

BREADALBANE DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

FEBRUARY 2016 DRAFT

**DEER MANAGEMENT
PLAN
2016 – 2021
Background Information &
Policies**

PREFACE

This Deer Management Plan has been developed for the Breadalbane Deer Management Group (BDMG). The Plan is part publicly and part privately funded. It replaces a previous DMP drawn up in 2009, aiming to take account of changing circumstances with the group area. The Plan runs from 2016 until 2021 and has been formally endorsed by all the Members of the Group. It has been designed to be readily updated as needs arise and will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis or as required, with a systematic review taking place at the end of the five year period.

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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 Breadalbane Deer Management Group (BDMG) covers just over 90,000 ha.

(1. BDMG Location Map). It has 31 subscribing members, and was formed in 2003 as an amalgamation of the East Glenlyon and West Rannoch deer management groups. It is not part of any other local association, and operates under its' own constitution. **(Appendix 1 BDMG Constitution)** The group subscribes to the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG). The boundaries of the area are:

- in the north: Loch Rannoch
- in the east: the A846 Keltneyburn to Tummel Bridge road
- in the South: Loch Tay and the rivers Dochart & Fillan leading up to Tyndrum
- in the west: Rannoch Moor and the Blackmount Deer Management Group

The group area therefore includes all of Glenlyon and Glen Lochay, the south side of the Rannoch system above Loch Tummel, and the northern part of the Dochart/ Fillan catchment, as well as the northern slopes of Loch Tay.

Other neighbouring Deer Management Groups are Inverarary & Tyndrum DMG to the south, Strathtay DMG to the east, and Loch Ericht DMG to the north across Loch Rannoch. The boundaries of the group are considered to be fairly well defined, although there may be interactions with ground to the west of Tyndrum. Movement across Loch Tay to the South Perthshire DMG is a theoretical consideration.

3. Group Membership

BDMG enjoys a very strong level of participation from among the 31 members of the group **(2. BDMG Members map)**. There are three main management regimes within the group area:

- Nine properties covering 25,000 ha or 28% of the group area who are solely interested in deer. Grouse moor management is a secondary consideration on half these units.
- Fourteen members covering 42,000 ha or 46% of the group area who regard deer as a primary management objective along with other sporting considerations, but who also have a significant farming interest. A majority of these members graze cattle as well as sheep, although the numbers are modest. Numbers of sheep have reduced markedly in recent years, and a number of units have cleared their sheep

stocks completely to concentrate on sporting objectives (above).

- Eight members covering 23,000 ha or 26% of the area of the group who view farming, forestry or conservation/ access/ land use research as their primary land use objective. These include national public bodies, NGOs and research organizations: Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), National Trust for Scotland (NTS), John Muir Trust (JMT) and Scottish Agricultural Colleges (SAC), as well as one community group, the Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust (HPCLT). These properties are mainly situated around the periphery of the area, with the main sporting/ farming properties in the interior. The various land management objectives of Group members are summarized in the attached map:

4. BDMG Management Objectives map.

Table 1 BDMG Members & Management Objectives

<i>Property</i>	<i>Main Objectives</i>	<i>Size(ha)</i>
<i>Auchessan</i>	<i>Deer/ woodlands/ sheep</i>	<i>1169</i>
<i>Auchlyne</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>4092</i>
<i>Boreland</i>	<i>Deer/farming</i>	<i>6278</i>
<i>Cashlie</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>3249</i>
<i>Corrie Carie</i>	<i>Deer</i>	<i>1063</i>
<i>Crossmount/ Dunalastair</i>	<i>Deer</i>	<i>1439</i>
<i>Dalchosnie</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>414</i>
<i>**Finnart</i>	<i>Deer/ woodlands</i>	<i>2273</i>
<i>Forestry Commission Scotland</i>	<i>Forestry</i>	<i>10,212</i>
<i>Garth</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>1639</i>
<i>Glen Lochay</i>	<i>Deer/woodland/ farming</i>	<i>4984</i>
<i>Glenlyon</i>	<i>Deer/ grouse/ farming</i>	<i>2830</i>
<i>HP Communities Land Trust</i>	<i>Woodlands/ conservation</i>	<i>428</i>
<i>Innerhadden</i>	<i>Deer/sporting</i>	<i>1872</i>
<i>Innerwick</i>	<i>Deer/ grouse</i>	<i>2311</i>
<i>Innischoarach</i>	<i>Deer/sporting</i>	<i>2142</i>
<i>Invermearnan</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>7180</i>
<i>John Muir Trust</i>	<i>Conservation/ access</i>	<i>919</i>
<i>Kynachan</i>	<i>Deer/ sporting</i>	<i>1190</i>
<i>Lochdochart</i>	<i>Farming/ forestry</i>	<i>2646</i>
<i>Lochs</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>6861</i>
<i>Meggernie</i>	<i>Farming/ Deer/forestry</i>	<i>7564</i>
<i>North Chesthill</i>	<i>Deer/ farming</i>	<i>2653</i>
<i>National Trust for Scotland</i>	<i>Conservation/ access</i>	<i>4570</i>
<i>Roro/Roromore</i>	<i>Farming/ deer</i>	<i>3045</i>
<i>Ruskich</i>	<i>Forestry</i>	<i>270</i>
<i>SRUC Kirkton</i>	<i>Farming/ upland research</i>	<i>2015</i>
<i>Slatich</i>	<i>Sheep/deer</i>	<i>243</i>
<i>South Chesthill</i>	<i>Deer/ other sporting</i>	<i>2533</i>
<i>West Tempar</i>	<i>Deer</i>	<i>756</i>
<i>*Loch Tay Side</i>	<i>Farming</i>	<i>2465</i>

Total area covered: 90,305 ha

**The number of owner occupiers and NTS tenant farmers along Loch Tay side are considered in this plan as one management unit, their primary management objective being protection of agricultural crops, especially grass in the early spring.*

*** Finnart have recently asked to rejoin the DMG..*

3a. Member Details

The following section gives a brief overview of the essential management information and contact details relating to each of the group members. A contact list is separately available as **Appendix 2. BDMG Contact List** which is confidential to Group members only. This also contains some information on actual sporting requirements as well as levels of cull attained in recent years by that property.

Auchessan Estate

Auchessan management objectives are deer, native pinewood regeneration and black game habitat. A small number of sheep are grazed on the open hill.

Auchlyne Estate

Auchlyne is the biggest landholding on the Dochart system. Management objectives include deer and farming activities, with both cattle and sheep. <http://www.auchlyne.co.uk/>

Owner Emma Paterson is vice-chair of the BDMG.

Boreland Estate

Boreland Estate is one of the bigger properties within BDMG, reporting north and south of the River Lochay. Deer and other sporting objectives are paramount, but a hill sheep flock is also of considerable importance, and one tenant farmer also runs a sheep stock. Limited cattle numbers are also kept. Judge Stroyan was a founder member and long time Chairman of the West Rannoch DMG, and Morven Frost is a regular count co-ordinator.

The Glen Lochay Woods SSSI lies entirely on Boreland Estate.

Cashlie

Cashlie extends both north and south of the River Lyon. Deer and sheep are the two principal land uses. About 100 cows are ran during the summer months, split north and south of the river. Cashlie have established a number of young pinewood schemes in recent years, fenced off from the main deer range.

Corrie Carie Estate

The sheep stock on Corrie Carie no longer exists, and deer management now comprises the main land use objective. Corrie Carie is managed in conjunction with Cruach Estate which lies further to the west at Rannoch Station. <http://rannoch-estate.com/>

Crossmount

Crossmount carries a ewe stock of 750 animals but deer management is the primary land use objective in this area. The wider Dunalastair Estate lies on both sides of the River Tummel, and as well as it's farming and sporting operations, it has a significant woodland operation as well as let property and holiday accommodation. <http://www.dunalastair.com/>

Dalchosnie

** Reported by Innerhadden*

Dalchosnie now maintains some 350 ewes which are grazed over Dalchosnie and West Tempar. There are also some 30 cattle but they do not graze the hill. Whilst Deer Management remains an important objective, the ground has good heather cover, retains the potential for grouse and provides some low ground shooting. Forestry remains an important objective. Deer Management is conducted in partnership with Innerhadden Estate.

Finnart Estate

Finnart is fenced off from the main deer range, and is effectively a self-contained management unit. There are no records of hinds/ calves culled in recent years. The area is also used for very small numbers of sheep and hill cattle, but this is very much a secondary consideration. In recent years, very considerable woodland creation schemes have been undertaken. Finnart have recently rejoined the DMG. <http://www.finnartestate.com/>

Forestry Commission Scotland

Other than Meggernie & Lochs, Forestry Commission Scotland are the largest landowners within BDMG, managing over 10,000 ha, and have the second highest overall deer cull. As well as the two larger reporting units at the Barracks and South Rannoch, FCS also report culls at Boreland Forest, Drummond Hill, Lassintulloch and Braes of Foss. Their primary management objective is to expand and protect Scotland's forests and increase their value to society and the environment.

Forest protection is therefore the most significant deer management consideration, especially at South Rannoch, where extensive re-stock areas require protection, and the nationally renowned Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI/ SAC Caledonian Pinewood Reserve and the semi natural woodlands and regeneration within them. Boreland Forest on Loch Tay-side also has a high proportion of vulnerable restock sites. All of the FC sites are fenced off from the main deer range, although analysis of culls achieved suggests limited access by stags must be occurring. FCS has good deer larders at Rannoch Station and Tummel Bridge. From the 01/04/10 there will be no leased areas within the DMG.

South Rannoch and the Barracks will remain forests for red stag permit stalking with 2 - 4 weeks offered. <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/forest-parks/tay-forest-park>

Garth Estate

Garth carries approx 500 ewes. Deer management is the primary sporting consideration, although the good heather cover on Garth provides potential for some grouse shooting.

Glen Lochay Estate

A very grassy estate, deer management and farming are the two principal land use objectives at Glen Lochay, where both sheep and cattle are grazed. There are plans to increase cattle numbers using the hill, and sheep stocks have been reduced by two thirds in recent years, with a view to achieving a larger and more productive deer herd.

The Mamlorn Project, a 800 ha native woodland restoration project, is one of the biggest of its type in Scotland, and involves 21 blocks being deer fenced from the existing deer range. The longer term aim is to diversify habitat in the glen, and provide long term shelter for deer. It is very much a long-term project. <http://www.pitcastle.com/glenlochay.asp>

Glenlyon Estate

Sheep have been removed from the hill ground at Glenlyon in recent years where deer management is now the primary consideration. Grouse moor management is an additional management objective. Sheep and cattle are largely confined to lower ground but estate policy with regards to their grazing the hill ground is kept under review and it is likely that sheep numbers on the hill area will now begin to increase again. A number of woodland plantings on the edge of the open hill are deer-fenced.

<http://robertwotherspoon1.vpweb.co.uk/>

Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust

The area at Dun Coillich is completely deer fenced, and management priorities are native woodland creation/ conservation/ education.

Incursions of deer occasionally occur, and a number of red deer are culled within the area, along with a number of roe deer per year. Much of the area is planted out with native trees, and are extremely vulnerable to browsing, and will be for the foreseeable future.

Dun Coillich provides for an extremely useful native woodland habitat connection between the Tay and the Tummel. <http://www.hpclt.org/>

Innerhadden Estate

Richard Barclay is the current Chair of Breadalbane DMG.

Sheep stocks on Innerhadden were removed in autumn 2009 to leave deer management as the main management objective with farming on the lower ground. There is scope for some grouse shooting, given the good heather cover, and black grouse management and pheasant shooting are further objectives on the lower slopes. Bracken control, tree planting, woodland regeneration and low ground agri-environment schemes are being implemented, as will be a grazing management plan to cover the hill area to take account of the designated site among other considerations.

Innerhadden manage deer across Dalchosnie and West Tempar , and report on these areas as well as Innerhadden itself. The joint stag sporting requirement of 40 animals is the largest in the north-east area of the group.

Richard Barclay manages the Rannoch Smokery, of which venison throughput is an important component. Leo Barclay is a current Committee member of SQWV.

<http://www.countrysportscotland.com/provider-302-innerhadden-estate/>

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

Innerwick Estate

Sheep stocks have been removed from Innerwick in recent years to leave deer management as the primary land use objective, although that situation is currently under review. The good heather cover gives potential for grouse management. A number of deer fenced regeneration schemes have been established in recent years. One new native pinewood SRDP scheme was established in 2011 along the march with the Rannoch forestry on the north of the estate. <http://www.innerwick.com/>

Innischoarach

Until recently owned and managed along with Glenlochay Estate and Invermearnan, Innischoarach is now a self-contained unit. 750 out of 900 ewes have been removed from the hill under a successful RDC application which has now been extended to 2020. Deer management is now the primary management consideration, with lower ground being used to sustain the population. Deer fenced native woodland enclosures are being investigated on a small proportion of the ground, as part of an additional RDC application. The current RDC plan also involves a Deer Management Plan for the property and livestock management payments.

Invermearnan

Reporting north and south of Loch Lyon, Invermearnan was until recently managed as one unit along with Glenlochay Estate and Innischoarach. Deer management and sheep are the two management objectives along with development of hydro power on a number of the prominent burns leading in to Loch Lyon. A number of conservation initiatives have been undertaken in recent years as well, and one of the bigger designated sites in the Group area, Ben Heasgarnich, falls mainly within the Invermearnan Estate.

John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust own and manage East Schiehallion. This property comprises approx half of Schiehallion, one of the most popular Munros in Perthshire. The summit is accessed by a well maintained pathway which bisects the holding and consequently visitor numbers are high. Management focuses on habitat restoration and improvement, where monitoring is used to assess deer impacts and inform culling activities. Strategic objectives are expressed in the property management plan which includes a DMP and forest plan. <http://www.jmt.org/>

Kynachan

** Reported with East Schiehallion, see above*

Kynachan maintains some 200 ewes. Deer Management remains the principal management objective for the time being. Otherwise the ground has outstanding heather cover, retains the potential for grouse, has a significant black game population and is utilized for some low ground pheasant shooting. It also supports a very considerable area of young regenerating birch woodlands, up to several hundred hectares. Deer Management is conducted in partnership with Innerhadden Estate.

Lochdochart

Agriculture and forestry/ conservation are the key management objectives at Lochdochart, although advantage is taken of the deer population to take around 35 stags per year. No stalker is employed as such, and deer are considered on balance to be a cost on the other enterprises. Approx 850 ewes use the hill area, and the estate also run an extensive herd of Galloway cattle, which make use of the higher ground. <http://www.lochdochart.co.uk/>

Lochs

Owned and managed along with Meggernie (below), these two units comprise the largest area with BDMG, and account for the largest overall deer cull. Lochs is slightly the smaller of the two units, and is considered to be a single unit within the DMP. Sheep are grazed, but are very much a secondary consideration to deer management. Lochs encloses the artificial water body, Loch an Daimh, and has a long deer-fenced boundary with the Forestry

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Commission at Barracks to the north. This is believed to be generally secure. Deer movements between Lochs and Blackmount DMG to the west evidently occurs. A significant area of young native pinewood is situated in the north-east corner of Lochs, along the boundary with Finnart, and this is also the case on Meggernie, below.

Highland cattle use the hill area around the dam.

Meggernie

As per Lochs Estate, Meggernie is slightly the larger of the two Estates, and reports both north and south of the River Lyon. Deer management is the primary management objective, but significant sheep flocks still remain, and a significant herd of Highland cattle graze over a wide area, both north and south of the river. Meggernie is well known for its native pinewoods, with the main SSSI enclosed to allow regeneration, and there are significant planted extensions to this, both to the east and west. The smaller Cnoc na Keys SSSI is also fenced. As with Lochs estate, there is a significant woodland area on the northern boundary with the Forestry Commission.

National Trust for Scotland

The National Trust for Scotland property, centred on Ben Lawers, reports as two units, with the second covering the Tarmachan ridge area, to the west of the public road. The whole area is managed for conservation and access. The deer cull is relatively modest for a unit this size, as sheep are the dominant herbivore, especially on Ben Lawers itself, where several farmers have servitude grazing rights. The NTS themselves only control one third of these rights. NTS sheep grazing rights are not exercised. Ben Lawers is the biggest designated site within the group. NTS have developed a recognized expertise in montane scrub restoration, which takes place in deer fenced enclosures, notably on the extensive area below the Tarmachan ridge. Other sizeable native woodland areas, all deer fenced, are also present. On the west side of the road, the main grazing sheep arise from Glen Lochay, NTS holding the grazing rights on that side. <http://www.nts.org.uk/BenLawers>

North Chesthill

Deer management and hill sheep farming are the two principal management activities at North Chesthill, with cattle being grazed on the lower ground only. With four main named Munros that can be accessed in a single circular ridge walk, North Chesthill attracts a lot of walkers, and it is considered that deer management returns only now contribute a proportion of what it might otherwise do. The Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh SSSI lies primarily within North Chesthill, and sheep grazing on this ground are now the only flock being ran in that area. <http://www.chesthill.com/>

Alastair Riddell was the previous Chairman of Breadalbane DMG.

Roro/ Roromore

Referred to locally as “the two Roros”, they report separately to BDMG. Agriculture takes priority over deer management, extensive sheep flocks being retained on both units, as well as hill cows. Stag requirements are modest, but the hind cull is significant within the sub-group area.

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

Ruskich

Ruskich is entirely dominated by a coniferous plantation. This wood is largely open to the surrounding hill ground, and is important shelter for deer using the wider area. Very little culling has taken place there in recent years. The plantation may well be felled/ restructured in the near future and that will have implications for fencing/ restocking and deer populations in the vicinity.

Scottish Rural Colleges (SRUC)

The SRUC property at Kirkton and Auchtertyre is managed primarily for upland research purposes, focused on upland & hill sheep systems and native woodland management. Breeding sheep numbers have reduced considerably in recent years from over 2500 in 1999 to around 800 in 2009, but increasing again a bit now. Current areas of priority include monitoring the biodiversity changes that arise after reduction/ removal of livestock grazing, and monitoring the productivity benefits and economics of away wintering. Deer management is focused on control of numbers, with the electrically fenced upland native wood enclosure in Kirkton Glen being especially vulnerable, but also the very limited in-bye grazing. There is no sport stalking, and the cost of control of deer numbers is a particular issue. <http://www.sruc.ac.uk/kirkton>

Slatich

Slatich is primarily a sheep farm, but has been developing its stalking interests in recent years in proportion to the size of the property. It is a full reporting member of BDMG.

South Chesthill & Inverinian

Reporting as one unit, deer management is the principal management objective on South Chesthill & Inverinian. Limited resources are also expended on grouse moor management, although the ground is predominantly grassy. Sheep numbers are now very modest, having been reduced to improve the ground available to deer. The hind cull on South Chesthill is the largest in the Middle Sub-group area.

Limited shelter for deer is available on the lower slopes, notably in the plantation forest at Inverinian. <http://southchesthill.com/>

West Tempar

Deer are the principal land management objective at West Tempar, although sheep also access the ground from neighbouring Dalchosnie. Deer management is undertaken by Innerhadden.

Loch Tay Side

A number of properties along the side of Loch Tay have traditionally not engaged with Breadalbane DMG, although they have submitted returns to SNH. They comprise owner occupied farms, woodland units and ground tenanted from the National Trust where deer can be culled under occupier rights.

Integrating these properties in to BDMG in a suitable manner will be a priority consideration for the group in the early part of this plan.

Owners/ occupiers with deer culling rights along Loch Tay side are included in the main contacts appendix attached to this plan.

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

Extensive discussions during the production of the previous DMP suggested that there were three main sub-populations within the overall Breadalbane DMG area; one north of the Lyon, one centred on Ben Lawers, and a third centred on Glens Lochay and Dochart and including ground south of Loch Lyon. These are referred to as the North, Middle and South Sub-groups. Although there will be a certain amount of movement between these areas, and stags will certainly move, it is considered that these contain reasonably discreet hind populations, and the consensus within the group suggests that this is a suitable working model for deer management planning purposes. A small number of estates have been subdivided to reflect the boundaries of the different sub-areas. The estates involved are Boreland, Invermearnan, Cashlie and Meggernie. Forestry Commission Scotland report on six deer management units, reflecting their different properties spread throughout the area. In this plan, all count and cull information will be reported at the Deer Management Unit level. (Tables 2-4 & **3. BDMG Reporting Units Map.**)

Table 2 : Northern Sub-area Deer Management Units (area figures are approximate)

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
1. FE Barracks	4446	Forestry	FCS
2. Finnart	2273	Deer	Finnart
3. FE South Rannoch	3608	Forestry	FCS
4. Corrie Carie	1063	Deer	Corrie Carie
5. Innerhadden	1872	Deer/ sporting	Innerhadden
6. Dalchosnie	414	Deer/ farming	Dalchos/ Kynach
7. West Tempar	756	Deer	Innerhadden
8. Lassintullich	273	Forestry	FCS
9. Crossmount	1439	Deer	Dunalastair
10. Kynachan	1190	Deer/ sporting	Dalchos/ Kynach
11. JMT Schiehallion	919	Conservation/ access	Dalchos/Kynach
12. Dun Coillich	428	Conservation/ forestry	HPCLT
13. Garth	1639	Deer/ farming	Harry McAdam
14. Glenlyon	2832	Deer/ sporting	Glenlyon
15. North Chesthill	2653	Deer/ sheep	North Chesthill
16. Ruskich	270	Forestry	Robert Curtis
17. Slatich	243	Sheep/ deer	Ian Fraser
18. Innerwick	2311	Deer/ sporting	Innerwick
19. Meggernie North	4500	Deer/ sheep	Meggernie/Lochs
20. Lochs Estate	6861	Deer/ sheep	Meggernie/Lochs
21. Cashlie North	1530	Deer/ sheep	Cashlie
22. Invermearnan North	3603	Deer/ sheep	West Highland Hunting
41. FE Braes of Foss	529	Forestry	FCS
Total:	42,049 ha		

Table 3 : Middle Sub-area Deer Management Units (area figures are approximate)

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
23. FE Boreland	331	Forestry	FCS
24. South Chesthill	2533	Deer/ sheep/sporting	South Chesthill
25. Roro	2028	Farming/ Deer	Roros
26. Roromore	1016	Farming/ Deer	Roros
27. NTS Ben Lawers	3094	Conservation/ access	NTS*
28. NTS Tarmachan	1348	Conservation/ access	NTS
29. Loch Tay Side	2465	Farming/ deer control	Misc
30. Boreland North	4427	Deer/ sheep	Boreland
31. Meggernie South	3064	Sheep/ Deer	Meggernie/Lochs
42. FE Drummond Hill	1031	Forestry	FCS
Total:	21,337 ha		

** Although conservation/ access is the priority management objective in this area, there are a number of grazing rights on Ben Lawers, and sheep grazing is the dominant land use.*

Table 4 : South Sub-area Deer Management Units (area figures are approximate)

<i>Management Unit</i>	<i>Extent (ha)</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deer Management</i>
32. Cashlie South	1719	Deer/ sheep	Cashlie
33. Invermearnan South	3576	Deer/ sheep	West Highland Hunting
34. Glenlochay Estate	4984	Deer/ farming/For	Pitcastle Estate
35. Innischoarach	2142	Deer/ sporting	Innischoarach
36. Boreland South	1850	Deer/ sheep	Boreland
37. Auchlyne	4092	Deer/ sheep	Auchlyne
38. Auchessan	1169	Deer/ sheep/ For	Auchessan
39. Lochdochart	2646	Farming/ Forestry	Lochdochart
40. SRUC Kirkton & Auchtertyre	2015	Sheep/ research	SRUC
Total:	24,193 ha		

4. Deer Management Statistics

The two previous Deer Management Groups, East Glenlyon DMG and West Rannoch DMG, that amalgamated to form BDMG kept good management records, but accessible and consistent records are only available since the time of the amalgamation in 2003. Analysis of these records is provided later in this document.

The data on deer counts and culls supplied by Members to BDMG 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, BDMG Deer Cull Information**.

Recommended cull record sheets are appended to this document.

All BDMG 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 OF THE BREADALBANE DMG AREA

Introduction

The Breadalbane area is very heavily designated, containing a number of high profile sites of national importance. In total, these sites extend to 19,780 ha or 22 % of the BDMG area. They include large upland sites, broadleaved woodlands and pinewoods as well as meadows, water habitats and geological sites. Deer management is potentially relevant to many of these. In particular, five of the large upland sites (*Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh*, *Ben Lawers*, *Meall na Samhna*, *Ben Heasgarnich* and *Meall Ghaordie*) are subject to the Delivering Favourable Condition Programme co-ordinated by SG agencies. They are regarded by the Government agencies as being a single cluster, and this issue is the single biggest natural heritage management consideration within BDMG at present.

Administration

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) are responsible for the administration of designated sites. Within this area, those sites within Glens Lochay and Dochart are managed from their Stirling Area office; sites in Glen Lyon, as well as the River Tay SAC, are administered from their office at Battleby, near Perth.

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Elsbeth Christie is the main contact Elsbeth.Christie@snh.gov.uk

Tayside & Clackmannanshire

Battleby, Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW
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Fax: 01738 458616

The area officer is John Burrow John.Burrow@snh.gov.uk

Nicki McIntyre is the main point of contact for all matters relating to the River Tay SAC, extending across both areas: Nicki.McIntyre@snh.gov.uk

In the context of this plan and the Breadalbane upland designated sites that are subject to Joint Working, James Scott of SNH is currently the primary point of contact. James.Scott@snh.gov.uk Mobile: (07500) 604 592. It is anticipated that in the near future, the area wildlife management officer will become the primary point of contact.

Five Different Designations

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

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

National Nature Reserves (NNR)

National Park

National Scenic Area(NSA)

In addition, just under 60,000 ha or two thirds of the DMG area has recently been classified as “wild land area”, along with significant areas in adjacent deer management groups. While it is not yet clear how such a classification will work in practice, it may well have implications for fencing and woodland creation schemes, and therefore have a bearing on deer management in future.

There are no Ramsar sites or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within the area.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

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

Scottish Natural Heritage chooses sites after detailed survey and evaluation against published scientific criteria. SSSIs can include freshwater, and sea water down to the mean low water mark of spring tides, as well as land. At 31 March 2008, there were 1,456 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 Areas of Conservation (SAC)

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

The SSSI & SAC designations can be located on [7. BDMG Designated Sites Map](#).

National Nature Reserves (NNR)

The first National Nature Reserves were designated 50 years ago, and at that time they were the cornerstone of nature conservation policy, safeguarding sites of national conservation importance as well as providing interpretative material and allowing the public to enjoy these sites. All NNRs are now designated as SSSIs to strengthen their protection. There are currently 65 National Nature Reserves in Scotland.

National Park

The Dochart catchment, as well as a small area at the bottom of Glen Lochay, lies within the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park (LLTNPA) area. The Cairngorms National Park lies to the north, only ten miles or so away. The BDMG area therefore occupies a substantial proportion of the area between the two National Parks, and can be regarded as a strategically significant buffer area to both.

National Scenic areas

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

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

The Loch Rannoch And Glen Lyon National Scenic Area http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=9137 covers some 48,000 ha, primarily within the BDMG area.

The area covered by the National Scenic Area, as well as the wild land area classification and the national parks can be seen on **7. BDMG Landscape Designations Map**.

A full account of all these sites, their current status and what properties are involved is given in **Appendix 3, BDMG Designated Sites**. In addition, **Appendix 6, Monitoring of Designated features**, details the likely contribution of deer to these sites. The current condition of the main designated features is also portrayed on **9. BDMG SSSI Condition Map**.

Commentary

There are 90 X SSSI and SAC designated features within the BDMG area. See Appendix 6. Of these features, 39 have no relevance to deer, or are only influenced indirectly by them. There are a number of geological sites, for examples. Several of the features relate to bird species. While deer can impact their habitat for better or worse, it is usually their breeding status which determines the feature status, and this can be affected by a wide range of factors. Lichen or fungi are affected primarily by stand structure, and within this area, over shading appears to be a greater limiting factor than stand fragmentation. In some locations, the status of the designated feature is not related to herbivore pressure. Eg Whorled Solomon's Seal in the Lyon Bank SSSI is listed as Favourable, but this cannot be attributed to herbivores. The woodland

at Finlarig Burn SSSI is listed as Unfavourable, but that is down to non- native tree species, notably beech, and not deer pressure.

In addition, there are a number of species rich grasslands and meadows within in- bye ground where it is suitable or unsuitable livestock grazing pressures that determine the status of the feature more than deer. In some cases, encroachment by willow/ birch and / or rank vegetation is the main issue. This sometimes arises because of under grazing. There are 8 X features that are primarily affected by livestock within in- bye areas., at the Fearnan Cowpark, Morenish Meadow, River Dochart Meadows and Keltneyburn sites.

All such sites will be disregarded in this plan, unless there is evidence to show that deer are causing an impact, through, for example, site statements from SNH.

There are 43 X designated features relating directly to deer.

Of these:

15 features or 35% are in Favourable condition

12 features or 28% are in recovering condition, and are subject to a plan of action that might reasonably lead to Favourable condition status in the short or medium term. Habitat Impact Assessments have been showing progress on these sites.

16 features or 37% are listed as being in Unfavourable condition, and some notes on these are given here below:

- 1 There are 6 X SAC features on Ben Lawers which are listed as being in Unfavourable condition, including grassland, heath and blanket bog habitats. There is an overlap between these features and broadly similar SSSI habitats on the same site that are listed as Favourable. In addition, it is accepted that sheep are the dominant herbivore on Ben Lawers, and the underlying limestone there makes Ben Lawers the most fertile and heavily grazed upland area within the DMG. Deer are a contributing factor to this overall pressure, but deer densities are in line with those being sought under the previous Section 7 agreement. There requires to be some additional analysis done re: habitats on Ben Lawers to more accurately apportion the impacts of deer and sheep, and to address the anomaly of broadly similar SSSI and SAC designated habitats being given very different status classifications. For the purposes of this plan, it is suggested that deer populations be kept within the range appropriate to the previous Section 7 agreement, and that finer scale habitat management is more likely to be effective with management of sheep numbers.
- 2 The tall herb assemblages and base rich fens on Ben Heasgarnich SAC are both in Unfavourable condition. They are two of nine SAC qualifying features on the site, one of which, species rich grasslands, requires a fairly high level of grazing. As with many of these upland sites that have a mixture of features where grazing requirements can conflict, it is difficult to see how those features requiring low impacts can be addressed without negatively impacting on others that require higher levels of grazing. The species rich grasslands are noted as the priority habitat on the site, and lowering deer densities can only lead to overgrazing of these habitats, as is already happening and documented via HIA assessments.
- 3 The montane assemblage at the Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh SSSI is in

Unfavourable condition. This area has been the focus for reducing deer impacts in recent years, and HIA analysis shows considerable progress in that direction. This area is likely to continue to be the focus of deer control efforts moving forwards over the next 5 years to bring densities in to line with targets envisaged under the previous Section 7 agreement. These densities were never attained, although the habitat response to reducing numbers has been notable. As with some of the other sites, a large proportion of the grassland sites have moved in to undergrazed categories, having all previously been within the acceptable range.

There is a suggestion from at least 2 X properties that sheep numbers on ground adjacent to this area may increase within the next 5 X year period, and that may well have implications for overall grazing levels within the area. A particular focus on habitat assessments in this area with therefore be very important.

- 4 There are 2 X SAC features listed as being in Unfavourable condition at Meall na Samhna, (willow scrub & species rich grasslands) and one SSSI feature (upland assemblage). As with (2) above, the SAC features require very different grazing impacts and in this case, they are virtually mutually exclusive. The broad picture for Meall na Samhna seems to be more or less correct, but it is unclear how these features can be addressed.
- 5 The birch woodland component of the Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI is at Unfavourable condition, although the Scots Pine element is Favourable. The birch woods lie outwith the active membership of this group, and it has not been possible to address this feature. The greater part of the SSSI is managed by Forest Enterprise, and deer impacts there are deemed to be acceptable, with good regeneration occurring throughout their area.
- 6 The Carie & Cragganester SSSI is listed as Unfavourable, but herbivore impacts there were listed as low- moderate in the NWSS survey, and the stand structure is very good over much of the site, showing pulses of regeneration up to 20 years or so ago. Over much of the site, there is a very good woodland vegetation, and good species mix. The eastern part of the site is more open, and has become dominated by bracken, and it is this which degrades the status of the site as a whole. A case is therefore made here that deer browsing is not the most critical factor on the site, and Favourable status can best be achieved by reducing bracken towards the eastern end of the site.
- 7 The Glen Lochay Woods SSSI is an Upland oak woodland, and listed as Unfavourable. It is a very extensive woodland area, half of which was fenced off in 2009 under SRDP in order to secure regeneration. This action has not yet fed through in to an improved SCM result for the site. The shelter provided by the SSSI is acknowledged as being important to overall deer welfare in Glen Lochay, which is why an agreement was made to tackle this site in stages.
- 8 Finally, at the Glen Lyon Woods SSSI, the wet woodland component is in Unfavourable condition. This is partly due to browsing, but also to non- native conifer species growing on the site. The most important management prescription on this site is therefore to gradually remove the conifers and allow a native woodland ground flora to become established again. It is likely that this process will be most effective if it is allowed to take place slowly over several decades. Regeneration of native tree species will be secondary in importance over that period.

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 Guidelines*, 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 BDMG area
- (ii) To achieve an appropriate balance between deer and their habitat, and between deer and other land uses, to minimize damage to agricultural, forestry, sporting or natural heritage interests, and to provide a conflict management role where significant differences in management objectives arise.
- (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. This currently amounts to some **725** stags and approx **2500** animals overall.
- (iv) To market such activity and produce to best advantage.
- (v) Without prejudice to (ii), to maintain a stable herd over the period of this plan, 2016-20, to keep numbers in line with actual sporting aspirations, and to facilitate an overall grazing regime that will gradually improve the overall condition of the five upland designated sites. It is anticipated that the target summer population should be some **4200 stags, 4200 hinds** and **1460 calves**, and numbers will be maintained at this level, subject to ongoing reviews of group objectives and regular habitat condition monitoring. While the current deer population is already at this level, the priority during this next 5 year period will be to try and adjust the proportion of stags and hinds so that they are in an approximate 1: 1 ratio.
- (vi) To ensure such resources, training and monitoring capacity that is required are made available to achieve the above objectives.
- (vii) To establish a thorough and robust set of working arrangements whereby access provision can be managed within the group area, taking account of current guidelines and industry initiatives.
- (viii) To facilitate the implementation of any other deer-related management agreements within the group area, and to provide a mechanism for dealing with any disputes.

Breadalbane DMG**Background Information & Policies**

- (ix) Where appropriate, to provide site specific management advice or information.
- (x) To ensure full participation from throughout the area in the deer management group.
- (xi) To maintain and improve local employment, be that specifically in deer management or wildlife management and agricultural activity more generally within the area.
- (xii) To ensure that an effective system of communication is in place for the internal purpose of members, for the wider community of the area and for external agencies and other interested parties. The Group will seek to be pro-active in all their communications.

Part Three - MANAGEMENT POLICIES & INFORMATION

8. Red Deer

Red Deer Population

The Breadalbane DMG traditionally foot counted every second year up to 2006. From 2008 onwards, the whole area was to be managed under a Section 7 Voluntary Control agreement, through which the government agencies gave a commitment to carrying out helicopter counts in 2011 and 2015, as well as an initial helicopter count in 2008 to set a benchmark population. This commitment was justified because of the sheer numbers of designated features in this area. A decision was made by the Group not to continue with foot counts as information gathered on a different basis might confuse and undermine the information coming forwards from the helicopter counts. The figures below therefore show foot counts up to 2006, with helicopter counts in the years since then. The quality of this recent information is generally agreed to be very good, and all Group members are happy to use it for the purposes of population modeling and subsequent cull apportionment between members. An SNH helicopter count took place in spring 2015, and this has provided the most up to date information on deer numbers within the group area, giving an overall total at that time of 9009 animals. This total does not include deer resident in Forestry Commission plantations or other significant wooded areas, which, because of their size and nature were not walked out on count days.

The following table summarizes the deer population data for the BDMG area from immediately prior to the Group formation in 2003:

Year	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Red Deer
2015*	2745	4914	1350	9009
2011*	3563	6288	1616	11,467
2008*	4513	6341	2436	13,290
2006	2928	4585	1362	8875
2004	3260	5043	2122	10,425
2002	3277	4954	1791	10,022

* DCS/ SNH Helicopter Count

The DCS deer count in 1999, sixteen years ago, was 14,596 animals.

The following table reflects the deer numbers in the three Sub-areas during the spring of 2015. The Forestry Commission areas and Finnart estate are excluded from these figures, both being fenced off from the main hill populations. There were 429 animals counted on Finnart during this count.

Sub-Area	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Deer	Area (ha)	Deer per 100 ha
North	1582	2376	648	4606	34,105	13.5
Middle	508	1327	342	2177	20,277	10.7
South	535	978	284	1797	24,193	7.4
Total:	2625	4681	1274	8580	78,575	10.9

Breadalbane DMG**Background Information & Policies**

The current red deer population across the group area as a whole appeared to be rising through to 2008, although current higher culls appear to have now reversed this trend, with a drop of over 4000 animals through to 2015.

The tables below give an individual property breakdown within each of the Sub- Groups. As the four more western estates in the North Group have a lower deer density than the east, the North Group here is split West & East, with the former generally being taken to be the deer population in and around the Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh SSSI.

North Group- East	2015	2015	2015 Total	Area ha	2015 Density
	Stags	Hinds			
Innerwick	275	188	521	2395	21.8
North Chesthill	148	413	664	2746	24.2
East Schiehallion	16	84	129	793	16.3
Coire Carie	174	19	196	1090	18.0
Crossmount	41	308	422	1595	26.5
Dalchosnie	50	42	106	350	30.3
Innerhadden	17	100	142	1743	8.1
Garth	63	222	329	1679	19.6
Glenlyon	178	161	381	3006	12.7
West Tempar	29	36	79	737	10.7
Total	991	1573	2969	16134	18.4

While the average density for the North sub group as a whole is 13.5 per sq km, excluding the four properties to the west shows that the density in the North-East part of the Group is much higher at 18.4 deer per sq km. For the North West part of the Group, the average deer density is only 8.7 deer per sq km, almost 10 deer per sq km less than the North East, and on a par with the South Group.

North Group- West	2015	2015	2015 Total	Area ha	2015 Density
	Stags	Hinds			
Meggernie (N)	167	186	423	4500	9.4
Lochs	309	450	889	7193	12.4
Cashlie (N)	6	60	77	1530	5.0
Invermearnan (N)	3	58	77	3603	2.1
Total	485	754	1466	16826	8.7

Cashlie and Invermearnan carry a much lower deer population than the other two properties. They are also the furthest west in the north group. It is doubtful whether deer in this area will affect the designated site to the east of the group, 10-15 miles away, although their utilization of the overall range will have an impact indirectly.

Breadalbane DMG**Background Information & Policies**

Middle Group	2015	2015	2015 Total	Area ha	2015 Density
	Stags	Hinds			
NTS Ben Lawers	33	288	394	4803	8.2
Boreland (Mid)	44	40	92	4427	2.1
Chesthill South & Inverinian	135	364	611	2345	26.1
Meggernie (Mid)	211	369	655	3064	21.4
Roro & Roromore	75	228	364	2996	12.1
Total	498	1289	2116	17635	10.7

In the Middle Group, South Chesthill and Meggernie hold the bulk of the deer population, with Boreland now showing a very low population, despite being one of the bigger properties in the Group. The deer density of 10.7 per sq km is significantly lower than the North Group, although the highest densities of sheep in the area are included in the Middle Group, with relatively few now present in the North Group.

South Group	2015	2015	2015 Total	Area ha	2015 Density
	Stags	Hinds			
Auchlyne & Bovain	7	126	185	4138	4.5
Auchessan	2	22	36	1147	3.1
Boreland (S)	271	137	455	1850	24.6
Cashlie (S)	68	149	239	1719	13.9
Glenlochay	39	105	170	5171	3.3
Innischoarach	127	243	441	2106	20.9
Invermearan (S)	9	117	154	3576	4.3
Kirkton & Auchtertyre	2	2	4	2209	0.2
Lochdochart	10	77	113	2442	4.6
Total	535	978	1797	24358	7.4

The deer density in the south group is the lowest of the three sub areas. Two properties, Boreland (South) and Innischoarach seem to winter the bulk of the population, with Cashlie also being reasonably prominent. All the other properties, including some of the larger ones, are all well below 5 deer per sq km, with Kirkton & Auchtertyre having very few deer on the count day.

Historical Data

An opportunity arose during the compilation of this plan to compare the 2015 count data with a map of foot count data from 1987, twenty eight years ago.

Care needs to be taken when comparing counts this far apart, let alone that the information is gathered by two different means, and it is not clear how comprehensive the foot count might have been in 1987. However, the data is interesting in looking at the broad trends that have taken place since then.

It should further be noted that the 2015 deer population has fallen by over 4000 since 2008, so that in the years in between these two counts, the population was significantly higher than at present.

North Group	2015	2015	2015	1987	1987	1987	Stag	Hind	Total
	Stags	Hinds							
Meggernie (N)	167	186	423	149	343	608	18	-157	-185
Lochs	309	450	889	180	314	618	129	136	271
Innerwick	275	188	521	8	132	195	267	56	326
North Chesthill	148	413	664	73	326	532	75	87	132
East Schiehallion	16	84	129	0	3	4	16	81	125
Cashlie (N)	6	60	77	0	0	0	6	60	77
Coire Carie	174	19	196	13	104	156	161	-85	40
Crossmount	41	308	422	17	141	213	24	167	209
Dalchosnie	50	42	106	14	125	180	36	-83	-74
Innerhadden	17	100	142	4	20	30	13	80	112
Invermearnan (N)	3	58	77	11	134	206	-8	-76	-129
Garth	63	222	329	155	3	162	-92	219	167
Glenlyon	178	161	381	27	198	299	151	-37	82
West Tempar	29	36	79	0	0	0	29	36	79
Total	1476	2327	4435	651	1843	3203	825	484	1232

In the North Group, the overall population has increased by over 1200 animals between the two dates, with an increase in stags making up most of the difference. There is a lot of variation between properties, some with very large increases or decreases. It is not clear if some of these changes are just the picture that happened on the day, or if underlying changes have occurred over the period. The “Total change” figure also includes calf figures. One interesting feature of the data across the 3 X groups is that calf numbers were often greater in 1987, despite the lower number of hinds then. This probably just reflects the very poor winter weather in 2014-15, after which calf survival was much reduced. 1987 was evidently a much better year.

Breadalbane DMG

Background Information & Policies

Middle Group	2015	2015	2015	1987	1987	1987	Stag	Hind	Total
	Stags	Hinds							
NTS Ben Lawers	33	288	394	0	0	0	33	288	394
Boreland (Mid)	44	40	92	234	185	486	-190	-145	-394
Chesthill South & Inverinian	135	364	611	59	416	635	76	-52	-24
Meggernie (Mid)	211	369	655	111	359	597	100	10	58
Roro & Roromore	75	228	364	93	143	283	-18	85	81
Total	498	1289	2116	497	1103	2001	1	186	115

In the middle group, there has only been a very modest increase in overall numbers, although the increase of 186 hinds is significant as a proportion of the total. The stag population has stayed almost identical overall, but there has been very dramatic changes at Boreland and Ben Lawers. There were actually no deer at all counted on Ben Lawers in 1987, but it is not clear if that is an actual count, or whether no count took place that year there. Interestingly, the change figures for Boreland and NTS Ben Lawers mirror each other exactly.

South Group	2015	2015	2015	1987	1987	1987	Stag	Hind	Total
	Stags	Hinds							
Auchlyne & Bovain	7	126	185	72	148	276	-65	-22	-91
Auchessan	2	22	36	5	41	65	-3	-19	-29
Boreland (S)	271	137	455	237	39	297	34	98	158
Cashlie (S)	68	149	239	115	258	453	-47	-109	-214
Glenlochay	39	105	170	33	220	329	6	-115	-159
Innischoarach	127	243	441	60	288	453	67	-45	-12
Invermearan (S)	9	117	154	22	116	180	-13	1	-26
Kirkton & Auchtertyre	2	2	4	2	0	2	0	2	2
Lochdochart	10	77	113	36	119	176	-26	-42	-63
Total	535	978	1797	582	1229	2231	-47	-251	-434

The south group is the only one that shows a net decrease in numbers over the period, principally of hinds, with the low calf % of 2015 also accounting for the fall as well. Stag numbers seem to be more static, although there seem to be changes between properties in who is keeping them for the winter. There are very significant drops in hind numbers on the south side of Cashlie and in Glen Lochay Estate, with the only significant increase in hind numbers being on the south side of Boreland. As with the other Groups, some of the above differences between properties may simply be due to where deer were located on count days, but there does appear to be a significant change in numbers nonetheless.

Red Deer Cull Data

The following table is a summary of the deer cull achieved by BDMG during 2014- 15, the combined cull being 2876 animals. These figures include non open range animals culled on Forestry Commission, which amount to 159 stags, 95 hinds and 78 calves, mostly from the North Sub-area. There are no culls reported for Finnart.

Area	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total
North	480 (137)	727 (79)	336 (73)	1543 (289)
Middle	168 (22)	284 (16)	112 (5)	564 (43)
South	259	309	124	692
Total:	907 (159)	1320 (95)	572 (78)	2799 (332)

Figures in brackets indicate the number of animals culled in the enclosed areas of FCS included in the total.

The following table outlines the BDMG cull since the 2003-4 season. The deer culls in 2010-11 to 2014-15 have been the highest in recent times, although it appears the peak year was 2012-13. There have been a very consistent no. of hinds culled over this period.

Year	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total Deer Cull
2014-15	907 (159)	1320 (95)	572 (78)	2799 (332)
2013-14	926 (193)	1363 (108)	587 (91)	2876 (392)
2012-13	1002 (257)	1384 (127)	530 (98)	2916 (482)
2011-12	931 (211)	1373 (150)	528 (106)	2832 (467)
2010-11	1094 (188)	1266(95)	517 (81)	2877 (374)
2009-10	972 (186)	1198 (82)	524 (67)	2696 (335)
2008-9	778 (134)	1108 (94)	439 (49)	2325 (277)
2007-8	816	882	345	2043
2006-7	654	770	260	1684
2005-6	695	817	208	1720
2004-5	793	1021	372	2186
2003-4	746	908	334	1988

Figures in brackets are from the enclosed areas on FCS or Finnart.

Red Deer Management Issues

The following issues have been identified within the Group area by Group members and others who have been consulted on this plan:

- Going forwards, the most significant issue within the group is ongoing management to bring the 5 X large upland sites in to favourable status overall. This has been largely achieved over the previous five year period with a reduction of 4000 animals overall, in addition to the significant reduction in nos of sheep across the area during the period 2006-10, which helped reduce the overall herbivore pressure. For the coming period, a stronger focus will be maintained on the North- east part of the Group. It is probable that a modest increase in numbers can be allowed for elsewhere. The challenge for both Group members and SNH is the conflicting grazing requirements of a range of these designated site types. In particular, the upland grasslands, which are the signature habitat of the Breadalbane hills, are now growing rank in some key locations.

Breadalbane DMG

Background Information & Policies

- The 2015 helicopter count does suggest that the South Group are over- shooting in their area, and culls there could be relaxed without detriment to conservation interests.
- The ongoing culls in the North Group are now putting pressure on numbers, and some properties have been expressing concerns that their sporting requirements may no longer be possible.
- Grassland habitats within the Group area are becoming overly rank, as evidenced by HIA assessments. This is partly because of the lack of suitable livestock within many parts of the DMG area. This is a potential problem as these habitats are the most significant by area in the DMG, and they are also the most floristically diverse upland habitat within the group. Part of this issue relates to having different habitats with different grazing requirements present in a very intimate mixture.
- Group members seem to favour the structured approach that the previous Section 7 agreement allowed them, and agreeing an appropriate mechanism to go forward with will be a key consideration for the early part of 2016.
- Training in habitat monitoring will become a significant consideration within this coming period.
- Access issues within the Group area are mainly restricted to the North Chesthill area, but considerable advances have been made over 2014-15, highlighting alternative routes for the short period of the stag rut. The Glen Lochay Hills are the other area where access pressure has been increasing in recent years, along with Cashlie where an increasing number of disturbed stalks is evident.
- New fences to the west of Tyndrum have now effectively cut off Breadalbane from land further west, where it is acknowledged that the Group had a net immigration of deer from. This development may well have a particular effect on the South Group, and the west of the North Group. Neither can no longer rely on an immigration of animals from elsewhere.

Additional issues include:

- Removal of hefted sheep stocks from many areas allows the encroachment of animals from neighbouring properties that still have sheep. This leads to increased gathering costs, disruption of stalking activity and pressure on grazing in areas where sheep had been removed to reduce this.
- A number of properties believe that there are unrealistic expectations of stag numbers within some parts of the Group.
- Several properties involved with grant schemes suggest that better co-ordination between government agencies is required, and that the single-point-of –contact approach used successfully by BDMG is not replicated elsewhere when dealing with the detail of some issues.
- There is a need to maintain an appropriate age class structure within the deer populations which is compatible with sporting cull targets.
- Deer populations are becoming very concentrated in some areas, with some small sanctuaries becoming evident, and movement of deer on to low ground in the spring months, sometimes leading to problems.
- Maintaining perimeter deer fencing around areas of forestry is a significant undertaking, although the current standard of fencing is very good.

Other Deer Species

There are not believed to be any Sika deer within the DMG area, although there have been some suspicious animals reported, and Sika deer are believed to be present to the west, and in the Loch Ericht DMG. South Chesthill shot a single Sika stag in 2009- 10. Fallow deer are locally abundant around Dunkeld and the A9 corridor, but are not known to impact upon this DMG area.

Group policy regarding these two species is as follows:

Sika Deer

Sika deer will not be encouraged within the Breadalbane DMG area, and all properties are encouraged to cull whatever animals that might be identified as such during normal operations, and report to the group. If necessary, out-of- season licenses/ advice should be sought from SNH as a matter of priority when such animals are causing damage to timber, crops or identifiable aspects of the natural heritage. Sika deer are believed to be present to the northwest of Loch Rannoch, and have also been observed within the FC plantations at Benmore on the Dochart. Auchlyne Estate report culling two Sika stags over the past 15 years or so, and South Chesthill one in 2009- 10.

Fallow Deer

Fallow deer are not present within the Breadalbane DMG area, and while some owners would be sympathetic to their future presence within the BDMG area, for the majority this is not a significant consideration.

Under current legislation, the introduction of any such animals outwith their normal range would constitute an offence.

Roe Deer Population

Roe deer are not a significant consideration within the DMG area, probably only being present in any numbers in the woodland in the north, around the periphery of the group, and along Loch Tay and possibly the Lochay and Dochart valley bottoms. All members report roe deer culls to the DMG, but other than the Forestry Commission and Dun Coillich, numbers are very low.

No information regarding roe deer populations is available within the group area as a whole, although the Forestry Commission will have information through dung counting within the main forested blocks.

Roe Deer Management Issues

There are not considered to be any significant roe deer management issues within the group area.

9. Grouse Moor Management

The Breadalbane DMG area is very much at the western edge of the viable grouse range, although grouse moor management has been a significant income generator in the recent past, and most estates with sporting interests have an aspiration to improve their grouse shooting. This is primarily the case within the Northern sub-area of BDMG where heather cover tends to be best. Much of the wider area is dominated by upland grasses. Most BDMG members, across the group area, ensure at least a basic standard of predator control.

Grouse numbers within the group have been very poor for the past ten years or so, with very little in the way of commercial or even family shooting. A widespread infestation of heather beetle in the early part of the previous decade had a devastating impact on heather cover, especially in the south of the group, and this has had serious consequences for future grouse prospects in those areas. Unlike some areas such as South Perthshire or the Angus Glens where deer have been severely culled and/ or fenced out to reduce tick burdens on grouse, this is not an issue within BDMG at present.

A limited amount of muirburn is carried out within the DMG on an annual basis, usually constrained by the availability of suitable weather in the spring months.

There have been no significant wildfires in the area for many years.

10. Hill Sheep Management

Due to the five major upland designated sites within the area, a very good level of knowledge exists with regards to sheep numbers and how they have changed since 2006. This has been collected privately from all properties within the area, and property-specific detail is kept confidential. Information relating to livestock will only be made available to the parties directly involved in and around each designated site if it is required for the purposes of producing a suitable agri-environment scheme application. In this document, sheep numbers are summarized in each of the sub-areas only. In the Middle Group: 'The Upland Grazing Plan for Ben Lawers SSSI/SAC' has been compiled by Richard Lockett of Lockett Agri-Environmental & Alan Boulton of Huntaway Consulting, with the author of this plan producing documents for the other four sites in 2009. Only some of this has been actioned.

Group members returned sheep numbers to BDMG as part of their previous plan in 2006, and that now allows any *changes* during the period since to be quantified. This is crucially important within the context of overall habitat monitoring, as there is often a time delay between changes in grazing levels and subsequent changes in habitat, and changing numbers of sheep will affect the overall range available for deer. ***Any significant changes in sheep numbers or policy should be communicated to the BDMG on an annual basis.***

The following table summarizes the approx numbers of sheep present in each of the sub-areas, in 2006, in 2010 and at present. The information arises from the HIA study in 2007, information provided for the previous Deer Management Plan, plus discussions that have taken place during the period of this plan. The sheep numbers summarized here are those present in the sub-area as a whole, not necessarily those with access to the designated sites. Many of these sheep will have access to in-bye grazing only. However, it is the totals that will affect potential overall carrying capacity of deer.

Sheep Numbers within the Breadalbane DMG Area

<i>Sub- area of DMG</i>	<i>Breeding ewes in 2006</i>	<i>Breeding ewes in 2010</i>	<i>Change in number, 2006-10</i>	<i>Breeding ewes in 2015</i>	<i>Change in number, 2010- 2015</i>
NORTH	10,400	5,400	-5000	5400	0
MIDDLE	7850	7550	-300	8500	950
SOUTH	14,625	9640	-4985	10,200	560
TOTAL:	32,875	22,590	-10,285	24,100	1510

Over and above this data, statistical information has been obtained from the annual agricultural census that summarizes sheep populations at a parish level for the years 2014, 2009, 2004, 1999 and 1994. This allows broader changes in sheep numbers to be analysed at five-yearly intervals.

The above data, gathered directly from the individual properties, suggests that there has been no further decrease in sheep numbers within the DMG, at least at a sub- group level. In the North Group, numbers are exactly the same as in 2010. There have been very modest increases in each of the other two areas, to give an overall increase of 1510 ewes across the whole DMG, an increase of c 7%. The increase seems to result in small increases over a number of properties. There have been some decreases in sheep numbers on individual estates, with these figures showing a net increase across each sub- area as a whole.

There are three parishes within the DMG area; Fortingall, Kenmore and Killin. The current distribution of sheep and the parish boundaries can be seen at [5. BDMG Sheep & Parish Boundaries map](#). None of the three parishes lie wholly within the DMG area, but the information does give a broader feel for how sheep nos are changing in different parts of the Group, and allows some comparison to be made with the data above, and a cross- reference to be made.

Summary tables of the information available are provided below:

FORTINGALL

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	% Change
No. of holdings keeping sheep	34	26	23	23	23	
<i>% change from 1994</i>						-32
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						0
No of breeding ewes	23758	22597	21544	14875	15044	
<i>% Change from 1994</i>						-37
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-30
Total Sheep	51859	51529	47519	33577	32242	
<i>% Change from 1994</i>						-38
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-32
Average Sheep per holding	1525	1981	2066	1459	1401	-8

Fortingall parish, which essentially takes in the North Group plus part of the South Group, shows a very small increase in numbers of breeding ewes in the last 5 years, and this tends to tie in with the figures produced above by individual members. The significant decreases in sheep numbers happened prior to 2009, but especially from 2004 to 2009 following the changes to the subsidy regime.

KENMORE

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	% Change
No. of holdings keeping sheep	23	24	21	22	22	
<i>% change from 1994</i>						-4
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						+5
No of breeding ewes	18219	17854	17365	16458	15345	
<i>% Change from 1994</i>						-16
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-12
Total Sheep	41325	41495	40518	38808	367732	
<i>% Change from 1994</i>						-11
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-9
Average Sheep per holding	1796	1728	1929	1764	1669	-7

Kenmore Parish covers part of the Middle Group, but also a lot of ground to the south of Loch Tay as well. The figures here suggest a fall in numbers from 2009 to 2014, which is slightly different from the increase suggested by individual members. The discrepancy will be because the time period is slightly different, and the actual area is different.

The fall in numbers prior to 2009 is not so dramatic as for the North Group/ Fortingall Parish, and this is borne out by the individual accounts above.

KILLIN

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	% Change
No. of holdings keeping sheep	27	26	22	19	16	
<i>% change from 1994</i>						-41
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-27
No of breeding ewes	26014	26122	23241	14098	12232	
<i>% Change from 1994</i>						-53
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-47
Total Sheep	56099	55894	47199	29487	27774	
<i>% Change from 1994</i>						-50
<i>% Change from 2004</i>						-41
Average Sheep per holding	2077	2149	2145	1551	1735	-16

Killin parish covers a much wider area than just the South Group, with the figures here showing a small decrease of c 2000 ewes from 2009- 2014. The full decrease over the 20 years is by far the greatest of any of the three parishes, but the individual estate data suggest that this has now stabilized.

Overall, the sheep numbers within the BDMG area appear to have now stabilized after a period of decline, with a modest increase of about 1500 ewes or so, a small % of the total. It is likely that most of these ewes will be grazing the lower slopes where grassy habitats predominate, with fewer of them getting up to the higher levels.

Two owners within the NE part of the group have indicated an intention to increase sheep numbers by c 1300 in total over the next 5 years. Given that this will be in that part of the Group where herbivore impacts are still a concern, these additional animals will need to be

taken in to account when assessing what the appropriate deer density should be there.

Cattle

A number of properties within the group run hill cattle, although they will very rarely, if ever, reach the higher tops.

In Glen Dochart, Lochdochart Estate grazes an extensive herd of Galloways on their hill ground. Other properties there have minimal numbers of cattle. In Glen Lochay, Glenlochay Estate graze approx 80 hill cows, and are seeking to use these more constructively in grazing the hill area. Cattle numbers in the rest of the glen are very low.

In Glenlyon, both Cashlie and Meggernie/ Lochs Estates run extensive hill herds; 100 blue-grey cows at Cashlie, a slightly lesser number at Meggernie/ Lochs. There is also a significant herd of hill cattle at Roro, other cattle in the glen being confined to in-bye ground only. SRUC Kirkton & Auchtertyre have re-introduced hill cattle in recent years.

While small numbers of cattle are present on the south side of Loch Rannoch, they are not significant with regards to the hill area.

In the last few years, both Innischoarach Estate and SRUC Kirkton & Auchtertyre have re-introduced herds of hill cattle, primarily for hill pasture management purposes. These should be very useful in managing grassy hill pastures at lower and middle altitudes.

11. Forestry & Woodland Management

Woodlands cover c 16% of the DMG area, only slightly less than the Scottish average cover of 18%. There is a good mixture of commercial conifer plantations and native woodlands, with a significant increase in area via planting over the last 20 years or so. A high proportion of the woodland, both private and public, is actively managed. Forest Enterprise are the second largest landholding in the DMG, covering six different management units, with South Rannoch and the Barracks being the two largest. There are a number of designated woodland sites, mostly around the periphery of the site, including some iconic woodlands such as the Black Wood of Rannoch. The Forest Enterprise property of Drummond Hill is particularly prominent in the area.

A more thorough description of the woodland area is given later in this document.

12. Supplementary Deer Policies

SNH Authorisation

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

The vast majority of deer are culled in season, but deer marauding on farmland in spring can sometimes occur and dealing with this is an important consideration in retaining some flexibility within the Group area.

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. Recruitment is approx

32%. These figures are used in the current population models for BDMG.

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> Members recognize that deer related traffic accidents are receiving more attention nationally and that there may be places in the Sub-Group area where deer can be a particular hazard. These are mainly on the periphery of the group, with the road along the north shore of Loch Tay and the A82 from Lix Toll through to Tyndrum being potential areas of interest.

A summary of such collisions can be seen at **14. BDMG Deer- Vehicle collisions map**, covering the period 2000- 2013.

From this it can clearly be seen that it is really only the main road between Lix Toll and Tyndrum where any number of collisions have taken place over that time. The comparison with some of the other main roads in Perthshire is striking, especially the A9 and the A85, and the road from Tyndrum on to Glencoe.

Deer Fences

Attaining an up to date picture of the status of these fences should be a priority for the group. Almost all significant woodland areas within the Group area are fenced off from deer, although many areas are retained as deer shelter, and a number of pole-stage plantations have been opened up for deer access in recent years.

Both conventional and electrified deer fences occur within the group area. Deer densities are such that it is generally held within the BDMG area that new plantings/ restocked areas be fenced. There are no regeneration areas outwith deer fences within the BDMG area, although modest extensions to gorge woodlands are occurring locally in some areas across the group, notably in parts of Glenlyon and Glen Lochay. There are extensive birch woods spreading through natural regeneration on Kynachan Estate, but these are not in any scheme. Native woodland regeneration is occurring along the railway/ road/ river corridor in Glen Dochart in many areas, seemingly by default after changes in livestock grazing patterns. Group members will take account of the Joint Agency Fencing guidelines, which are shortly to be renewed.

Supplementary/ diversionary Feeding

There is relatively little supplementary or diversionary feeding specifically for deer in the group area, although feed blocks and silage laid out for sheep can sometimes be utilized by deer.

Members currently feeding deer are:

Meggernie & Lochs

Innerwick

Boreland

Ruskich

Auchessan

Invermearnan

South Chesthill

Members agree that they will inform the Group if they decide to undertake any such feeding in period of this Plan, or if any significant changes are made to current practice. All deer feeding which takes place will comply with industry Best Practice.

Venison Marketing

Larder provision within the group is generally good, but local co-operation to ensure appropriate capacity takes place at a number of locations within the area, notably around Loch Rannoch where one game dealer picks up from all properties around the loch, streamlining collection costs, and allowing a better price to be paid on all venison sourced there.

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. Several group members are members of the venison quality assurance scheme (SQWV) and other Members will be encouraged to attain the standards required. 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.

The Rannoch Smokery and Glenlyon Gourmet Foods provide outlets for locally sourced venison.

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.

There are no fallow deer within the Group area, and there are no known plans to introduce any.

Sika Deer

There is no desire from any Group members to see Sika deer become established in the area. For this reason, all Sika deer will be culled within accepted seasons, and such culls reported to the Group for the information of other members.

Should Sika deer look like becoming resident in a particular area, a concentrated effort will be made by affected properties to remove these as quickly as possible.

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 as quickly as possible. Group members are encouraged to cull such animals first, and report them later.

There are no wild goats within the area, and it is not believed that there are any wild boar.

14. Communications Policy

The Breadalbane 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 its website, www.breadalbanedmg.deer-management.co.uk, linked to the Association of Deer Management Groups' website <http://www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-groups/deer-management-group-map/breadalbane-dmg> and 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.

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

Breadalbane Deer Management Group

Group Secretary: Victor Clements

Victor@nativewoods.co.uk

Tel: (01887) 829 361

Chairman

Richard Barclay

richard@rannochsmokery.co.uk

Mrs Emma Paterson of Auchlyne Estate is the vice-Chair of BDMG.

Emma.Paterson@auchlyne.co.uk

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.

Breadalbane DMG

Background Information & Policies

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

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

Scottish Natural Heritage Contact

James Scott is the current SNH Wildlife Operations officer covering the Breadalbane area: James.Scott@snh.gov.uk,

For more general deer enquiries: wildlifeops@snh.gov.uk

BDMG 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.

BDMG welcomes comment on all matters either directly or indirectly associated with deer management within the Breadalbane area.

15. Training Policy

BDMG 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 October 2015, 43 of the 55 personnel involved in deer management in the BDMG area have obtained this qualification. Of the 55 personnel involved, 39 are full time employees. Of these 32, have DMQ Level 1. The remaining 7 tend to be owner occupiers or employees of small properties.

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 October 2015, 22 of the 55 personnel involved in deer management in the BDMG area held the DMQ Level 2 qualification. 20 of the 39 full time employees hold this 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 October 2015, 27 of the 55 personnel involved in deer management within with BDMG area had trained hunter status, although it is thought that a number of these personnel will ultimately not be responsible for carcass preparation. Of the full time employees, 24 of the

39 hold this status.

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

At October 2015, 26 X personnel in the BDMG area required to take deer under authorization, and were on the Fit & Competent register. This relatively 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. BDMG 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, especially in all matters relating to Health & Safety, both of personnel and visiting guests.

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 2021 and thereafter, 2026, 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

Breadalbane 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 group are considered to be appropriate and secure to significant deer movements from elsewhere, with the probable exception being to the west of Tyndrum. The population model for the South sub-Group suggests that the current annual cull should not be sustainable from the existing population. The most obvious explanation for this is that the South Group have a net immigration of deer from outwith the area, but extensive new fences to the west of Tyndrum may now have changed this situation. Population models for the other two sub areas work fairly well, and have been use to inform the setting of cull levels since 2009 with a good degree of success. The location of the group is shown on the **1. BDMG Location map**. Beyond this issue, the deer density to the west of the North Group is significantly less than the deer in the east, and yet all are subject to the same culling regime in respect of the Section 7 agreement, despite these properties being 5-10 miles from the nearest designated site. There is therefore an argument for creating a sub-division within the North Group, splitting it east and west.

Action Point

- 1.1 *Monitor the operation and accuracy of the three population models during the course of this plan, and review as required.*
- 1.2 *Try to obtain a better understanding of the exact dynamics involved in the South Group by autumn 2016.*
- 1.3 *Investigate the option of splitting the North Group in to West and East areas before autumn 2016. This will have implications for population modelling, cull setting and habitat monitoring work, and needs to be carefully considered by the Group.*

Membership

Almost all of the significant land holdings within the BDMG area are members of the Deer Group, although there are two significant exceptions to this:

- 1 Finnart Estate have not been participating members for a number of years, although their property is effectively fenced out from the common deer range. They have now agreed to return to the Group.
- 2 Unsuccessful attempts have been made in recent years to try and recruit the farmers and occupiers along Loch Tay in to the Group.

Neither of these issues significantly affects the running of the Group as a whole, nor does it interfere with addressing the main issues within the Group. However, knowledge of what goes on in these areas would contribute to the overall understanding of deer dynamics within the area, and it should remain a Group priority to try to recruit these properties, perhaps on an associate basis.

Action Points

2.1 Before the end of 2016, look to recruit the above mentioned landholdings as members of the Group.

Meetings

The group already meet twice a year, and the attendance at meetings is generally good. SNH & FE attend meetings, and group have demonstrated an ability to take forwards business between meetings. Additional meetings to develop the preceding Section 7 process were well attended. Not all owners attend every meeting, but communications/ correspondence between meetings is good, as required, so overall participation can be considered to be adequate, with both owners and employees contributing well. Going forwards, minutes and agendas of meetings should be published and efforts made to ensure that local interests are aware of meetings and that they have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda as required.

Action Points

3.1 Look to encourage wider community participation, including invitations to community councils. All such groups to be given the opportunity to contribute to the agenda of meetings. Secretary to action.

3.2 Minutes to be structured to include Action Points.

3.3 The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) have developed a greater capacity for dealing with deer matters, and will be invited to all future meetings.

Constitution & Finances

The Group have worked according to a Constitution since its inception in 2003, and this was recently updated in 2014 to more reflect the current situation.

Financial management in the Group is good, with subscriptions being quickly invoiced and collected and a buffer/ reserve equivalent to one year's subscription to ADMG being held in the bank account at any one time. Budgets are prepared on an annual basis.

Consideration might be given to having the accounts independently audited.

Action Points

4.1 Consideration should be given to having the accounts independently audited. This need not be an expensive process with a sufficient standard being that required by Community Councils. Introduce by spring 2017.

Deer Management Plan

The Group has operated to the current management plan since 2010, with this co-inciding with the Section 7 Voluntary Control agreement process. A previous plan was in place before that. The current plan is now being upgraded to incorporate a wider range of public interest actions, and to deliver a suitable mechanism for taking forwards continued development of the upland designated features in the Group area.

Action Points

5.1 Endorse new DMP at spring 2016 meeting

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.

5.3 By spring 2016, agree on a suitable mechanism for overseeing the new plan, ensuring that it delivers the outputs expected of it, in particular in relation to designated sites.

Code of Practice on Deer Management

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

Action Point

6.1 Ensure adherence to code at all times, both by the Group, and by individual members. This action point will provide an opportunity for all members at meetings to bring up issues that may be of concern to them re: deer welfare or management.

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 Breadalbane DMG constitution.

Best Practice Guidance

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

Data & Evidence gathering- Deer Counts

As part of the previous Section 7 process focused on upland designated sites, the Breadalbane area has been counted by helicopter in 2008, 2011 and 2015, with a partial count of the NE part of the group in November 2012 as well. Deer population data for the Group is therefore very good, with the resources to deliver these counts coming through the Section 7 process. The counts are generally regarded as being accurate and accepted by Group members.

Prior to this, the Group would traditionally have completed a foot count every 2 years.

When the programme of helicopter counts was devised, it was decided to stop the foot counts, for fear that this additional information would only distract from/ confuse that being obtained from the helicopter counts. So, although the population data for the group is very good, the group itself now has not completed a foot count since 2006, and the capacity to do so might well have now been compromised over that period of time.

The current strategy in the Group has therefore been to have a helicopter count every 3-4 years, and to undertake good recruitment counts on an annual basis so that the number of animals coming in to the Group each year can be determined, and population models utilized to determine the cull levels required. Mortality data is also gathered on an annual basis.

Irrespective of what mechanism is used going forwards to oversee the development of upland designated sites, it is likely that the group will continue to see a combination of recruitment counting, population modelling and helicopter counts (perhaps once every five years), and not to rely on annual foot counts.

Because of the size of the Group, and the nature of the terrain, foot counts in Breadalbane are notoriously difficult, with SNH having previously calculated that a proper count would require 120 man- days to complete properly.

Forest Enterprise manage the only significant woodland holding across the group area, and make use of dung counting when setting their cull levels.

Action Points

9.1 With a good helicopter count having been recently completed in spring 2015, the group should continue to use population modelling and recruitment counts on an annual basis. Information on mortality shall also be collated on an annual basis.

9.2 It should be determined whether to organize another helicopter count during the period of this plan and if so, how to pay for that. If not funded by agencies, then it may be paid for via a combination of SRDP and private funds.

9.3 No foot counts are planned during the period of this plan, although this will be kept under review.

Data & Evidence Gathering- Culls

Deer cull information within the Group is very good, with the only obvious gap being the lack of information about what is culled on the properties along Loch Tay.

Aspirational sporting requirements have been provided by Group members, and a five year population model has been drawn up for each sub population area. From this, culls have been apportioned to each Deer Management Unit area. These population models and cull targets can be found in the Working Plan part of this document. In most cases, target culls are very similar to current levels, with a lesser cull being advised in some areas.

The broad strategy going forwards will therefore be to set cull levels which ensure a stable population density across the area, this being required to ensure the socio- economic, environmental, sporting and venison production requirements of members.

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.

Data & Evidence Gathering- Habitat Monitoring

Habitat Impact Assessments (HIA) have been carried out by SNH under contract in 2007, 2011 and 2014, and a round of Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) undertaken in 2010 across most of the Group area. A very good level of habitat monitoring therefore exists on the designated upland sites in the group, although not in the wider, non-designated habitats.

While some Group members undertake habitat monitoring, the extent of this is very patchy, with most properties having come to rely on the monitoring undertaken by SNH above.

Many group members have had experience and training in habitat monitoring, but coverage is not uniform, confidence is low in some cases, and Habitat Impact Assessments are not currently undertaken in a structured manner across the DMG area.

Action Points

11.1 A schedule of habitat and designated site monitoring will be devised in conjunction with SNH during early 2016, and will be included in the Working Plan part of this document.

11.2 The DMG will co-operate with government agencies and provide or access sufficient resources to ensure that this programme is implemented over the period of this plan.

11.3 Updated sheep information will be attained from SGRIPD for 2019 and 2024, in line with the data gathered on a five-year basis since 1994.

11.4 The DMG will liaise with members on an ongoing basis so that they are aware of any significant changes in sheep numbers or hill usage at a more local level.

Competence

Of the 55 personnel involved in deer management within the NWS DMG area, the following qualifications are held:

DMQ Level 1:	43
DMQ Level 2	22

27 personnel hold trained hunter status, and 26 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. The greater 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 for all personnel involved with deer management within the area, and encouragement will be given to professional stalkers to achieve DMQ level 2. Chair to co-ordinate this activity.

12.2 Questionnaire results suggest some confusion as to how “trained hunter” status is actually defined. BDMG to provide this clarification to all members, and to facilitate any necessary training to give all employees this status by the end of 2016.

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

12.4 The DMG will work with farmers and other occupiers where possible to ensure that deer culling carried out on their ground meets with all appropriate industry standards.

12.5 Training and support will also be sought from ADMG where that is required to help with running of the Deer Management group.

Training

A Training Policy is included earlier in this document.

Action Points

13.1 Promote and facilitate the uptake of appropriate deer management qualifications, and specifically address the issue over how trained hunter status is defined.

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 at spring DMG meetings. Health & safety is already on the Agenda of meetings.

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 mixed within the area. The perceived bureaucracy surrounding this seems to be more of a limiting factor than poor facilities or training as such, along with a perceived lack of reward for actually attaining the status. Of the 24 main members of the Group, 13 hold the SQWV status. Group members use a number of outlets for their venison, with a proportion of the total cull being processed or sold locally. A successful collaborative collection scheme is in operation around Loch Rannoch, in which a number of BDMG members participate, giving those members a higher venison price. There have been a number of attempts to expand this to Glen Lyon, but so far without success.

Action Points

14.1 The DMG will work with ADMG to promote uptake of SQWV within the area.

14.2 In the medium term, beyond the settling in period for this Plan, the DMG will explore further 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 the ADMG and Breadalbane DMG websites, including notices to local stakeholders and 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 [6. BDMG 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

Breadalbane 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

BDMG have 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 April 2016. The plan plus associated documents, maps and minutes of meetings will be published on dedicated BDMG website space, www.breadalbanedmg.deer-management.co.uk and also accessed through the Association of Deer Management Groups website. See here: <http://www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-groups/deer-management-group-map/breadalbane-dmg/>

An important consideration for the Group will be to determine how best to provide appropriate agency oversight to the management regime covering the five large upland sites within the area. The Section 7 Voluntary Agreement proved very useful in doing that, and it is likely that the Group will ask to continue with that arrangement or a slightly less formal version of it going forwards.

Action Points

PIA 1.1 Publish and endorse the new BDMG 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, by June 2016, and then annually thereafter.

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

PIA 1.4 Agree a suitable mechanism for overseeing the deer management regime covering designated sites within the Group area by Spring 2016.

Delivering Designated Features in to Favourable condition

Designated sites and features within the DMG are documented with [Appendix 3, BDMG 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.

Specific actions will be laid out in the Working Plan at the back of this document.

Action

PIA 2.1 Implement actions required to bring designated sites in to favourable condition:

Priority actions are:

- *The 5 X large upland sites subject to the Section 7 voluntary agreement from 2010-15 will continue to have red deer numbers managed to an agreed density over the coming five year period, with an agreed programme of culling, monitoring, oversight by SNH and appropriate habitat monitoring. These sites are Ben Heasgarnisch, Meall Ghaordie, Meall na Samhna, Ben Lawers and Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh. These sites contain a mixture of SSSI and SAC designated features and are of considerable national importance. The majority of features are currently in Favourable or Recovering condition, although some SAC features are currently still listed as Unfavourable. The purpose of this plan is to create the broad conditions for a positive direction of management with regards to deer populations.*
- *While both the Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI pinewood feature, and the SAC pinewood feature are at Favourable status, the birch woodland SAC feature is Unfavourable. The area concerned lies on private ground where the owner has just recently rejoined this Group. Options for improving this area will be evaluated in 2016.*
- *The Glen Lochay Woods SSSI was partly fenced to encourage regeneration in 2011, although this has not yet resulted in an improvement in its condition status. Progress will be evaluated in summer 2016, with a more formal assessment made before 2020.*
- *SRDP applications will be taken forwards re: Glen Lyon Woods in 2016, to be implemented in 2017. This is likely to involve 2 X separate fencing schemes.*
- *It is suggested that Carie & Cragganester Woods SSSI is more impacted by invasive bracken on one property than deer. The owner is taking forwards a woodland management plan for the area in 2016. The NWSS data shows this area to be a medium herbivore impacts, and appropriate to the site.*
- *2 X SSSI sites, Morenish Meadow and Finlarig Burn, have little relevance to deer.*
- *Remaining designated sites within the area are in either Favourable or Recovering condition.*

PIA 2.2 Also in Working Plan, implement the series of actions required to monitor designated sites over the period of this plan.

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

There are approx 14,750 hectares of woodland within the BDMG area, covering 16 % of the area of the Group (National Forestry Inventory, NFI). This is very similar to the national average of c 18.5 %, considering the relatively high proportion of high mountain tops and designated features that would not be suitable for planting in comparison to many other

parts of the country. The 14,750 ha includes all recently planted woodland.

Of this area, 4912 hectares or 33 % is composed of native or nearly native woodland (NFI), a figure which is slightly lower than that provided by the Native Woodlands Survey of Scotland (NWSS), which gives 5462 ha. This latter figure includes conifer woods planted on ancient woodland sites which, while not possible to be described as “nearly native”, are capable of being restored to something approaching a native character through appropriate management over many decades. A relatively high proportion of the woodland area (1608 hectares or 11 %) is to be found within designated sites. Of this 1608 ha, only 461 ha or 29% is broadleaved woodland with the remainder being coniferous woodland or other undifferentiated mixed woodlands. A high proportion of this total will include the native pinewoods in the DMG area, notably the Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI/ SAC, but this figure will also include a small area of PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland sites) woodland, notably in the Glen Lyon Woods SSSI.

Of the total woodland area, 990 hectares is under an agreed management regime through an SRDP Forest Plan or Management Plan since 2008. There were 791 hectares under an SFGS management plan from 2003-7. There was a very high proportion of the DMG woodland (5927 ha) under some sort of management in the WGS 3 scheme from 1995-2004, with 1009 ha in the WGS 2 scheme and only 78 ha under WGS 1. This represents a high proportion of the DMG woodland in active management, especially in the WGS 3 period. In addition, there are approx 8000 ha of trees in FE Tay Forest District woodlands locally, which are actively managed and have been significantly felled and restocked in the past decade or so. Given the extent of recent woodland creation, the total area of woodland under active management is actually a very large proportion of the total mature woodland resource.

As an alternative means of quantifying active management, 407 hectares of woodland within the DMG has been subject to a felling or thinning license between 1998 and 2011, but with only 64 ha subject to licence from 2012-14. (Woodlands covered by a Forest Plan do not require a separate felling licence).

Of the total native woodland area of 5462 ha (NWSS), the following herbivore impact levels are currently given:

Low: 923 ha or 17%

Medium: 2168 ha or 40%

High: 1103 ha or 20%

Very High: 1267 ha or 23%

57% of native woodlands overall therefore show low or medium herbivore impact levels.

Native woodlands as a whole are now considered to be in satisfactory condition by SNH if herbivore impacts are in the low or medium categories, canopy cover is greater or equal to 50%, native species comprise more than or equal to 90 %, and invasive species comprise less than or equal to 10%.

In the Breadalbane DMG are, 538 ha or approx 10% of the total area has a canopy less than 50%. There will be a correlation between this and longer term herbivore impacts.

564 ha or 10% has less than 90% of native species. Some of these will be PAWS sites under an appropriate management plan to allow gradual restoration over a period of time. Of the

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remainder, a significant proportion will be beech encroaching in to native woodlands, or sycamore infiltrating the broadleaved woods which follow the river corridors in the area.

Only 1.5% of the native woodlands have invasive species more than 10% of their area. This will apply mainly to rhododendrons, small areas of which are to be found mainly in woods around estate houses in the area. There are no very extensive areas more than a few hectares. Other invasive species are largely absent from the area.

There will be some overlap between each of the above categories.

Wild Deer- A National Approach suggests that for native woods outwith designated sites, 60 percent of them should be in satisfactory condition by 2020.

For the 2765 ha of native woodlands with canopy greater than 50%, non-native species less than 10% and invasive species less than 10 % outwith designated sites, the following herbivore impacts apply:

Low: 690 ha or 25%

Medium: 1051 ha or 38%

High: 340 ha or 12%

Very High: 684 ha or 25%

63% of these woods therefore would be deemed to be in satisfactory condition, although due to the other factors causing unsatisfactory condition, this would constitute 45% of native woodlands outwith designated sites overall.

These areas are shown on [**11. BDMG Herbivore Impact woods outwith designated sites.**](#)

If the Breadalbane DMG wanted to achieve this 60 % target within their own area, then 15% of native woodlands outwith designated sites or **578 ha** would require to be targeted, either for reducing herbivore impacts, reducing non-native or invasive species or increasing the canopy cover in some areas. There is a connection between canopy cover and herbivore impacts, in that low or medium impacts that allow for regeneration will inevitably increase the canopy cover within the woodland.

Within this DMG, there are two significant opportunities for increasing the amount of native woodland in satisfactory condition by increasing the woodland canopy and PAWS restoration in woods where herbivore impacts are at acceptable (medium impact) levels already. Between them, they comfortably exceed the 578 ha figure above. These areas and a number of other key woodland complexes are located on the map, [**12. BDMG Key Herbivore Impacts Map.**](#)

The young planted pinewood between Lochs Estate and Finnart (Area A)

This young pinewood is approx 12-15 years old, planted with a mixture of Scots Pine and broadleaves, and is currently behind deer proof fences. A number of riparian woodland remnants have taken advantage of the enclosure to regenerate as well. The area extends to approx 360 ha.

The woodland is not considered to be in satisfactory condition because the canopy cover is given as 40%. This is simply a function of the young age structure of the woodland, especially as areas of the wood, while healthy, are growing relatively slowly. It could therefore be expected that as the trees grow and start to mature, that the canopy cover will

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increase to above 50%, moving the woodland in to satisfactory condition as per SNH definition. At some future point, this woodland is likely to be opened up again for deer shelter, at which point a woodland that is partly wooded and partly open will serve that purpose very well. Meggernie and Lochs Estates are cautious about opening up pinewood areas, and it is likely that this wood will remain fenced off for the duration of this deer management plan, certainly for at least another ten years.

South Rannoch (Area B)

To the east of the Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI/ SAC lies a huge swath of what is essentially PAWS woodland, an ancient woodland site with non- native conifers planted on it. Almost all of this area is on the NWSS database. The greater part of the area has been felled within the last 10 years or so, and has successfully regenerated with birch and other broadleaves. The herbivore impact on this area is medium, although the birch regeneration is especially dense over much of the area. Between these regenerating areas are retained stands of conifers which, as part of the PAWS restoration, will be gradually thinned or felled as part of the overall restoration management plan. The mix between these areas and the birch regeneration is so intimate that they could be regarded as being at medium herbivore impact as well. There are over 500 ha of such plantations within this overall matrix, PAWS or equivalent areas that are on the NWSS database, and which can be considered to be in appropriate management leading to satisfactory condition.

Between these two areas above, there are 860 ha of native woodlands in the wider countryside that will either move in to satisfactory condition just by being given time to grow, or by appropriate PAWS management which is in hand. The former site suggests that there will also be a series of smaller native woodland plantings that will move in to satisfactory condition as well as they grow and then mature.

In addition to the above, there are two areas of woodland at low/ medium impacts were “satisfactory” condition may either eventually evolve through increases in canopy, or where it might not actually be desirable to achieve a reduction in non- native species.

The upland native woodland planting at Kirkton (Area C)

This extensive native woodland planting was initiated in the mid 1990’s with the intention of introducing sheep in to the woodland area as an alternative to away- wintering, once the trees became established. It is a large area, of approx 135 ha.

The site is at a high altitude, and establishment has been very slow. It is likely to be many years, if not decades, before the trees are beyond browsing height. The area is protected against deer by an electrified deer fence, but this is sometimes breached, and significant numbers of deer can sometimes enter and have to be culled. SRUC are persevering with the site, and it will be many years before the canopy closes and the area fits the definition of “satisfactory” condition. Current herbivore impacts are listed as “low/ medium”.

The main ridge on Drummond Hill (Area D)

Over 250 ha of the main ridge on Drummond Hill is on the NWSS database. It is mainly Scots Pine of plantation origin, but has a very strong pinewood feel, and is part of the key capercaillie area in Perthshire. Indeed, this is where capercaillie were re-introduced in 1837.

Scattered and mixed through the Scots Pine is Norway Spruce and larch, and it is this

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proportion of non-native species which marks this area down as not being in “satisfactory” condition as the herbivore impacts are low/ medium. The spruce and larch trees increase the value of the site for capercaillie, in that they produce shelter and hiding places among the pine trees, including shelter/ hiding places at ground level. The ridge would be a more windy and cold place without them. The current mixture, while not native to Scotland, has a strong Scandinavian character about it, and capercaillie are one species that benefit from this sort of mixture.

While FE intend to manage both the larch and spruce so that they do not take over the stand, they will retain a proportion of each species. This will diversify the conservation and amenity quality of the site, but it will ensure that the area will not meet the NWSS definition of “satisfactory” because of the proportion of non- native species.

Finally, there are six significant clusters of native woodland areas within the DMG where herbivore pressures are high or very high. Two of these are within designated sites, four are outwith designated sites. All of these will be given some consideration in the production of this plan.

The two designated woodland areas are:

The Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI/ SAC): 1130 ha, of which 760 ha on FE land (Area 1)
Glen Lochay Woods SSSI: 118 ha within the SSSI, plus an approx 115 ha outwith (Area 6)

The four undesignated woodland complexes are:

The Innerhadden Estate birch woods: 68 ha (Area 2)

The Kynachan birchwoods along the River Tummel: c 200 ha. (Area 3)

The Dun Coillich planted native woodlands c 92 ha (Area 4)

The Meggernie Birchwoods 74 ha plus 71 ha birch/ conifer mix (Area 5)

The Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI/ SAC (Area 1)

The greater part of this area within FE ownership is down as High impact within the NWSS database, with that part on Finnart Estate down as Very High impact. Overall, there is approx 1000 ha at High impact, and 130 ha at Very High Impact.

There is a contradiction between this assessment and the SCM status of the site which assesses the pinewood and associated features as Favourable maintained, although the upland birch woodland is assessed as unfavourable.

Most of this area is managed as one unit with the rest of South Rannoch, which has very profuse birch regeneration, and the herbivore impacts are deemed to be only medium. It would therefore seem that the unfavourable/ unsatisfactory condition of the birch element within the main pinewood area is partly a function of the lesser critical area of the species there, and if the seed source and ground conditions were more amenable, then perhaps a greater proportion of broadleaves would get away.

There is clearly a complicated picture here, and it would be unfair to imply that the unsatisfactory condition of over 1000 ha was purely a deer management issue, when control in the area is already very high, and the important pinewood element is doing very well.

It is argued here that the NWSS assessment of the FE part of the Black Wood being at High Impact levels is misleading.

It is understood that the part of the SSSI/ SAC on Finnart Estate is grazed more heavily and that this is where the greater part of the birch woodland is.

FE will be doing more monitoring work within this area and reporting back on it in early 2016. Important detail from that monitoring will be incorporated in to this report.

Glen Lochay Woods SSSI (Area 6)

The lower half of Glen Lochay is very extensively wooded, and constitutes the largest area of native broadleaved woodland in the Stirling district area. The age profile of the woodlands would suggest a high proportion of pole stage and mature trees with relatively few that are in decline or senescent, although a range of ages is present and relatively little young unsecured regeneration exists. A very strong pulse of woodland seems to have become established 50-60 years ago, mostly birch, but ash, hazel and alder as well, along with willows which characterize much of the glen. The species diversity is very good with elm, aspen, oak, hawthorn, rowan and bird cherry also being present.

This large woodland area has become an important wintering area for deer, perhaps the most important in the South Sub Group. In 2009, part of the SSSI woodland area was fenced off to begin a regeneration process, with the rest of the woods left open to provide winter shelter.

In terms of deer welfare within the South Group, these woods in Glen Lochay are strategically important, and it is suggested that no further enclosures are contemplated here until the first regeneration enclosure within the SSSI is secure and fences there can be taken down. In the medium to longer term, the very large areas of new woodland planted further up the glen will become available to deer as shelter, and this will spread deer pressure over a much wider area, potentially taking pressure of these woods further down the glen and possibly allowing more birch/ willow regeneration to become established. Modest regeneration does already occur under existing circumstances, and a proportion of this does become established.

Innerhadden Birch Woodlands (Area 2)

These woodlands are currently at Very High Impact. Sheep were removed from this area in 2009, considerably reducing the overall herbivore pressure, although in the time since, these woods have become a key wintering area on Loch Rannoch, with deer excluded from much of the rest of the woodland area to the west by fences. The structure of these woodlands suggests a reduced canopy, heavily grazed system that appears to be fragmenting and declining. There are a number of very old and important veteran trees, but there is also a younger pulse of birch trees, 30-50 years old as well, and some very modest recent regeneration that has got away. The important characteristic of these woods however is that they are a very old wood pasture system, dating back to the mid 1700's. At that point, they were very much larger, extending west on to the ground now planted in commercial conifers. What we see at Innerhadden today is not a birch wood that is fragmenting, but a very old wood pasture system that has actually got more trees on it today than it may have done for several centuries. This history makes these woodlands significantly different to others in the deer group, and it is in this relatively open/ grazed nature that the current conservation and biodiversity interest lies. A high/ very high herbivore impact must therefore be accepted as part of that, as long as it does not place the longer term existence of the habitat at risk. The current structure is unlikely to change significantly for 50-60 years under current circumstances.

The Kynachan birch woodlands (Area 3)

This very extensive swath of birch woodlands is also down at Very High impact levels, but this is at odds with the age structure of the woods that are present. These woods have been spreading up the hill for 30-40 years, and regeneration from 5- 40 years is evident across the area, becoming established and moving up the hill. There is an almost perfect woodland edge which benefits black cock in the area, and which is relatively rare through most of the rest of the group area.

It is suggested here that the Very High impact level given for Kynachan is misleading, and the ages of regeneration present suggest that birch trees are able to seed and grow away under current conditions.

Dun Coilich (Area 4)

Dun Coilich is a planted native woodland scheme, approx 10- 12 years old. It is completely fenced off from the main deer range, although there has been long standing problems in getting to grips with the internal roe deer population, and occasional break-ins of red deer have occurred. The result has been a very poorly established planting, with very high browsing levels, as reflected in the Very High Impact assessment. Over the last 3-4 years, very concentrated efforts have been made to reduce the internal roe deer population with considerable success, and it is now understood that the woodland is beginning to develop and become established.

Meggernie Woodlands (Area 5)

To the east of pinewoods and on the north side of the Lyon lies a long strip of mixed woodland. Approx 75 ha of this is birch dominated and has been assessed as having Very High Impacts. Just to the west of this lies a spruce/ larch dominated block of similar size which is also all on the NWSS database, and will also be at Very High impact. As with the Glen Lochay woods and, to a lesser extent the Innerhadden ones, this area is very important as shelter for deer right at the heart of Glen Lyon. In recent years, a huge 600 ha enclosure has been formed to the west of here incorporating existing woodland, the native pinewoods and new native planting as well as traditional wintering ground, making the value of these woodlands and those opposite at Kerrowmore all the more important. It is suggested that very significant deer welfare issues might arise if deer did not have access to these woodland areas in winter.

Looking forwards, it is likely that in 20 years that the 600 ha enclosure will be opened up, providing shelter and feeding over a much wider area again, and reducing impacts in these woodlands. If regeneration of these woods is required, then that is the likely time window for doing so. At the moment, although some of the trees are widely spaced, the extent and stocking levels within these woods are such that they constitute quite a resilient woodland remnant, able to withstand a further period without regenerating.

It is therefore suggested that these woods are retained for deer shelter, but the opening up of adjacent ground in 20 years will create a new dynamic and new possibilities, and that will be the time to address the future of these particular woodlands.

Actions

PIA 3.1 Work with Finnart Estate to reduce browsing in their part of the Black Wood of Rannoch SSSI/ SAC, with initial contact during 2016.

PIA 3.2 Areas 2, 5 & 6 (See main document) should be left open for deer shelter in the short

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to medium term, with the current Glen Lochay Woods enclosure opened up in 15-20 years as appropriate. It is suggested that the age structure of these woods is such that they will be fairly resilient against browsing for the foreseeable future.

PIA 3.3 The Kynachan birch woods appear to be spreading under current circumstances, and there appears to be little reason to intervene there.

PIA 3.4 HPCLT will continue to implement their current plan of operations to ensure successful establishment of their woodland area at Dun Coillich, as already agreed with FCS.

PIA 3.5 Area A (See main document) is free of deer and will mature and have fences removed within the 10-15 year bracket.

PIA 3.6 FE Tayside to continue with current PAWS restoration process within South Rannoch, gradually increasing the native woodland component via thinning and felling as appropriate, and achieving restocking via natural regeneration.

PIA 3.7 SRUC will continue with current protection efforts to ensure that the upland native woodland planting becomes established, hopefully in the 10-20 year time window.

PIA 3.8 FE Tayside to ensure appropriate management of the pinewood habitat along the ridge on Drummond Hill, such management to include a continuation of current deer control efforts, and the retention of a proportion of non- native species, notably Norway Spruce and larch.

PIA 3.9 SRDP applications for both the Glen Lyon Woods SSSI and the Carie & Cragganester Woods SSSI will be taken forwards in 2016/ 17.

Demonstrate DMG contribution to woodland expansion target

There has been a significant increase in woodland area within the DMG over the past 20 years or so, with 1535 hectares being established under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) since 2008, 388 hectares being established under the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) since 2003, and 2119 hectares being established under the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) since 1994. See [10. BDMG Woodland Creation Map](#).

This woodland expansion amounts to 4042 hectares in total, or 27 % of the woodland area today. Although the overall increase in terms of area is modest, the proportional increase has therefore been very significant over twenty years or so. Of the most recently planted woodland under SRDP, 99 % consisted of native woodland plantings or native woodland regeneration, with the remaining 1% comprised of 8 ha of mixed broadleaves/ mixed conifers. There has been no “commercial” conifer planting in that time at all. Almost all of this recent planting has therefore been with native species, as is the case with the restocking of conifer plantations felled over this period. The very small level of native woodland regeneration will be largely due to the nature of the SRDP grant scheme, in which this was a particularly risky financial undertaking. It actually represents a very large proportion of the overall Scotland total. Such low levels of regeneration do have significant consequences for improving native woodland habitat networks.

During the production of this plan, only 2-3 properties indicated that they were interested in woodland creation within the next 5 year period, possibly up to 300 ha of new planting. It

appears that the priority for most members is to secure the proper establishment of the large area of native woodland planted in the previous 5 year period.

Actions

PIA 4.1 BDMG to establish up to 300 ha of new woodland area in next five year period.

PIA 4.2 All members to ensure that the 1500 ha of woodland planted in the previous 5 year period is properly established.

Monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside

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: BDMG Broad Habitat Data](#). This is a particularly good set of data for this area, although 1680 hectares or 2 percent of the total was obscured by cloud across the whole area. The data is now over 25 years old.

The main habitats in the group are:

21, 826 ha of species rich, smooth and nardus dominated upland grasslands, covering 24% of the DMG area, of which 16, 783 or 77% are outwith designated sites.

21,143 ha of miscellaneous montane habitats, covering 23% of the DMG area, and 64% of which is outwith the designated sites.

20,146 ha of undifferentiated heather moorland, covering 22% of the DMG area, and 85% of which is outwith designated sites.

11405 ha of woodlands, covering 12% of the DMG area, 86% of which was outwith designated sites. Note, the woodland area has increased to 14,750 ha by 2015.

7,660 ha of blanket bog, or 8% of the DMG area, 87% of which lies outwith the designated sites.

3412 ha of improved grassland and arable land, covering 4% of the DMG area, 95% of which lies outwith designated sites.

2875 ha of dry heather moorland, covering 3% of the DMG area, and 86% of which lies outwith the designated sites.

Finally, 2202 ha or 2% of the DMG area is covered by miscellaneous features, the greatest part of which is accounted for by cloud cover. 54% of this is outwith designated sites, implying that approx 800 ha of habitats within designated sites were not properly classified at that time.

The current deer densities of 7.4- 13.5 per sq km across the 3 X sub areas are broadly compatible with the various moorland habitats present within the area, with the caveat that the habitats themselves require a range of sometimes conflicting grazing densities. Within the whole, there are areas where herbivore impacts due to deer are still relatively high, notably the Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh SSSI site. Within the South Group, Innischoarach Estate holds a very high deer density, but there is little evidence of this impacting on

moorland features in the area which, if anything, are improving in condition.

They are likely to be too high for blanket bog habitats, although as this is not a highly monitored designated feature in any of the upland sites, we currently have little information on this.

Current deer densities can be an issue when they maraud on to lower improved ground, but in recent years, that appears to only be a significant issue in late springs where grass growth in the hills has been very slow. In general, farmers within the DMG are equipped to deal with marauding deer if they are an issue, and estates are generally willing to look at options for dealing with issues if they arise.

Habitat impact assessments on designated grassland habitats have shown evidence of undergrazing in recent years, notably in the 2014 survey, with a high proportion of sample plots being affected. Given that upland grasslands are the most extensive habitat within the DMG, and a habitat for which the Breadalbane hills is best known, then there is clearly an issue here which we will need to be aware of. The combination of deer reductions and a loss of sheep grazing will have brought this about. Allowing deer numbers to increase in some areas is unlikely to make a difference to this, and it is likely that some targeted livestock grazing will be necessary to address this problem, possibly with summer cattle grazing.

Finally, the deer densities within the DMG are such that it is generally accepted that new woodland creation schemes require to be fenced to allow establishment. However, it may well be that beyond the 20 year period that some of the very large current enclosures will be opened up, spreading deer pressure over a wider area in winter, and increasing the options for achieving natural regeneration unaided in some areas. The critical area of woodland that might allow this to happen is not yet present in much of the DMG.

No habitat impact assessments are carried out within the group area on non- designated habitats, and this will be a very significant element of the work programme going forwards. The logistics of this will be very considerable, and require careful planning. But it may be that the status of habitats on designated sites can be taken as a measure of the status across the wider resource, given that designated sites are so extensive and well distributed across the DMG area.

Action Points

PIA 5.1 An agreed monitoring programme for these habitats will be devised and included in this plan by February 2016.

PIA 5.2 Areas will be identified where targeted livestock grazing may improve the condition of undergrazed grassland communities. This to be completed by autumn 2017. Options for addressing these sites will then be appraised.

Improve Scotland's ability to store carbon

Within the Group area there are approx 14,750 hectares of woodland and 7660 hectares of peatlands. These are the two habitat types of most relevance to carbon sequestration.

As previously discussed, a very high proportion of the woodland area is under active management in the Group, and the forest area has increased by over a third or 4000 ha in the past 20 years. The majority of owners have a Forest Plan or a woodland management plan in place, both of which look at the full range of woodland management options over a twenty year period. There are also a number of good planting, felling and fencing contractors within the area.

During the production of this plan, members were asked about potential planting options going forwards. It is estimated that Group members will be looking to take forwards 300 ha of new woodland creation in the next five years. This very modest area is partly explained by the relatively high area of woodland planted in the previous 5 year period, when grants for native woodland creation were better than they are in the new scheme going forwards.

There are extensive swathes of blanket bog within the DMG boundary, located mainly through the Middle and North sub areas. Relatively little is actually understood about the status or condition of blanket bog within the Group as they are not one of the designated habitats (with the exception of Ben Lawers) and lie mostly outwith these sites.

It will be an important part of the planning process going forwards to undertake some habitat monitoring on these areas to understand what condition they are currently in. There may well be a problem in balancing the needs of these sites, which require relatively low herbivore impacts, and those of the species rich grasslands in the group, which require relative higher grazing pressure to remain in favourable condition.

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

Actions

PIA 6.1 Create 300 ha of new woodland planting in the period of this plan.

PIA 6.2 Carry out habitat monitoring on the blanket bog areas within the DMG before the end of 2017 to determine their current condition and ascertain what management action, if any, might be required to bring them in to good condition.

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 Ensure that all woodland planted in the 2008- 13 period is properly established.

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

A non- native deer policy is included earlier in this plan.

Action

PIA 7.1 Cull spreading sika deer so that they do not become established within the area.

PIA 7.2 Report any sightings of muntjac deer, feral pigs or feral goats to SNH. Muntjac deer should be shot on sight if possible.

PIA 7.3 Monitor any fallow deer that become established in the area. They are not currently resident within the group, but do exist within 15 miles or thereabouts.

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. Local hotspots include Loch Tay side and Glen Lochay, and also parts of South Rannoch. 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. The current woodland grant schemes are very good at flagging up potential sites of cultural or historic value.

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.

PIA 8.3 Contact will be made with local authority archaeologists in both Stirling and Perth & Kinross, with a view to drawing up a list of any vulnerable sites by spring 2016. Discussions with both Perth & Kinross Council and Stirling Council, as well as Historic Environment Scotland, show that there are no sites of concern within the BDMG area.

Delivering higher standards of competence in deer management

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

Of the 55 personnel who are involved in deer management, 43 have DMQ Level 1, 22 have DMQ Level 2, and 27 have trained hunter status. Only 26 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.

A number of individuals are not clear how “trained hunter” status is defined, or what the Fit & Competent register is. These points need to be clarified.

There is relatively little in the way of unregulated deer stalking or poaching that takes place within the Group area. The layout of the glens is such that poaching activity would be

relatively easily discovered, with a high risk of those involved getting caught.

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, boat handling and VHF telemetry. 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 Clarify the definitions of “trained hunter” status and Fit & Competent register for all Group personnel, and look to ensure that all personnel hold trained hunter status by the end of 2016. These issues are particularly relevant to the smaller properties and part-time personnel involved with deer management in the area. Levels of training are very good among fulltime professional staff.

Contribute to Public Health and wellbeing

Deer Vehicle Collisions are regarded as not being a significant issue throughout most of the DMG area, with the possible exception of the A85 between Tyndrum and Lix Toll. There are a number of stretches of road within the DMG where deer are well known to be in close proximity to the road at night, such as Glen Lyon, but they are not regarded as being a significant problem as such. The record of deer collisions from 2000-13 is summarized on the map **15. BDMG Deer- Vehicle Collisions Map**. Neither Perth & Kinross Council nor Stirling Council raised this issue as a particular concern. Killin Community Council raised the issue of roe deer on the road outside the village, and also roe in village gardens. They also mentioned red deer on the golf course, mainly in the winter months, but it is not clear what practically could be done about that, and some people are evidently quite happy to see them there.

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.

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 as a whole, although the situation at North Chesthill has gained considerable attention in the past, and Glen Lochay Estate report increasing access pressure in the Glen Lochay hills.

During 2014, both Perth & Kinross Council and SNH agreed that North Chesthill Estate could trial a new approach to managing access within the area, restricting access for the

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busy Sept/ Oct period and making potential walkers aware of other options within the wider area. This approach has been considered a success, and is likely to be repeated in subsequent years.

Neither Perth & Kinross Council, Stirling council nor the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority consider there to be any other difficult situations from their perspective within the DMG.

Group members have participated in the Heading to the Scottish Hills website for a number of years, and several members have also used the Hillphones system in the past.

A number of Group members promote access and provide good information for the public. Beyond the private estates, Schiehallion and Ben Lawers are popular and well known mountains that are always easily accessible, there is a good path network within the Black Wood of Rannoch and a number of shops and businesses and guest houses within the area promote walking and access to the countryside.

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 between Tyndrum and Killin.

PIA 10.2 DMG to clarify “Trained Hunter” status and ensure that all have attained this by end of 2016.

PIA 10.3 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 10.4 DMG to highlight the risks of ticks and Lyme’s Disease to their guests and the public more generally through all appropriate channels.

PIA 10.5 Continue with the new approach to access management at North Chesthill Estate, and monitor as necessary.

PIA 10.6 Monitor increase in access on Glen Lochay & Cashlie Estates, and provide support/ better information as required.

PIA 10.7 Group members and DMG to all promote a positive and welcoming message to all those visiting the area throughout the year, and to contribute fully to the Heading to the Scottish Hills website.

PIA 10.8 BDMG will contribute to the cost of providing deer related information packs to all accommodation providers in Highland Perthshire, in conjunction with neighbouring DMG areas.

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 BDMG area is approx £290,000 annually.

Up to 60% of the hind cull is likely to be taken with sporting guests, the value of which might be £150,000 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 £880,000.

Based on a cull of 907 stags, 1320 hinds and 572 calves (2014-15 cull), it is estimated that the total value of venison produced within the group area is approx £285,000 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 dealers operate in close proximity to the group.

The total direct economic value of deer management within the Breadalbane area is therefore likely to be in the region of £1,165,000 annually, 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, this now becoming proportionately more important as incomes from river management come under pressure, and many in- hand sheep stocks have been cleared off the ground.

Within the Breadalbane DMG area, there are currently 39 full time jobs that are either fully or partially involved with deer management, and a further 16 personnel who are used at key times of the season. In the latter situation, 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 opportunity to have the chance to stalk can often be important to the overall package, whether a deer is actually taken up or not.

Livestock management, general estate work, forestry and rangering are other important activities for those also involved with management of deer.

Allowing that 25 X personnel are essential to delivering deer management within the area, 14 play a supporting role for part of the time and 16 are necessary at key times of the year, it is estimated that the total cost of employing the necessary staff to deliver deer management within the area is £1.16 million. This does not include administrative or factoring costs, or costs associated with accommodation or other services.

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. Some commentary of this is provided in the next section.

Opportunities to add value to deer management

The most significant opportunities for increasing the value of deer in the area probably relate to deer watching. At least one such business, Highland Adventure Safaris, already exists, and deer form a significant part of the core wildlife that they would expect to see.

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They operate just outwith the Group boundary, but make extensive use of estate roads, usually out of season and in the summer months, as well as the Forestry Commission roads network.

There already is a collaborative collection system around Loch Rannoch, and the Rannoch Smokery is well known locally for its produce, which includes a high proportion of venison within its products. There are a number of other outlets for local venison, including the Big Shed on Loch Tay.

Larder/ infra- structure sharing

A number of properties already share larders, and it is not considered that this is a limiting factor within the DMG area.

Minimize the economic costs of deer management

For virtually all of the properties within the DMG area, deer management is just one of many activities that they are involved in, and the costs of employing staff, maintaining houses and estate infra-structure will be spread across a number of different enterprises or interests, with staff undertaking different activities at different times of year. The proportions of time spent on different activities, including deer management, will vary between properties. No-one spends all of their time on deer. Indeed, few 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 55 personnel directly involved in deer management as a key part of their job, to a greater or lesser extent. Twenty five of these staff are key to overall delivery, but a number of others provide essential support, or are required for key periods of the year.. Terms and conditions will vary, but if an average cost of employing a full time staff member of £40,000 is used (to include vehicle costs etc), then a broad brush cost of £1,160,000 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 very similar to income brought in from deer alone (£1,160,000 vs £1,165 ,000, see above), but this does not account for income from other sources. For example, on a number of properties, income from fishing lets or farming is at least as important as income from deer, and in some cases, it is very much more, delivered by the same staff. 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

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income from deer is an important part of the funding equation that allows these people in particular to remain. With other sources of income, a number 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 BDMG 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 have undergone significant expense in recent years in upgrading perimeter fencing around South Rannoch and the Barracks in particular, although this has proven to be very successful. There remains a large resident population within each area, which requires full time stalking input to control. Each of the other 4 X management units are vulnerable to deer to a greater or lesser extent as well, although red deer culls in these areas are relatively modest. There is likely to be very significant restructuring of the Lassintulloch block within the next 5-year period, and the area will have to be fenced to achieve that. In terms of capital and ongoing investment needed to deliver their core objectives, Forest Enterprise will have to spend more money than any other group member.

SRUC Kirkton & Auchtertyre at Tyndrum view deer control as an expense, and derive no income from sporting lets. The majority of deer are culled by contractor on lower ground, but the large upland woodland site is also vulnerable to deer pressure, and significant numbers of stags have been culled there in recent years. There is a particular problem in that this woodland has been very slow to establish, and therefore will be vulnerable to deer for many years to come yet. The central issue is that trees are being grown at a relatively high altitude.

The *Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust (HPCLT)* have a core objective of establishing native woodland on Dun Coillich. This area has a perimeter deer fence which has been in need of continual repair over recent years and there has been difficulty in coming to terms with the internal roe deer population on the site. Red deer incursions have been relatively rare. It will be a number of years before the trees here are properly established, and this ongoing cost is an issue for the trust, both from fence repairs, and the internal roe deer control required.

The *John Muir Trust* at Schiehallion have come to an arrangement with Dalchosnie/Kynachan Estate who undertake deer control on their behalf.

The *National Trust for Scotland* at Ben Lawers undertake red deer control on their property without any sporting income, and this will be viewed as a net expense.

Lochdochart Estate at Crianlarich see their red deer stag cull as a by product of control activity, and it is not a main management objective for them. However, they have an arrangement which seems to work OK.

Innischoarach Estate in Glen Lochay do not have a sporting requirement as such, and view their deer cull as a necessary management activity. The cost of this is not begrudged. Similarly, *GlenLochay Estate* have no sporting requirement as such, with all culling being undertaken by estate staff. Again, the cost of this is absorbed.

All other properties within the Group derive income from sporting lets to help off set the costs of overall deer management activity.

Action Points

PIA 12.1 DMG to assess the current PACEC survey in to the value/ costs of deer management and extract information from BDMG in order to inform more fully the above narrative. Complete and adapt if necessary by autumn 2016.

Ensure effective communication in deer management issues

Internal communication within the group and with government agencies is very good, and the group has demonstrated an ability to address issues that arise between meetings, dealing with enquiries and putting members of the public in touch with the most relevant people.

The Deer Management Plan, minutes of meetings and other relevant information is being made available through a new BDMG website at www.breadalbanedmg.deer-management.co.uk , and this can also be accessed through the main ADMG website at <http://www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-groups/deer-management-group-map/breadalbane-dmg/>

There are a number of opportunities to view deer and learn about the natural environment more widely in Breadalbane. These range from initiatives undertaken by private estates to Highland Adventure Safaris and ranger guided walks undertaken by the Forestry Commission, National Trust for Scotland and others.

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, with deer populations generally being well within the carrying capacity of the environment and poaching activity being at very low levels. The Breadalbane hills are generally nutrient- rich, and there is a good network of woodlands for shelter throughout much of the group.

A number of 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.

The restocking and fencing of felled conifer plantations is removing valuable winter shelter from some areas of the range, and this is likely to have an impact on local deer populations in some areas. Some compensatory culling may be required on the back of this. Liaison on such matters has been good within the group in the past.

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

Action Points

PIA 14.1 Focus on bringing natural habitats in to favourable condition status, capable of withstanding browsing pressure and providing good nutrition, with targets for habitats agreed with SNH by spring 2016.

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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.