

Upper Deeside and Donside Land Management Group

Annual Report

Year to 31 March 2023



DMG Chairman: Angus McNicol
Email: angus@invercauld.estate

DMG Secretary: Linzi Seivwright
Email: 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

www.caorann.com



1. Introduction

1.1 Annual Report Background

This is the sixth 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 new refreshed Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Plan (DMP) 2022 – 2027

<https://upperdeesidedonsidedmg.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/UDD-LMG-Plan-2023-.pdf>

1.2 Meetings and Events

The Group met twice in 2022. Minutes are available on the LMG website

<https://upperdeesidedonsidedmg.deer-management.co.uk/>.

25 March 2022	LMG AGM and Hybrid DMG meeting.
16 November 2022	Hybrid DMG Meeting

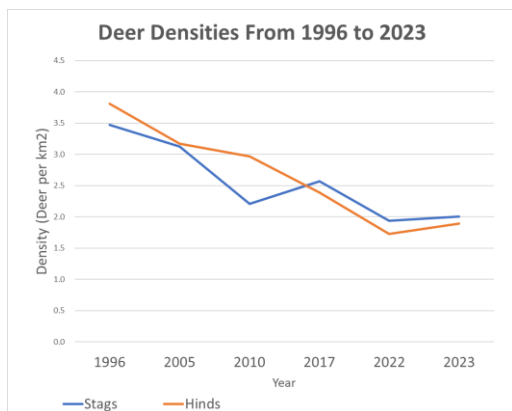


1.3 Key Deliverables of the plan

The following table sets the main actions from the new Deer Management Plan :

1a	<i>The Working Plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Management actions will be adjusted and agreed accordingly.</i>
2a	<i>Members will use information gathered on habitats and herbivore numbers to manage deer sustainably, agreeing and delivering cull targets.</i>
2b	<i>Foot counts of deer will be repeated annually. Count coordinators will ensure the count is conducted accurately and effectively.</i>
2c	<i>Group will continue to review deer movements within the LMG.</i>
3a	<i>LMG to organise annual CPD opportunities for LMG members.</i>
4a	<i>Members will aim to significantly increase the areas of restored peatland over the next 5 years and will provide regular updates on peatland restoration activity.</i>
5a	<i>Members will seek to create/regenerate new woodland, particularly focussing on areas which would benefit habitat connectivity.</i>
5b	<i>Members will identify opportunities for riparian woodland improvement and creation to support the recovery of Atlantic salmon and to promote river health.</i>
5c	<i>Members will provide annual updates on woodland activity.</i>
5d	<i>Members to carry out woodland monitoring to assess herbivore impacts.</i>
6a	<i>Members will continue to monitor herbivore impacts on key habitats and use the information to manage impacts to within acceptable ranges and for the benefit of wider ecosystem health.</i>
6b	<i>Members will work with NatureScot collaboratively to reduce negative herbivore impacts on designated sites and undertake management actions as required.</i>
6c	<i>Members will seek to implement management practices and actions to restore and enhance biodiversity throughout the LMG area.</i>
6d	<i>Members will follow all management Codes of Practice including Muirburn Code</i>
6e	<i>Members will actively seek opportunities to conserve and restore species and contribute to biodiversity restoration.</i>
7a	<i>Group will seek opportunities to promote deer management through training, educational or awareness raising events and social media.</i>
7b	<i>Members to identify, raise awareness and where possible minimise the local health and safety risks ie incidents of Deer Vehicle Collisions and Tick Awareness</i>
7c	<i>Members to promote responsible Access and the following of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.</i>
7d	<i>Members to raise awareness of CWD with Clients and Visitors from USA, Canada and Norway and undertake the appropriate Bio-Security protocols prior to their visit.</i>
7e	<i>Group to actively engage with local community through Community Council, newsletters and events and promote good news stories.</i>
7f	<i>Group to seek active engagement with Rural Land Use Partnership Scheme.</i>

Deer Densities from 1996 to 2023



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
Heli & Foot	2023	2,004	1,888	540	4,432	2.0	1.9	4.4

2. Summary of LMG Member Activities

2.1 Management Activities

The following table details some of the deer management activities undertaken from to March 2023 in the DMG area which contribute to delivering the local public interest identified in the Deer Management Plan.

Activity Report 2022-2023	
Mar	The year saw what we hope to be the bottom of the grouse cycle with good conditions and results for all ground nesting birds. The deer did well with projected numbers culled leaving a herd in good condition in balance with its habitat. The damage from Storm Arwen became evident from the preceding year, and will take some time to clear up with many thousands of trees having been lost. We started our third Peatland Restoration project under Peatland Action, which will be our first under Peatland Code. The peatland over the whole estate was assessed with a view to drawing up a restoration plan over the forthcoming years where conditions allow.
Mar Lodge	22/23 was a busy year on Mar Lodge Estate. The Glen Geldie Riparian Woodland project was completed, with 120,000 trees planted in fenced enclosures across 120 hectares of this remote glen. Peatland restoration also continued in Glen Geldie with a further 96 hectares of degraded peatland actively restored, with an additional 29km of drain blocking on the south side of the Dee. The Allanaquoich woodland restoration scheme was also completed with a further 48 hectares fenced on the Eastern march, allowing trees to naturally regenerate in this area. Montane willow restoration continued with some 4000 willows planted out in remote corries to reinforce existing populations. Work was also completed to allow stands of aspen in Glen Dee to regenerate. A successful raptor breeding season included a white tailed eagle chick fledged from MLE for the first time, in addition to golden eagle, hen harrier, peregrine and merlin.
Gairnshiel & Micras	Both let and in-hand sheep farming was undertaken along with some cattle farming together with pheasant and partridge shooting and, at Gairnshiel, grouse shooting. Management specifically for grouse on Micras ceased in Autumn 2020 and farming and woodland management and expansion are the key management objectives there. Roe deer stalking was also undertaken and aspen regeneration promoted along with other conservation efforts. Surveying of endangered red and amber breeding birds was undertaken. Community engagement included liaison with Ballater and Crathie Community Council and use of the Ballater community Facebook page.
Corndavon	Deer management sought to maintain the population to enable a limited amount of red deer stalking plus roe deer stalking. Activities included farming, management for grouse, woodland management, natural regeneration, public access, blanket bog habitat impact assessments, and biodiversity conservation. Community engagement included use of the Braemar community Facebook page, Braemar Buzzard and attendance at community council meetings.
Homebeat	Deer management continued to focus on maintaining a consistent number of red deer commensurate with providing sporting stalking for British and international guests whilst taking into account management of browsing impacts and neighbours' objectives. Other activities also included a foot count of hill deer, muirburn, fisheries management, blanket bog habitat impact assessments, woodland habitat impact assessments, public access management, other rangers activity, natural regeneration of heather, trees and other plantlife, sheep grazing and sporting roe deer stalking. Community engagement included use of the community Facebook page, Braemar Buzzard and attendance at community council meetings. Various third party surveys were facilitated including for wood ants and salmonids.
Baddoch	Management for grouse was undertaken along with red deer management which included let deer stalking. Sheep farming was also undertaken and the Glenshee Ski Centre continued to operate within the southern part of the beat. A major grant was awarded under the Nature Restoration Fund for riparian improvement works on the River Clunie including the installation of woody debris, woodland improvement and wader scrape creation and preparatory works for these commenced. Natural regeneration of heather, mitigation of wildfire risk, public access, ranger activity, designation management and biodiversity conservation through gamekeeping were all undertaken.