

Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Group

Annual Report Year to 31 March 2019



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1. Introduction

1.1 This is the third annual report from the Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Group. The purpose of this report is to provide an overall summary of management activities undertaken and progress to date in the delivery of the Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Plan (DMP) (<http://egrampiandmg.deer-management.co.uk>)

1.2 Key Deliverables of the plan

The following table sets out progress being made with the main deliverables of the Group:

Action	Progress to 31 st March 2019
Action 1: To have implemented management to help Designated Sites to achieve Favourable/ Unfavourable Recovering management status	Collaborative deer management being implemented across the Group to reduce localised deer impacts on Designated sites. 9 features now in Favourable condition since start of plan.
Action 2: To use the Mar Lodge Section 7 review process, the Cross-DMG Working Group and the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (2017-22) (see Part 1 Section 1.3 for details) to review deer movements, review DMG boundaries and implement collaborative deer management to deliver the combined objectives of conservation and the sustainable harvest of deer at a landscape scale	Section 7 agreement concluded early due to ecological targets having been met. Group has expanded boundaries to the east and increased wider membership of the Group. Group continues to harvest deer sustainably whilst reducing impacts across the DMG area. NTS are implementing new Management Plan.
Action 3: To have implemented DMG wide Habitat Monitoring of Heather Moorland and Blanket Bog to help inform future management	The Group organised for further training of Estate staff in Habitat Impact Assessment in Spring 2018. Invercauld, Mar Estate and Glenavon completed Habitat Impact Assessment in 2018 and report completed for Group. All properties with deer above 2 deer km ² now have monitoring in place covering 82,250 ha (84% of Group area).
Action 4: To have conducted two full aerial counts of the population in Winter 2017 & 2020	Helicopter deer count of properties within SAC completed in winter 2018. Foot count in March 2019 indicates an overall deer population across the DMG area estimated to be 4,201 deer (1,949 stags, 1,754 hinds and 498 calves). This represents an overall deer density of 4.31 deer per km ² over the DMG area which is within the density recommended by the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (2017-22).
Action 5: To have secured additional Funding through ECAF to carry out a review of existing native woodland and explore opportunities for woodland expansion.	ECAF Funding ceased to become available. However, according to the Native Woodland Survey for Scotland 81% of native woodlands within the group area are in good condition with regards to herbivore impacts.

2. Summary of events and DMG management activities

2.1. The Group has met twice in 2018 and undertaken the development of a new website which contains the Deer Management Plan, Annual Reports, Minutes of Meetings as well as contact information for the Group.

April 2018	DMG Spring Meeting.
Development of New Web Site	http://upperdeesidedonsidedmg.deer-management.co.uk
November 2018	DMG Autumn Meeting

3. Summary of activities undertaken by individual DMG Members

3.1 The following table details some of the deer management activities undertaken from April 2018 to March 2019 in the DMG area which contribute to delivering the local public interest identified in the Deer Management Plan.

Activity Report 2018-2019	
Micras	Activities undertaken included continued management of natural regenerating woodland along moorland edge, grassland reseeding, road maintenance, vermin trapping, controlled muirburn, wader counts, participation in BTO wader project, blackcock lek counts, monitoring of capercaillie, management of roadside trees, stock fencing erected to keep sheep off the public road. No known DVCs.
Gairnshiel	A peatland restoration project was completed on the North side of the River Gairn under the Peatland Action programme. An article about this was provided for the local magazine, The Ballater Easgle. Road maintenance, vermin trapping, controlled muirburn, wader counts and participation in BTO wader project have all been undertaken. No known DVC's.
Corndavon	Activities included installation of woody debris in the River Gairn as part of a DDSFB project, sheep grazing, road maintenance, vermin trapping, controlled muirburn, wader counts, participation in BTO wader project, blackcock lek counts, hare counts using the new SNH methodology. A Prior Notification was submitted for improvement works to a track. No known DVC's.
Homebeat	Activities undertaken included continued management of natural regenerating woodland and planted woodland alongside deer managed for sport, road maintenance, vermin trapping, controlled muirburn, wader counts, participation in BTO wader project, blackcock lek counts, monitoring of capercaillie, management of roadside trees, a peatland restoration on Culardoch, hare counts using the SNH methodology and HIA monitoring. No known DVC's.
Baddoch	Deer fences have been maintained, road maintenance, vermin trapping, controlled muirburn, wader counts, participation in BTO wader project, hare counts using SNH methodology, and HIA's all undertaken. Representation made at Community Council meetings. Litter collection along the River Clunie has had to be undertaken and camp fire management due to the very dry summer and the high number of campers present.