2.42
Milton	269	0	0	0	0	0.00
Monzie	1452	6	0	0	6	0.41
Murthly & Strathbraan	3532	15	48	22	85	2.41
Remony	2936	31	477	146	654	22.28
Tullybeagles	2920	25	79	31	135	4.62
Urlar	3272	0	0	0	0	0.00
West Glenalmond	2524	23	81	30	134	5.31
Wester Tullich	501	0	0	0	0	0.00
Total:	72289*	1083	2864	909	4856	6.72

* *Excludes forested areas*

This data above is summarized on the map **13. SP DMG 2010 Deer Density Map**.

The data since this count is less accurate, with a number of properties not counting in some years. However, the 2013 & 14 count datasets have been merged to give an indication of how the population might have changed since 2010. A summary of this can be seen at **14. SPDMG 2013 & 14 Deer Density map**.

It would appear from these maps that the deer population has contracted significantly in the period since 2010, with the higher population densities no longer evident, and more of the properties in the lower density categories. Also significant in that a number of properties have not counted in 2013 or 2014, and this fragmentation of effort is a problem within the Group. Several Group members have also expressed concern about the accuracy of some current counts as well.

Whatever the case, it at least appears to be the case that deer numbers have decreased within the area since 2010.

Current Count Data

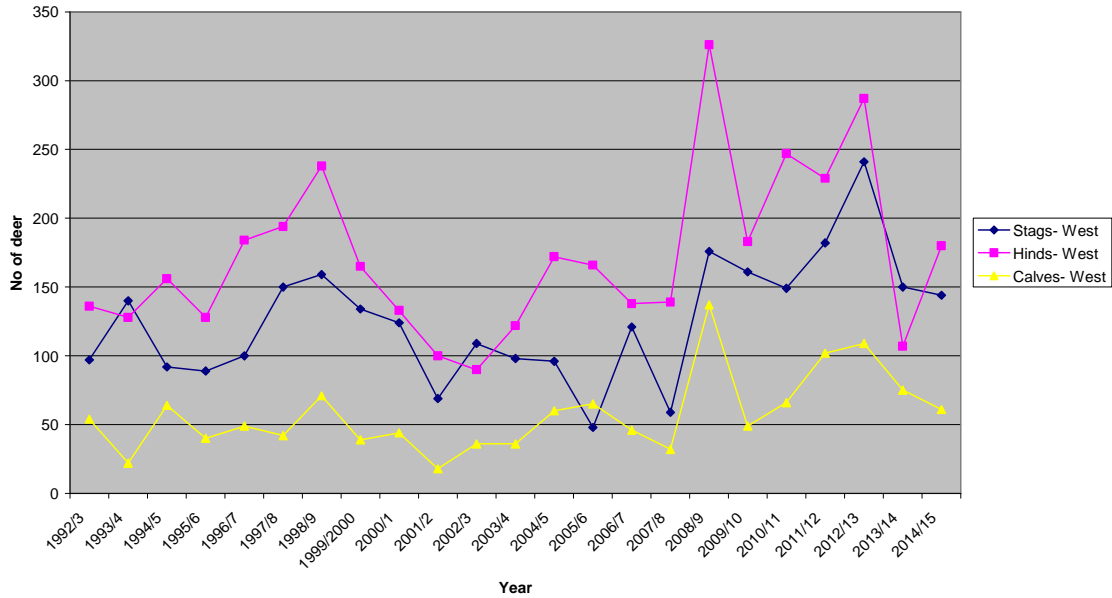
The incomplete nature of the more recent data potentially makes any comparison misleading. If a new sub- area structure is to be adopted for the Group, then comparisons with the past are also going to be less relevant as well.

It has been decided here just to compare the above 2 X lots of count data and not to carry out any additional analysis.

Red Deer Cull Data

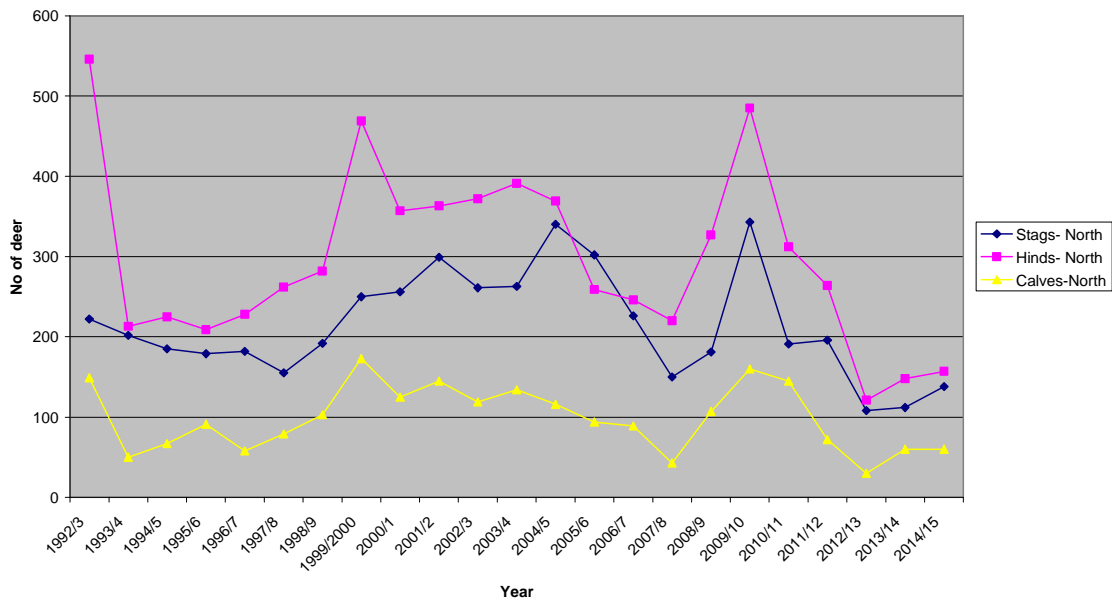
There is particularly good and consistent reporting of cull data within the 3 X sub- areas of South Perthshire going back to 1992. This data is presented here as a series of graphs, to give a feel for what has been going on over that time. If these sub-areas are now changed, then this is the appropriate time to sign off this particular run of data, and restart with the new sub- area boundaries.

SP West Sub Group 1992- 2015 Deer Culls



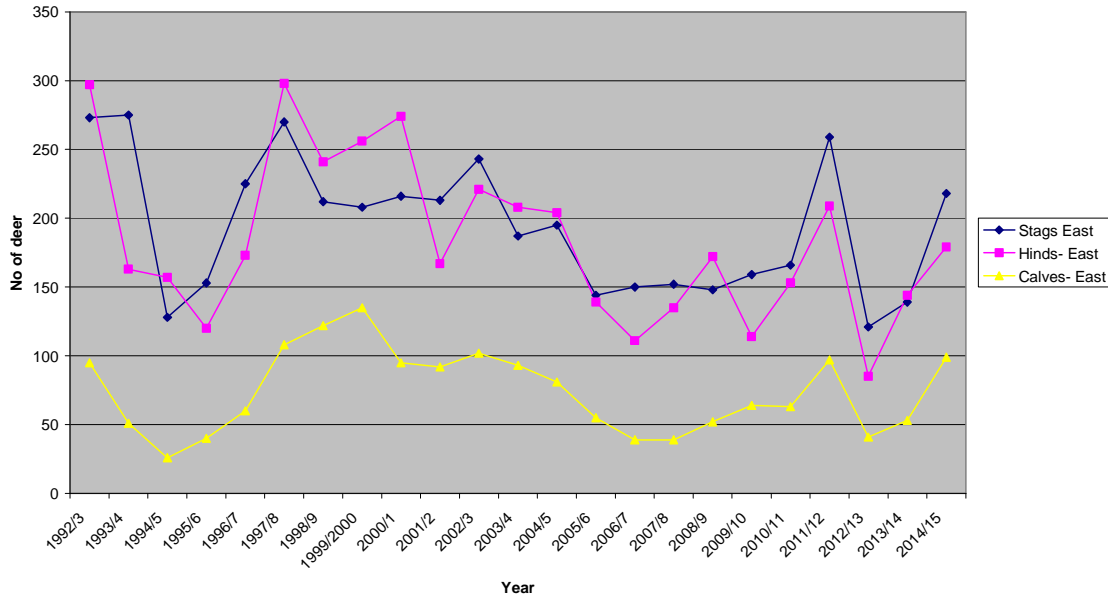
In the West Group, the culls from 2008-13 or so have been the highest in the history of the area, although now at a much reduced level. There was a lesser spike in activity in the late 1990's. The hind cull has consistently been higher than the stag cull. The 2008/9 peak coincides with efforts to fence off grouse moors in the Northern group, and presumably this had a displacement effect in the west group.

SP North Sub Group 1992- 2015 Deer Cull Summary



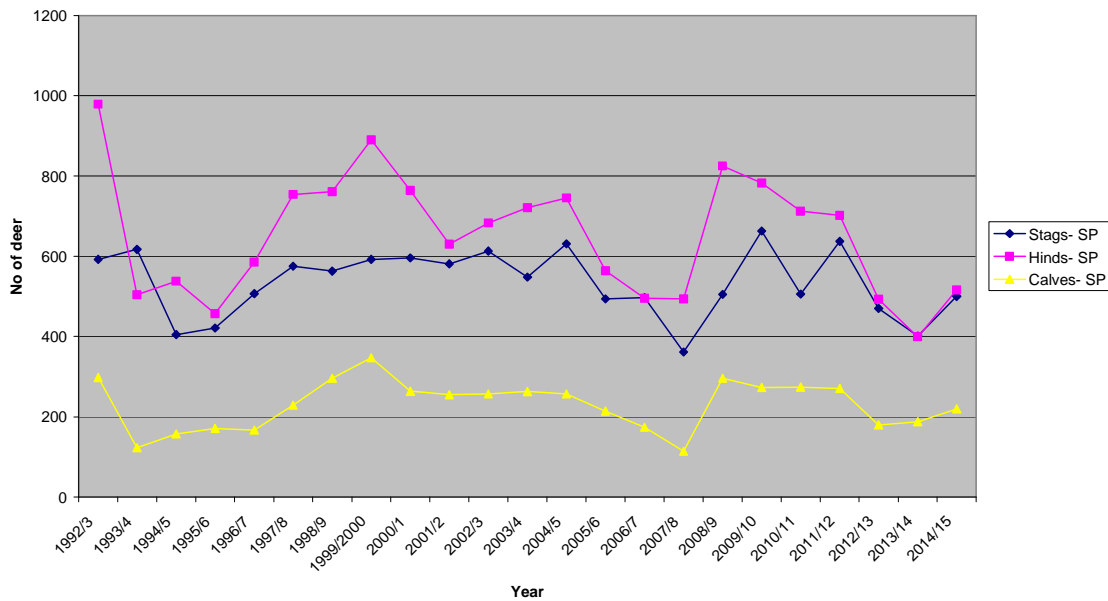
Like the West Group, the Northern sub- area has always culled more hinds than stags. Interestingly, the late 1990s peak in the West Group co-incides with a trough in this group, and this pattern is then also the other way around for the subsequent period of time. The recent high peak is in 2010/11, with culls falling away to much lower but stable levels by 2012/13.

SP Eastern Sub Group 1992- 2015 Deer Culls

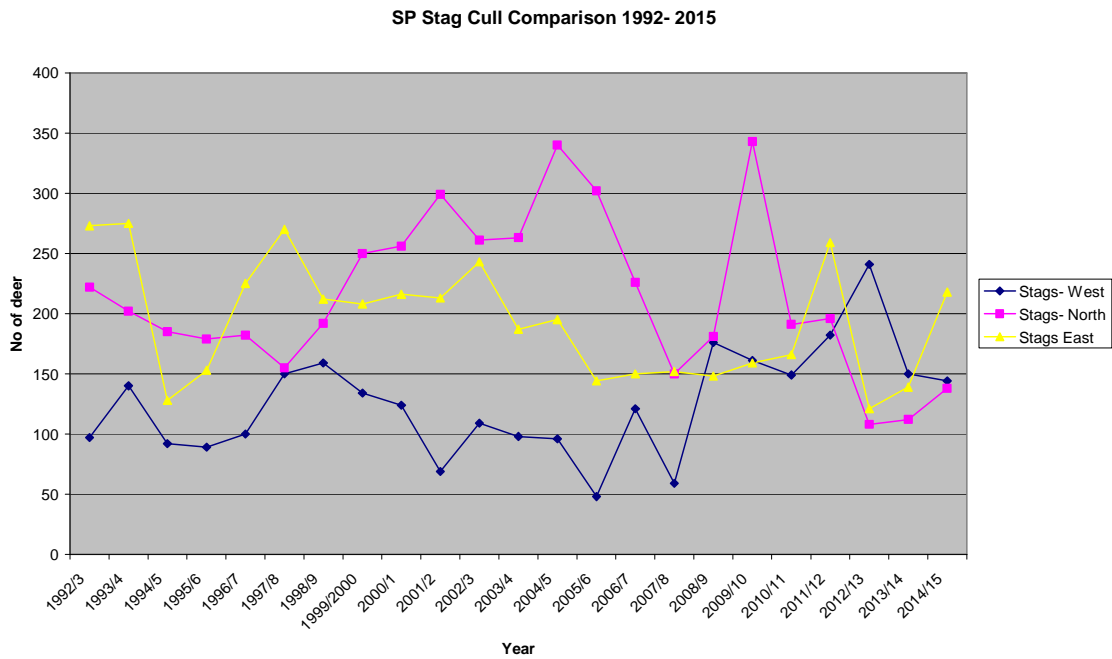


Stag and hind numbers mirror each other very closely across the period, rarely varying by more than a few tens of animals, if that. The overall trajectory across the period is clearly in a downwards direction, although increasing again in the last two years or so.

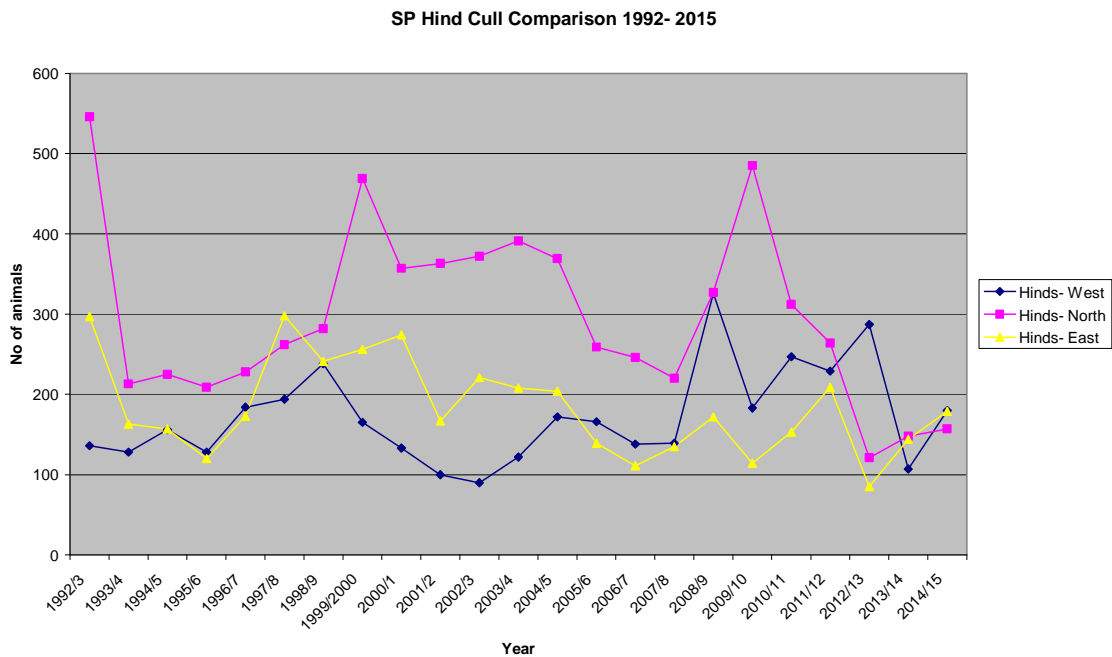
Total SP Deer Cull Summary 1992- 2015



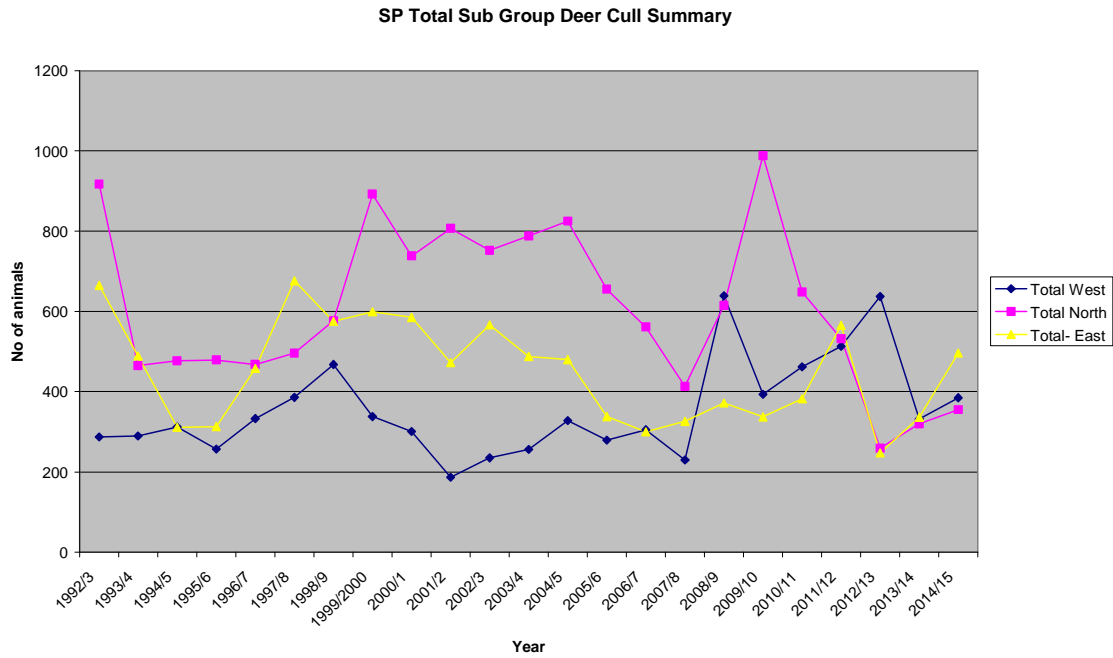
This graph shows the total activity across the 3 X sub areas since 1992. The totals for the last 3 X years are the lowest in 20 years, with stags and hinds being almost exactly the same. There are two obvious peaks in activity, but it is difficult to detect any obvious long term trend in numbers culled. It is useful to say at this point that numbers of deer culled are not a proxy for deer population. The latter peak, for example, was partly in response to the effort to clear deer from a number of estates, and was therefore designed to drive down the population in those areas.



This is an interesting graph. In the 1990s, the east culled the most stags, and that was the case again in 2014/15. The period in between was relatively steady. The west had the smallest cull consistently through to 2007/8, from where the total increased markedly through to 2012/13, before falling away again. The North Group culled the most stags for most of the 2000's, before falling sharply to 2008/9, and then peaking again to the highest ever sub- area cull in 2009/10. It has now fallen away again to be the lowest of the 3 X sub-areas, no doubt a reflection of the smaller area which is now available to deer there.



The North area has always culled by far the greatest number of hinds, although in common with the other 2 X groups, the hind cull has now fallen away sharply to relatively low levels. The hind cull in the east appears to be on a steady downward trend, and this may explain the apparent reported increases in deer numbers in that area now. The hind cull in the west group mirrors that of the stag cull there.

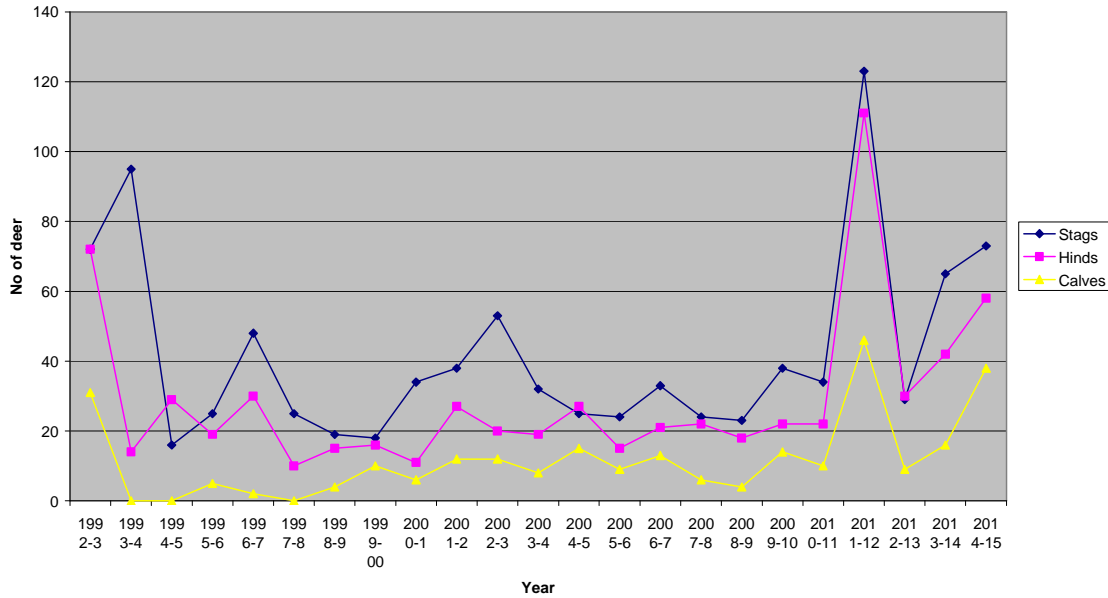


This graph shows that most deer culling activity has taken place in the Northern Group, then the eastern group, with the West Group at the bottom, but that has changed in the last few years, with very similar total culls throughout.

Red Deer Woodland Culls

The following graph shows the numbers of red deer that have been culled in the woodland complex in the Eastern sub- area, covering FE Craigvinean, Griffin estate and latterly, the area managed by SSE Griffin. Numbers have been very steady across most of the period, with the very sharp peak in 2011/12 seemingly co-inciding with the deforestation efforts to clear ground for Griffin Windfarm. Although nos fell in the year or so afterwards, they are on an upward trajectory again. The large clear felled areas will certainly allow for better culling options in future. Understanding the population dynamics within this area will be an important function of the Group going forwards.

SPDMG Woodland Red Deer Culls



Red Deer Management Issues

The following factors have been identified as issues relating to red deer management within the group area, some of which relate to running of the deer management group:

Fragmentation of the deer range

From 2007/8 onwards, a series of deer fences were erected within the Northern Sub- area to exclude deer from properties which wanted to reduce the incidence of ticks and Louping ill on grouse moors. Additional fences have appeared in the 2015 season further south, with the affect that the wider group is now practically split in two. These fences can be seen on **3. SP DMG Existing Sub Areas map**. The fences have allowed deer numbers to be reduced, but they have also restricted east-west movement within the area, and this has disrupted the dynamics that previously existed. Positive results, in terms of grouse production, have arisen as a consequence of these new policies, and other properties may also go down this route in future as well. Neighbours are showing a willingness to adapt and adjust by culling displaced deer and adjusting their expectations, but this is a process that is ongoing, and it has implications for the current sub- area structure, see below.

Current Sub-area structure is no longer relevant

The above fences have split the north sub- area in two, to the effect that it is no longer a coherent entity. The fences further south have further disrupted the other sub- areas, but they do now define what a future sub-area structure should now look like, although this may evolve again should additional properties wish to eliminate deer and work primarily with grouse and deer only. The new suggested sub-area structure is suggested on:

4. SP DMG Proposed Sub Areas Map

Conflict between deer and the more fertile properties within the group area

Related to above, the properties in the proposed new South Central Sub area are particularly fertile, and draw in deer from the wider Group area, causing conflict with agricultural activities. This area is already largely fenced off, and it may be appropriate

to consider closing a ring fence to eliminate or reduce this problem, although that would require management objectives on one property to change slightly.

Contracting red deer numbers on the open hill, and how to deal with that

It would appear now that deer numbers to the west of the deer fences are contracting quickly, and that properties there will have to adjust their expectations if they are to establish a stable herd again. It is likely that a significant reduction in both hind cull and stag expectations will be necessary in order to achieve this.

The expanding fallow deer population in the Eastern Sub Group

There is a very large and seemingly expanding population of fallow deer immediately next to the A9 within the Eastern Sub- area of the Group, almost all within Murthly & Strathbraan Estates. The annual cull suggests that there must be over 1000 animals to sustain this. While there are occasional culls on adjacent ground, this only extends to a few tens of animals overall, so the bulk of these animals are located more or less in one area, and they have severe implications for forest management in that area. There is a similar population on the other side of the A9, which is probably interconnected, and there is a desire among members of the Eastern Sub- area to expand their horizon across the A9 so that fallow deer numbers can be better managed overall. Such an approach could work well with efforts being made around Dunkeld and in Strathardle to co-ordinate fallow deer management.

Lack of leadership in the eastern sub- group

The Eastern Sub- area of the Group does not work especially well. Engagement is good, but the area needs more people who can devote time to making it work, and this is one important reason to be thinking in terms of expanding this area, to increase the pool of people from which office bearers of the sub- group can be drawn. It is also the case in the eastern Sub –area that most staff have priorities other than deer, and deer management work is undertaken as opportunities rise between other activities. Deer management activity is more central to the role of employees elsewhere in the DMG area.

The possible expansion of red deer population within woodland areas

There is some evidence of high and growing red deer populations within the large woodland complex in the eastern sub- area. An important focus going forwards will be to make sure that sufficient woodland culling takes place to eliminate the annual increment growth each year. These woodland deer will also have access to rich agricultural land within easy reach of their woodland cover, and this will no doubt lead to a population increase if sufficient culls are not undertaken. It is not clear at present if current culling rates are sufficient to keep on top of numbers.

The low uptake of the SQWV standard within the area

While there are a lot of very good larders within the area, most of them up to modern specification, only five properties are members of the SQWV scheme, much lower than many other areas. There needs to be a focus on how to address this.

Lack of deer culling capacity in some areas of the group

Many employees within the area, mainly in the eastern group, have a wide range of expected functions that compete for time. There does appear to be a capacity issue within the eastern area, where additional stalking input may be required to properly bring some deer populations under control.

Counting efforts are fragmented

The core members of the North and West Sub- areas count on a regular basis, with some properties carrying out spring and summer counts each year. However, there are gaps, with some properties never counting, and others in some years but not others. Many employees question the thoroughness of counts in some areas. So while counting ethos and intent within the Group is very good, there are some questions over the outputs obtained, and the analysis then drawn from these.

General lack of any community initiatives within the area

There is a very noticeable lack of significant community initiatives involving the public and deer within the area, certainly in comparison with many other DMG areas. While opportunities for Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme students and similar initiatives are available, most open days and events are for deer societies and people who would otherwise move in similar circles. This is particularly interesting in that this DMG is much closer to centres of population than other groups. This may be because few properties within this area see themselves as deer estates. They are largely sheep farms, who just also happen to have some deer, and they think about them in this more pragmatic way. Certainly, many of the properties are extensively involved with sheep shows and other agricultural events within the area, and make themselves known to the public in that way. Consideration needs to be given as to how group members can engage more widely on the deer front, as they can clearly demonstrate this engagement with the public in other areas. Over the last year or so however, the developing grouse/moorland management group has become very pro-active via social media and videos, and that is very quickly becoming a good source of information and interest for people who like to know what is going on in the area and how things are done. This is very much to be welcomed.

Habitat monitoring capacity is low

The uptake of habitat monitoring within the area is very low, probably because there are so few designated sites within the area. A monitoring plan will therefore be an important part of this process going forwards.

The problem of “hidden” deer

In terms of population modelling, there are extensive forested areas around the periphery of the group in which deer, especially stags, might be able to hide. This makes deer counts difficult, and it also obscures the dynamics of how deer populations in the area actually work. Having the forest complex in the East Group effectively cut off from the west potentially reduces an important source of stags at rutting time. The fences therefore change the overall dynamic very considerably.

Non- participating members

There are a number of significant properties within the area who do not participate in the Group, although their engagement with this planning process has actually been very good. It is recommended that these properties are regarded as Reporting Members of the Group, contributing cull data on an annual basis, and perhaps coming to some arrangement over counting practice if this is relevant in their particular circumstances.

Other Deer Species

Sika Deer

There are very few reported Sika culls within the area, with only two culled in recent years. However, one member of the north group reports hybrid hinds on their property, which they try to shoot out when identified. So, while Sika numbers appear to be very low, the hybridization which many people fear would appear to have already taken place within the area, albeit at a very limited scale to date.

Roe Deer Population

Roe deer are present throughout the DMG area, but are only present in any significant numbers in the eastern sub- area. In general, the further east you go, the more numerous they become, not just in woodlands, but on the open hill area as well. A number of properties make sporting use of these animals, more so than in many DMG areas.

The following table shows the total roe deer culls in each of the 3 X sub areas. Data is only available since 2012/13.

Roe Deer Culls (total roe deer)

Year	Eastern Sub-area	Northern sub-area	West Sub-area
2015-16	346	121 (South Central)	98
2014-15	265	60	27
2013-14	247	87	14
2012-13	165	51	56

Numbers in the eastern area appear to be increasing, but this may simply be a result of people reporting more accurately. Very small numbers are culled in each of the other two areas.

Roe Deer Management Issues

There are not considered to be any significant roe deer management issues within the group area at present, although the properties engaged primarily with grouse management report greater numbers on the hill areas, which can potentially host ticks. It is likely that they have spread out from the woodland areas to the east. Numbers are clearly significant within the Eastern area, and some use is made of these.

Fallow Deer Population

There is a very significant fallow deer population around Murthly in the eastern sub- area, which extends across the A9 to the area around Dunkeld, and east to Blairgowrie, and up Strathardle. Within SPDMG, the population is very constrained in this one area, with lesser numbers in Craigvinean, and some animals spreading out and slowly becoming resident towards Glenalmond. Achieving a better focus on fallow deer will be a priority for the group going forwards.

Data is only available for the past two years, although information going back over a longer time frame can be obtained if necessary. It is likely that some fallow deer data will not be getting collected at present, and cull recording records should be adjusted to capture this information.

Fallow Deer Culls (total fallow deer)

Year	Eastern Sub-area	Northern sub-area	West Sub-area
2015-16	190	11 (South Central)	0
2014-15	210	0	0
2013-14	270	0	0

Fallow Deer Management Issues

Fallow deer are a very significant consideration within the eastern group, especially for woodland management objectives. They are also likely to be a key factor in the area of very high and high herbivore impacts present in that area of the group. There is a strong case for extending the DMG boundary across the A9 to allow for more effective overall management of the species.

9. Moorland Management

Almost all properties within the Group would say that they try to maintain a balance between sheep, grouse and deer that maintains the extensive moorland area within South Perthshire.

From 2007/8, a number of properties in the Northern Sub- area decided that they needed to fence out deer in order to deal with ticks and Louping Ill which was affecting their sheep stocks, as well as grouse numbers. These properties now undertake fairly intensive moorland management practices, including using sheep as tick mops, and rotational burning of heather. The results of this, in terms of grouse and sheep welfare, have been generally very good. A number of properties to the north of Crieff are now progressing in a similar direction. Other properties within the wide area are also interested in better grouse management, although few if any of these are prepared to fence out deer to achieve this. So, moorland management is very important within the overall group area. The Earn Tay Almond (ETA) Grouse Management Group was set up in 2007 to co-ordinate moorland management activity in the area, not just for red grouse, but for black grouse and a range of other moorland species as well. The Group involves all those properties with a grouse interest within South Perthshire, and the Group is Chaired by Daniel Parker of Abercairny Estate. Some information on the group can be found here; <http://www.helpingithappen.co.uk/case-study-72>

10. Hill Sheep & Cattle Management

The following table shows sheep numbers within the DMG area, and how they have been changing at 5, 10 and 20 year time intervals. The data has been set out relating to the proposed new sub- areas, West, South Central, and Eastern. The numbers of sheep quoted here are numbers of ewes and followers, excluding lambs.

SP DMG Sub- area	2015	2010	2005	1995
West Sub- Group	21,920	-400	-3400	-3200
South Central Sub Group	8,300	-100	+100	0
Eastern Sub- Group	9020	-20	-620	-120
Total sheep	39,240	-520	-3920	-3320
Change to 2015		-1.3%	-10%	-8.5%

Figures in 2010, 2005 and 1995 columns show change in numbers from that time to 2015.

There are just under 40,000 sheep in South Perthshire, with many of the flocks being nationally renowned within Scotland.

Numbers have been very stable over the last 5 years, with any clearance of sheep being cancelled out by slightly higher numbers on some of the grouse- orientated properties. The overall fall I numbers has been only 1.3%.

Going back over 10 and then 20 years, the flocks in the South Central and Eastern areas have been similarly stable, with the only significant fall in sheep numbers having taken place in the West Sub- Group area. This amounts to a reduction of c 10% of the total South Perthshire population over that time, or 15% of the population of the West Group. These are very modest changes to sheep numbers in comparison to many deer management group areas in Scotland, where up to 50-60% of sheep numbers have been lost over a 20 year period.

One interesting aspect of the South Perthshire is that hill sheep are present throughout almost all of the hill area, bar a small number of properties. In all cases, the hills are well grazed by sheep, with nowhere where only token numbers of animals are present.

The distribution of sheep can be seen on [6. SPDMG Hill Sheep MAP.](#)

Cattle

There are almost 900 cows kept within the area, although the greater number of these only graze the hill pastures in the summer months. Hill cattle can be a very valuable management tool in grassy hill areas, and South Perthshire has access to more animals than are present within many DMG areas.

11. Forestry & Woodland Management

There are over 10,000 ha of woodlands within the South Perthshire area, much of which is laid out as commercial conifers, and is genuinely productive. Forest Enterprise have 4 X holdings within the area, but there is a greater area of private forestry as well at Griffin, Murthly and Creag Ghlas & Breaclaich. Other members have smaller but significant woodland holdings within their boundaries, with most properties having woodlands of some sort or another. At both Dunkeld and Comrie, woodlands play a very important part in the local landscape character.

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 Sub-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 30 - 32%, varying across the Group, although this can be much less after poor weather.

It is critical for this DMG that recruitment counts are carried out thoroughly on an annual basis in late April/ early May each year.

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

There are extensive strategic deer fences in the middle part of the Group area, the majority of which are electrified. Additional fences have been added in 2015. There are also fences surrounding FE Craigvinean, and a number of properties have fences closing off their hill ground from their lower ground. It is not thought that there are any significant issues with any of these fences, but they are a particular characteristic of this group.

Supplementary/ diversionary Feeding

Only 2 X properties within the Group area feed deer, and it is mostly stags which take this feed. The objective is to try and keep deer on safe ground, and so that they are not lost as marauders on farmland elsewhere. In addition to feeding, one property keeps access to fields for deer only, with access summer grass being removed as silage or hay.

Members currently feeding deer are:

Dunira

Fordie

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

Larder provision within the group is generally good, but local co-operation to ensure appropriate capacity takes places at a number of locations within the area.

Group members share a commitment to high standards beyond the larder door, right through

to the sale of the carcase or else its use locally. Despite the good standard of larders, uptake of the SQWV scheme is poor within the area, with only 5 X members signed up to this. As a matter of general principle,

Members also support the local consumption of locally shot, high quality venison. A wide range of game dealers and processors are used by group members, with no one organization having a dominant role.

13. Non- native Species Policy

At present, as well as the native red and roe deer, there are known to be occasional sika deer within the DMG boundary, and a very significant population of fallow deer.

Sika Deer

There are occasional reports of travelling Sika stags within the area. One property in the Northern Group reports that they have some hybrid hinds but they try and identify these and shoot them out as opportunities arise. Many other DMG areas fear hybridization occurring, but seldom report it happening in practice.

The policy within this area will be to shoot all sika or suspected hybrids to stop them from becoming established in this area.

Fallow Deer

Fallow deer are a particular feature of the area around Dunkeld, one of very few areas in Scotland where the species exists in the wild. There is no question of trying to eradicate the species, although numbers do need to be reduced to ease pressure on woodlands in particular. Unlike Sika deer, fallow deer cannot hybridize with other species, and they do not create the very serious damage to mature timber by bark stripping which Sika deer can do.

However, Group members will look to keep fallow numbers within their current approximate range, and not let them spread to other areas of the Group.

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.

There are no wild goats within the area.

14. Communications Policy

The South Perthshire 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://spertshiredmg.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:

South Perthshire Deer Management Group

James Duncan Miller, Chair

Tel: 01887 830 209

james@remonyestate.co.uk

Michael Aldridge, Secretary/ Administrator

Michael_aldrige@drummondstates.org.uk

Tel: 01764 681 257

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

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

South Perthshire 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.

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

15. Training Policy

South Perthshire 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 November 2015, 65 or 89% of the 73 X personnel involved in deer management in the South Perthshire 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 November 2015, 30 or 41% of the 73 personnel involved in deer management in the South Perthshire 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 November 2015, 56 or 77% of the 73 personnel involved in deer management within with area had trained hunter status. In practice in this DMG, those without this status tend to be working under the supervision of those who do, and it is likely that some of those who say they do not hold this status will simply be unaware of the exact definition of it.

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 November 2015, 18 personnel in the South Perthshire area required to take deer under authorization, and were on the Fit & Competent register. This low number reflects the fact that the vast majority of deer within the area are culled in season and during daylight hours.

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. South Perthshire 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

South Perthshire 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 area generally make sense in terms of the hill population of deer, but there are areas around the periphery of the Group which would merit consideration for inclusion. Three properties, Dalchonzie, Aberuchil Estate and Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) have all indicated a willingness to join the Group.

In addition, there is a more strategic and ambitious option of extending the deer group to the other side of the A9 in order to develop a mechanism for dealing with fallow deer. That might ultimately involve the establishment of a new DMG area, potentially taking away some of the SP DMG members in the eastern sub- area. Some development time has been spent on this option as part of the current planning process, and this should be taken forwards during the summer of 2016.

The location of the group is shown on the **1. SP DMG Location map**. The potential new members and extension areas are shown on **17. SP DMG Potential Extension Areas Map**.

It is recommended that a new sub-area structure is developed for the Group, to take account of strategic fencelines within the area. The proposed new structure is illustrated at:

4. SP DMG Proposed Sub Areas Map

Action Point

- 1.1 Endorse Aberuchil Estate and Perth & Kinross Council as members of the Group in spring 2016, and add in Dalchonzie as an additional reporting unit for SMH Holdings who are already a Group member.
- 1.2 During summer 2016, work with SNH and others to develop options for extending the DMG boundary across the A9.
- 1.3 Adopt the new proposed sub- area structure within the Group area at Spring 2016 meeting.

Membership

There are a number of landholdings within the area who do not participate in the Group and who do not pay subscriptions, return cull figures, or help the Group with counts. For many of these properties, deer management is probably of little concern, but it would be helpful to the Group if they had a better knowledge of what happened there. It is recommended that these properties be recruited as Reporting Members only, and that cull returns are sought from them for 2015-16. These properties, along with full members, can be seen at:

2. SPDMG Members map.

Action Point

- 2.1 During spring 2016, recruit the above mentioned properties as Reporting Members of SPDMG.

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

Meetings

The group already meet annually, with sub- areas meetings also taking place in the autumn, and also as required to deliver and analyse counts, and a number of steering group meetings took place to help deliver this plan. 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 meetings from this spring onwards. 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 east, one aim of this being to secure potential office bearers for the eastern sub- area. Personnel to make this sub- area work are lacking at present.

Constitution & Finances

There is no existing constitution, but this has been addressed as part of this management planning process. Management of finances within the Group is very good, and good records are kept.

Action Points

4.1 A constitution to be adopted at Spring 2016 group meeting.

Deer Management Plan

This Plan replaces a previous one that was drawn up in 2010 for the Northern sub- area only. 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, including second summer counts, but they rarely involve more than the core members, significant areas can often be missed, and the quality of the counting is questioned by some members. The count data bears little resemblance to what then is actually culled. However, an ethos to count certainly does exist, and if good practice can be adopted by other Group members, then a much better dataset should be obtained that is more useful for planning purposes.

Action Points

- 9.1 Group to extend counting practice to cover all members by spring 2017.
- 9.2 If possible, look to undertake another helicopter count within the period of this plan.
- 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

There is very good and consistent cull data collation within the Group going back to 1992. It is anticipated that this should continue. Data will be more complete if the series of Reporting Members can be added to the Group. It is necessary to add fallow and sika deer culls to the list, and to build on the collection of roe deer cull data that has been taking place in the past few years. Data collection summaries will now need to be adjusted to allow for a new – sub-area structure.

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 include fallow and sika deer, and to include data from new members and reporting members.
- 10.4 Cull summary to reflect new sub- area structure
- 10.5 Cull summaries to be obtained from potential new members on other side of the A9.

Data & Evidence Gathering- Habitat Monitoring

Habitat monitoring activity is poor within the DMG area, with very few personnel involved in this. This will be 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. Habitat monitoring data from the SSE Griffin area and dung counting within FE Craigvinean should be reviewed to get a better indication of deer densities within the woodland complex in the eastern Sub- area.

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 73 personnel involved in deer management within the KDMG area, the following qualifications are held:

DMQ Level 1:	65
DMQ Level 2	30

56 X personnel hold trained hunter status, and 18 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. A number of stalkers within the group do not apply for such authorizations, and therefore do not require to be on the register.

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 delivered as the now accepted industry standard within the area, and encouragement will be given to 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

While the quality of deer larders across the DMG is generally good, the uptake of the Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV) scheme is poor within the area, with only five members who now carry this status. The perceived bureaucracy surrounding this seems to be more of a limiting factor than poor facilities or training as such. The Group should consider carefully how this particular issue might be addressed. This is one of the lowest uptakes of SQWV within the deer range in Scotland.

Action Points

14.1 The DMG will work with ADMG to promote uptake of SQWV within the area, and seek to understand more carefully why uptake here is so poor.

14.2 In the medium term, beyond the settling in period for this Plan, the DMG will explore options to market venison from the area in a more collaborative manner.

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 community councils have been consulted on the development of this plan. See [7. SP DMG Community Councils Map](#).

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

South Perthshire 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

SPDMG 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://knoydartdmg.deer-management.co.uk>.

Action Points

PIA 1.1 Publish and endorse the new South Perthshire 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, SPDMG Designated Sites](#). This includes an up to date account of their current status, and suggested actions through which a number of sites in Unfavourable condition can be brought forward in to assured management status.

It is not thought that deer are having a significant impact on any of the designated sites within the DMG area, with impacts within Cambusurich SSSI and Comrie Woods SSSI/ Upper Strathearn Oakwoods SAC being attributed more to sheep and/ or bracken and structural issues within the woods themselves. However, two designated sites lying just outwith the boundaries of the DMG may be in Unfavourable condition due partly to deer. The owners of the two properties concerned, Bolfracks Estate and Perth & Kinross Council will be encouraged to join the DMG. PKC have already agreed to join, and have engaged a stalker for deer control on their site. Balnaguard SSSI and Monzie SSSI are in favourable or recovering condition, but comment is made on both of these below.

Action

PIA 2.1 Endorse PKC as a member of SPDMG, and invite Bolfracks Estate to join. PKC to focus roe deer culling effort in and around the SSSI area, and the fence at Bolfracks to be made secure.

PIA 2.2 Kinnaird Estate will be invited to join the Group, and to focus deer culling activities in and around Balnaguard Glen SSSI. The site is already in Favourable condition, but it is understood that wider regeneration of native species is not taking place.

PIA 2.3 Enclosures have been created and planted within the Monzie Woods SSSI in order to diversify species and age structure within the area. Browsing impacts in the wider area are attributed to roe deer and rabbits/ voles, and bracken is preventing regeneration from developing over much of the site. Roe deer control will be targeted around the SSSI site to try and reduce the impacts from deer.

PIA 2.4 Dunira to take forward an SRDP scheme to fence deer out of the Comrie Woods SSSI, in addition to the efforts that have recently been undertaken to exclude sheep from the area. However, the dense canopy of the oakwood will make regeneration unlikely unless some felling coupes are contemplated within the area.

PIA 2.5 Active deer management requires to be implemented in and around the Cambusurich Wood SSSI. Owner to be invited to join SPDMG so that options for taking forward such activity can be assessed and implemented.

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

There are approx 6442 hectares of woodland within the South Perthshire DMG area, covering just less than 8 % of the area of the Group (National Forestry Inventory, NFI). This is 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 6442 ha includes all recently planted woodland, and Forest Enterprise woods, although the biggest area is in private hands.

Of this area, 2517 hectares or 39 % is composed of native or nearly native woodland (NFI). This figure is almost identical to that provided by the Native Woodlands Survey of Scotland (NWSS), which gives 2518 ha.

Of the total woodland area, 2384 hectares or 37% is under an agreed management regime through an SRDP Forest Plan or Management Plan since 2008. There were 1647 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 high level of woodland under active management.

Only 129 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 2517 ha (NWSS), the following herbivore impact levels are currently given:

Low: 72 ha or 3 %

Medium: 1735 ha or 62%

High: 397 ha or 14%

Very High: 314 ha or 11%

65% of native woodlands therefore show low or medium herbivore impact levels. These areas are shown on [12. SPDMG Woodland Herbivore Impacts Map](#).

For the 1669 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: 55 ha or 3%

Medium: 1067 ha or 64%

High: 275 ha or 16%

Very High: 272 ha or 16%

Therefore, 67% of these woods that are otherwise in “satisfactory condition” outwith designated sites show low or medium herbivore impacts. This is in comparison to the 60% of such woodlands which Wild Deer- A National Approach (WDNA) envisage being in such condition by 2020.

Of the woods at High or Very High impacts, it can be seen from the above map that a very high proportion of these lie within the boundaries of Murthly & Strathbraan estates, who acknowledge there is an issue there with very high numbers of fallow deer in that area, and have asked for some help in being able to address this as an issue. Lowering the pressure from fallow deer in that area will add considerably to the area of native woodland that is then at low or medium impacts.

There are no other clusters of woodlands at high or very high impact levels within the DMG area.

Actions

PIA 3.1 Work with Murthly & Strathbraan Estates to target fallow deer on their property and increase the amount of native woodland at low or medium impact levels.

Demonstrate DMG contribution to woodland expansion target

There has been a modest increase in woodland area within the DMG over the past 20 years or so, with 401 hectares being established under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) since 2008, 139 hectares being established under the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) since 2003, and 510 hectares being established under the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) since 1994. See [11. SPDMG Woodland Creation Map](#).

This woodland expansion amounts to 1050 hectares in total, or 16 % of the woodland area

South Perthshire DMG

Background Information

today, which includes the extensive FE area.. Although the overall increase in terms of area is modest, the proportional increase has therefore been very significant over twenty years or so, especially as a proportion of the woodland on private ground. Of the most recently planted woodland under SRDP, 296 ha or 74 % consisted of native woodland planting. There has been 57 ha of productive conifer planting and 46 ha of mixed conifer/broadleaved planting as well.

Looking ahead, the private owners within the Group have suggested that they could plant up to 1485 ha of new native woodland within the period of this plan. This total is mostly made up of 5 X potential schemes in excess of 100 ha, with 3 X of these being 300 ha or larger.

Actions

PIA 4.1 Private owners in South Perthshire to take forwards applications for approx 1485 ha of new planting.

PIA 4.4 All to ensure that recently planted woodland areas become properly established.

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: SPDMG Broad Habitat Data](#). This is a particularly good set of data for this area, with only 683 hectares or less than 1% 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:

7715 ha of blanket bog, covering 10% of the DMG.

28,656 ha of heather moorland, covering 38% of the DMG.

6098 ha of montane habitats, covering 8% of the DMG.

10,081 ha of improved pasture, covering 13% of the DMG

16,693 ha of upland grasslands, representing 22% of the DMG area.

4548 ha of woodland, occupying approx 6% of the DMG. (1988 figure)

Finally, there are about 1577 ha of miscellaneous areas, including 683 ha obscured by cloud cover, 610 ha of open water, 103 ha of cliffs, 81 ha of built up areas, 80 ha of golf courses, 17 ha of quarries 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 April 2016.

Improve Scotland's ability to store carbon

Within the Group area there are approx 6442 hectares of woodland and 7715 hectares of peatlands.

It has already been noted that a high proportion of the native woodlands within the Group are in satisfactory, with 65% of all native and nearly native woodlands being at low or medium herbivore impact levels.

There is scope for creating up to 1485 ha of new woodlands within the period of this plan.

The 7715 ha of peatlands are, at 10% 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 10-12 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 programme, if applicable.

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

A non- native deer policy is included earlier in this plan. This includes a section on sika deer, which may already have become hybridized within one property in the DMG area.

Fallow deer are well established in the area. It is the intention of Group members to keep these within their current boundaries, and to reduce their numbers to lessen impacts on woodlands within the area.

Action

PIA 7.1 Cull spreading sika deer throughout the Group area, especially in the woodland areas in the east of the DMG, and any suspected hybrids in the north of the Group.

PIA 7.2 Reduce fallow deer populations towards the east of the Group area, and try to keep this species within its current boundaries.

Protection of Historic and Cultural Features

There are likely to be many hundreds of sites throughout the DMG area that have archaeological or cultural importance. It is likely that for the majority of these that light grazing by deer and sheep will be beneficial in keeping back rank vegetation growth. At present, the DMG are not aware of any cultural sites that are being negatively impacted by grazing. A greater threat to such features will be woodland creation projects that do not ensure adequate buffer zones around such features, or other development projects. Neither Perth & Kinross Council, Stirling Council nor Historic Environment Scotland are aware of any sites of cultural or archaeological importance where grazing or trampling damage is a problem.

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 73 personnel who are involved in deer management, 65 have DMQ Level 1, 30 have DMQ Level 2, and 56 have trained hunter status. Eighteen personnel are on the Fit & Competent register, but this is a reflection of the low number of deer culled out of season or at night by estate staff.

Staff within the DMG area have a wide variety of other qualifications and certificates covering other aspects of their work. These include ATV, Argocat, First Aid, Chainsaw, digger, water bailiff, Health & safety and boat handling. Higher deer management qualifications are also held, and one stalker is an accredited witness for DMQ Level 2. Several group members have a close association with the British Deer Society, and organize events within the area on their behalf. 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 staff, and promote a culture of continued professional training more widely.

Contribute to Public Health and wellbeing

Deer Vehicle Collisions are a particular issue on the A9, which is just outwith the DMG boundary. The majority of accidents on the road involve fallow deer, and part of the strategy for this Group going forwards, as already covered, is to look to expand to the other side of the A9 so that fallow deer management can be more effectively managed. DVCs are also an issue on the A85 between Crieff and Perth. Again, this road lies outside the DMG area. There is a strong argument for extending the DMG boundary up to the A85 and co-ordinating deer cull efforts more in that area, and this will be investigated as a possibility going forwards with this plan.

Food safety and meat hygiene is best maintained through appropriate training and facilities, and a high proportion of personnel within the Group have Trained Hunter status. All properties operate their larder facilities to Best Practice standards, and five Group members carry the SQWV status, although this is a very small proportion of the total larder capacity, much of which is modern and up to date.

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, with neither local authority being aware of any significant issues. Any tensions that do arise tend to be with walkers from outwith the area heading to Ben Chonzie from the south.

It is considered that access management is not a priority consideration for the majority of group members, and no particular action points are associated with this at the moment.

A number of Group members promote access and provide good information for the public, and South Perthshire DMG contribute to an initiative to supply deer management information and advice to all the accommodation providers in Highland Perthshire in season. This is co-ordinated with Breadalbane DMG and Strathtay DMG.

Action Points

PIA 10.1 Maintain communication with local Community Councils re: DVCs and look to implement any mitigation which may be deemed helpful in reducing local risk, particularly around Dunkeld and on the A85, although these two areas are currently outwith the DMG boundary. . 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.

PIA 10.5 SP DMG to continue with initiative to provide material to all accommodation providers in the area.

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 South Perthshire DMG area is approx £150,000 annually.

Up to two thirds of the hind cull is likely to be taken with sporting guests, the value of which might be £60,000 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 £420,000.

Based on a cull of 500 stags, 516 hinds and 220 calves (approx 2014-15 cull, including FE), it is estimated that the total value of venison produced within the group area is approx £160,000 annually. This does not take account of the fact that a number of properties market a proportion of their venison directly within the area, and a number of small game/ fish dealers operate in close proximity to the group.

The total direct economic value of deer management within the South Perthshire area is therefore likely to be in the region of £580,000 annually, for red deer, and perhaps another £50,000 or so to cover fallow and roe deer, giving approx £630,000 overall, this before any economic multipliers are considered. The majority of sporting estates will also consider their overall capital value to be related to the numbers of stags that can be culled.

Farming, forestry, grouse 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 73 X personnel that are either fully or partially involved with deer management, of which 53 X are full time employees. The remainder are either members of syndicates, or whose involvement is recreational. For many employees, income from deer management often allows the position as a whole to remain viable. 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 livestock, grouse moors or low ground shooting. Deer are often important in this situation as a fall back option, and from the perspective that these enterprises, stalking and accommodation are often closely integrated in to an overall package.

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

There is relatively little value added to venison within the area, but this probably reflects the case that deer are rarely the priority management objective on member properties, and priority is given to getting the meat away to a game dealer as quickly as possible after culling.

Action Points

PIA 11.1 Investigate the possibility for a local means of advertising sporting opportunities within the area, during the first 2-3 years of this plan, initially through the new dedicated website for South Perthshire DMG.

Larder/ infra- structure sharing

There already is good use made of shared larders within the DMG, and the quality of larders in general is very good, although very few are quality assured.

Action Point

PIA 11.3 Maintain larder standards across the 2 X DMG area, and work with ADMG, SQWV and others to have more larders accredited within the 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 53 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 £2,120,000 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 within the area is likely to be much greater than income brought in from deer alone (£2,120,000 vs £630,000, see above), but this does not account for income from other sources, many of which are more important than deer. For example, there are many nationally renowned sheep flocks within the area, grouse shooting is very much in demand, and timber production within the area is close to roads and potential

sawmills, and this explains the relatively high rate of activity in that enterprise. 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, most if not all 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 *Craigvinean Forest* also provides a recreational asset that is not replicated anywhere else in this part of Perthshire, and it would be accepted that there is no other way of maintaining this, and that deer are a natural part of a forest ecosystem and need to be managed. Having a ranger on site allows a number of other activities to be promoted and maintained.

SSE Griffin have to manage and improve the area of habitat around their windfarm site. Deer management will be a key part of this, and there will be a net cost to carrying this out.

A number of the grouse moors took the decision about eight years ago to fence deer out from their properties so that they could concentrate more fully on grouse moor and upland sheep management. While there will have been a significant capital cost to doing this, and ongoing maintenance required, it appears as though that decision has had a beneficial outcome. More recently, other properties have indicated their intention to move in a similar direction, albeit without so much strategic fencing. There will be ongoing costs associated with red deer reductions on these properties, and protecting agricultural crops from marauding deer on occasion as well.

Action Points

PIA 12.1 DMG to assess the current PACEC survey in to the value/ costs of deer management and extract information from SPDMDG in order to inform more fully the above narrative. Complete and adapt if necessary by spring 2017.

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://sperthshiredmg.deer-management.co.uk> .

Local community councils 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, with such information being distributed annually

by SP DMG I conjunction with other neighbouring groups..

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.

Two properties feed deer in the winter months to protect vulnerable animals and to keep them in locations where they can be readily monitored. 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, and reduce the need for artificial feeding. Almost 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 bringing natural habitats in to 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