



Deer Management Plan (DMP) – Bin and Deveron Woods

Background

This DMP should be used as a supporting document/annex for the Long-Term Plan (LTP). The DMP should also be used in conjunction with FLS Deer Management Strategy.

National & Local objectives

- Contributing to [Scottish Forestry - Forestry Strategy](#) (also includes Climate Change)
- Deer Management Strategy [Deer management strategy - Forestry and Land Scotland](#)
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy [Biodiversity strategy: consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Bin and Deveron Woods are in western Aberdeenshire, centered around the River Deveron valley. The plan area comprises a dispersed group of approximately twelve woodland blocks, with the majority clustered along the Deveron corridor and one outlying block at South Balnoon. The plan area totals approximately 2,270 ha.

Historically the woodland blocks have been managed primarily for commercial timber production, with significant areas of productive conifer crops including Sitka spruce, Scots pine, Norway spruce, and larch. Over time, management has also increasingly reflected environmental and social objectives including designated site protection, riparian management, native woodland retention and enhancement, and recreational use.

The woodland resource contains a mixture of age classes, including substantial areas of young establishment, mature crops and open ground/felled areas awaiting restocking. The woodland also includes areas of mixed native broadleaves and important habitats associated with watercourses and designated conservation sites.

What are we going to protect

- A diverse range of commercial conifer species will be established in resilient mixes where conditions allow, helping to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate.
- In and around watercourses, along forest edges and near infrastructure, corridors of native broadleaves will be established to safeguard these features, improve forest stability, and improve environmental value.



- The woodland will be managed to protect and enhance key natural assets including designated conservation sites, watercourses and riparian habitats, and areas of native woodland and PAWS. Habitat networks will be strengthened and woodland conditions improved through appropriate restocking design and targeted restoration.
- By the end of the plan period, broadleaf species coverage will have increased from 18% currently to at least 22%.

Deer Species (and other herbivores)

- Roe Deer are the predominant deer species in this area.
- There is a level of recruitment in the LTP area due to migration from the surrounding area.
- Hares/Rabbits- Brown hares have been an issue in the past where some historical coupes were fenced to prevent browsing by Brown Hares to the Broadleaf component.

What have we done to date

Deer culls from the Bin and Deveron LTP Area:

Year	Roe	Red	Total
24-25	225	3	228
23-24	321	6	327
22-23	224	3	227
21-22	239	0	239

The culls have been delivered using both FLS ranger and Deer management contract resources.

Impacts

A 3-year average nearest neighbour survey results recorded an average of 31.8% damage over the years 2019-2022. Which is high, but these figures relate to sites that had an exceptionally elevated level of localized browsing. With the increased culls delivered and a focus on setting the correct culls for the future, it is hoped the level of damage across all species will be kept low. Recent surveys for deer signs across multiple sites suggest an overall reduction in deer numbers with very little evidence on the ground of deer browsing or dung.



Fencing

- There are a mixture of stock fences in various stages of condition.
- Two historical Deer fenced enclosures to enable broadleaf establishment to remain, with rabbit netting to exclude Hares.

Have an evidence-based approach.

Cull setting within this LTP is challenging, due in principle to the ingress from adjoining land and this varies throughout the year. There will be increased focus along with regular use of the FLS deer team drone to survey deer numbers, with this accurate information it will enable the correct culls to be set for the future and allow the deer team to manage and reduce the deer population.

FLS uses an information-based decision-making process to set its deer management operations with the data received from various internal and external reports which can include.

- Thermal drone counts
- Herbivore dung counts
- Historical cull data
- Sighting data
- Ranger daily/monthly reports
- Deer Management Contractor daily/monthly reports
- Strath Caulaidh Survey data, independently obtained – i.e., Deer density figure, impacts - NN/HIA, SDA, etc.
- All data obtained is then applied to a population model which is used to help set the correct cull.

Link to Deer Dashboard

Data used to create this DMP can be found in the FLS Deer Dashboard.

Population Modeling and Future Culls

- A cull of 400 Roe deer has been set for 2026-27. Which will be challenging to achieve. This figure is a result of looking at survey information, population modelling and considering local deer movements and the forest plans, in particular the element of broadleaves being planted.
- The future cull planning and deer management may require flexibility to provide the crop protection required.



- The cull set will be challenging to reach with the current access and structure of the forests and a programme to open access-rides and open space along with crucial ATV tracks must be planned and delivered, to allow future culls to be met and providing the crop protection required.

Protection Options – cull/fence/tubes

- Culls will be regularly monitored, reviewed, and changed when required to ensure a proactive approach is taken with the deer management to ensure crop success is achieved.
- There may be further fencing required to protect the more palatable broadleaves to allow establishment. This will be discussed with the FM team prior to any planting using the most up to date information available. The intention is to protect crops through robust culling.
- Small areas of broadleaves may be protected using tubes.

How will objectives be met

- Maintain a deer population of between 2 and 5 per km².
- Control other herbivores within the LTP area to allow the FLS target of less than 10% damage to leader shoots to be achieved.

The Bin and Deveron LTP area will be managed by using the Wildlife Ranger staff and Deer Management Contract resources.

- All controllers are qualified to Deer Stalking Certificate levels 1 & 2. They also undertake an annual firearms skills test, ensuring the highest levels of safety and competency when undertaking their duties.
- Deer management contractors are a vital resource in FLS' s deer management toolbox which are selected after satisfying FLS of their competence via a competitive tender. All Deer Management Contractors must meet the FLS standards of health and safety, compliance and be trained at the level of deer management like that of the FLS wildlife staff.
- Out of season shooting is an essential tool in the protection of vulnerable tree crops and natural habitats. This is conducted either under the General License issued by NatureScot for enclosed woodland or by 5(6) authorisations on application to NatureScot for un-enclosed woodland. Male deer of all species will be culled through the 12 months of the year on FLS land. Females will be culled under license from the 1st of September to the 31st



of March When early out of season culling of females is conducted any dependent young will be culled first.

- Night shooting is permitted by the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011 (WANE Act), under section 18(2) authorizations granted by NatureScot. All operations will conform to current Best Practice Guidance, and a copy of the guides will be issued to Wildlife Rangers and Contractors, as necessary. Night shooting is a valuable tool in areas of high deer management pressure where the population has become wise to deer management practices.

Roads, Infrastructure, and equipment

- Infrastructure and access within the LMP area requires to be improved and once done it will be challenging to maintain and keep clear due to a combination of track side vegetation and considerable regen. Flailing of the road's edge can also increase visibility of deer and vegetation clearance that coincides with Civils Road maintenance programs will be explored.
- Open areas, green ride networks have grown over with regen in recent years which has led to less open areas to shoot deer. This has been due to the lack of resource (The availability of hand cutters), however, the plans for this LMP area will require a more robust focus to ensure an infrastructure maintenance program is in place and delivered and ongoing which will restore open areas and create shooting opportunities.
- Efficient deer control cannot be undertaken without clear access along all forest roads and ride systems this requires the clearing of these areas to become a priority.
- New infrastructure must be planned and installed at the restock stage and foresters consult with the wildlife team to decide the best location for access tracks. This provides an opportunity for improving culling infrastructure surrounding the vulnerable areas enabling more effective crop protection to be conducted.

All FLS Wildlife Rangers have the following kit as standard:

- 4 x 4 vehicle with either a winch or loading crane attached to the back to aid in loading carcasses safely.
- Capstan winch and rope to aid in extraction when far away from roads.
- 4 x 4 ATV with winch.
- Trailer to transport ATV.
- Sledge/hill trailer to aid in extraction using the ATV.
- .270 caliber rifles
- Binoculars.
- Handheld thermal imager to increase herbivore detection.
- Various knives, saws, and PPE.



- Access to thermal drone and pilot.

Venison

- FLS subscribe to the Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV) scheme. This sets the standards for our larders and actions of our staff and contractors to ensure we provide a safe food item for the market.
- All venison is quality assured and sold to Highland Game where it is further processed.
- All waste from the larders is removed by a licensed waste disposal contractor.
- All animal by-products are sold to Highland Game along with the venison.
- The LTP area is not in any deer management group.
- The main Deer Larder for the LTP area is situated beside the Huntly Office, Portsoy Road, AB54SJ