

# Upper Deeside and Donside Land Management Group

## Annual Report

Year to 31 March 2022



**DMG Chairman:** Angus McNicol  
Email: [angus@invercauld.estate](mailto:angus@invercauld.estate)

**DMG Secretary:** Linzi Seivwright  
Email: [linzi@caorann.com](mailto:linzi@caorann.com)

**DMG Website:** <http://upperdeesidedonsidedmg.deer-management.co.uk>

Prepared by: **Dr Linzi Seivwright** BSc PhD

**Caorann**

Tel. 07547 676509

Email: [linzi@caorann.com](mailto:linzi@caorann.com)

[www.caorann.com](http://www.caorann.com)



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Annual Report Background

This is the fifth annual report from the Upper Deeside and Donside Land 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 Meetings and Events

Despite COVID the Group met twice virtually in 2021/22. Minutes are available on the LMG website <https://upperdeesidedonsidedmg.deer-management.co.uk/>.

|                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 25 March 2022    | LMG AGM and Hybrid DMG meeting. |
| 11 November 2021 | Hybrid DMG Meeting              |

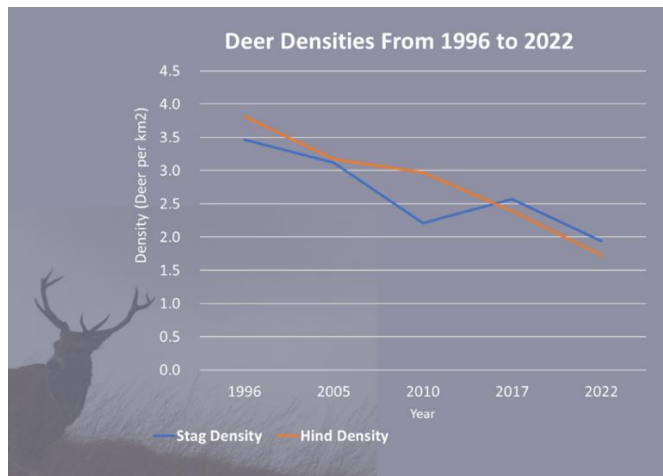


### 1.3 Key Deliverables of the plan

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

| Action  | Progress to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022   |
|---|---|
| <b>Action 1:</b> To have implemented management to achieve Favourable/ Unfavourable Recovering management status on Designated Sites.   | Collaborative deer management continues to be implemented across the Group to reduce localised deer impacts on Designated sites. 9 features now in Favourable condition since start of plan. Section 7 agreement concluded early due to ecological targets having been met. |
| <b>Action 2:</b> To implement the actions of the Deer Management Plan (2016 to 2021) to deliver the combined objectives of conservation and the sustainable management of wildlife at a landscape scale | Despite COVID, the Group delivered all actions set out in the Deer Management Plan. The Group is currently drafting a deer management plan for the next 5 years and will consult with the local community.  |
| <b>Action 3:</b> To have implemented DMG wide Habitat Monitoring of heather moorland and blanket bog to help inform future management   | Monitoring of upland habitats is in place covering 82,250 ha (84% of Group area). Peatland Restoration has been completed or is being considered by 6 properties within the DMG area.   |
| <b>Action 4:</b> To have conducted two full aerial counts of the population.  | Helicopter count in spring 2022 showed a density of 4.2 deer per km <sup>2</sup> which is within the density recommended by the new Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan.  |
| <b>Action 5:</b> 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 <b>81%</b> of native woodlands within the group area are in good condition with regards to herbivore impacts.  |

#### Deer Densities from 1996 to 2022



| Count Type  | Year | Whole DMG Total (99,921 ha) |       |        |       |              |              |         |
|-------------|------|-----------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------------|--------------|---------|
|             |      | Stags                       | Hinds | Calves | Total | Stag Density | Hind Density | Density |
| Heli & Foot | 1996 | 3,465                       | 3,808 | 1,138  | 8,411 | 3.5          | 3.8          | 8.4     |
| Heli & Foot | 2005 | 3,120                       | 3,168 | 992    | 7,280 | 3.1          | 3.2          | 7.3     |
| Heli & Foot | 2010 | 2,207                       | 2,964 | 956    | 6,127 | 2.2          | 3.0          | 6.1     |
| Heli & Foot | 2017 | 2,566                       | 2,389 | 866    | 5,821 | 2.6          | 2.4          | 5.8     |
| Heli & Foot | 2022 | 1,935                       | 1,723 | 523    | 4,181 | 1.9          | 1.7          | 4.2     |

## 2. Summary of LMG Member Activities

### 2.1 Management Activities

The following table details some of the deer management activities undertaken from April 2021 to March 2022 in the DMG area which contribute to delivering the local public interest identified in the Deer Management Plan.

|                      | Activity Report 2021-22  |
|----------------------|--|
| Allargue             | In discussion with SNH about possible Peatland Restoration project.  |
| Mar                  | Ongoing discussions regarding peatland restoration. HIA repeat survey to be carried out in 2022.   |
| Delnadamph           | Main focus this year has been on preparation and planning for the Peatland restoration project, grouse numbers were low so no shooting took place, wader surveys undertaken with better results.   |
| RSPB Crannach        | The primary management objective on Crannach is woodland expansion and development and we are confident we are achieving that objective. Browsing and seedling surveys indicate an acceptable level of browsing pressure and we are not currently undertaking deer control. Biological recording is ongoing on Crannach and priority species such as pearl-bordered fritillary, twinflower, spotted flycatcher, redstart, tree pipit and woodcock continue to be recorded.   |
| Glenavon             | During this period Glenavon Estate operated its usual sporting and farming activities. The moorland was left to recover for another year and therefore minimal grouse shooting took place during the 2021/22 season. Let stag stalking continued as normal though with some interruption to guest bookings due to the covid pandemic. Feasibility studies for a peatland restoration project took place and drafting of a new long-term forest management plan began.  |
| Mar Lodge Estate     | During 2021, 3 major pieces of land management work were undertaken. Firstly our 5 yearly HIA of all habitat types. This suggests all open habitats continue to improve in condition and provides confidence that our deer management continues to be effective. A peatland restoration project was also completed which saw 94 hectares restored over a 130 hectare site. Finally, our 5 year regeneration mapping revealed that we now have almost 2000 hectares of active woodland regeneration (up from 870 hectares in 2015, and 125 in 2010.) Smaller projects were also undertaken to reinforce rare montane willow populations across the estate, and this project continues. The estate continues to support a wide range of raptor species including hen harrier. The commercial stalking season was very successful with over 100 stags shot with guests. In common with most other estates, the grouse season was very poor. |
| Invercauld Homebeat  | Through the year to 31 March 2022, management included undertaking gamekeeping activities including let stag stalking and a hind/calf management cull, muirburn, fisheries management, dwarf shrub heath habitat impact assessments on the open hill, woodland habitat impact assessments of deer within the woodland zone, roe deer stalking, clearfell work and emergency tree works on the A93 to reopen this route after winter storms, attendance at community council meetings, additional community engagement including through the Braemar Buzzard and community Facebook page, and surveying of breeding pairs of endangered bird species.   |
| Invercauld Corndavon | Management included undertaking gamekeeping activities including predator management, muirburn, a small amount of stag stalking, walked up grouse shooting, fisheries management, dwarf shrub heath habitat impact assessments on the open hill, roe deer stalking, woodland management, attendance at community council meetings, additional community engagement including through the Braemar Buzzard and community Facebook page, surveying of breeding pairs of endangered bird species.  |
| Gairnshiel & Micras  | Management at Gairnshiel and Micras included undertaking gamekeeping for partridge and pheasant shooting on a small area of Micras and for grouse across Gairnshiel, roe stalking, fisheries management, woodland management, attendance at community council meetings, seeking planning permission for additional hutting activity, community engagement including through the Ballater and Crathie community Facebook page, surveying of breeding pairs of endangered bird species, general conservation for black grouse and capercaillie monitoring.   |
| Invercauld Baddoch   | Management has included undertaking gamekeeping activities including let stag stalking and a hind/calf management cull, muirburn, fisheries management particularly with regards to riparian habitats, dwarf shrub heath habitat impact assessments on the open hill, small amount of roe deer stalking, attendance at community council meetings, additional community engagement including through the Braemar Buzzard and community Facebook page, and surveying of breeding pairs of endangered bird species.  |