

Lewis and Harris Deer Management Group

Annual Report Year to 31 March 2019



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1. Introduction

1.1 This is the first annual report from the Lewis and Harris Deer Management Group. The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overall summary of management activities undertaken and progress to date in the delivery of the Deer Management Plan (DMP).

1.2 Key Deliverables of the plan

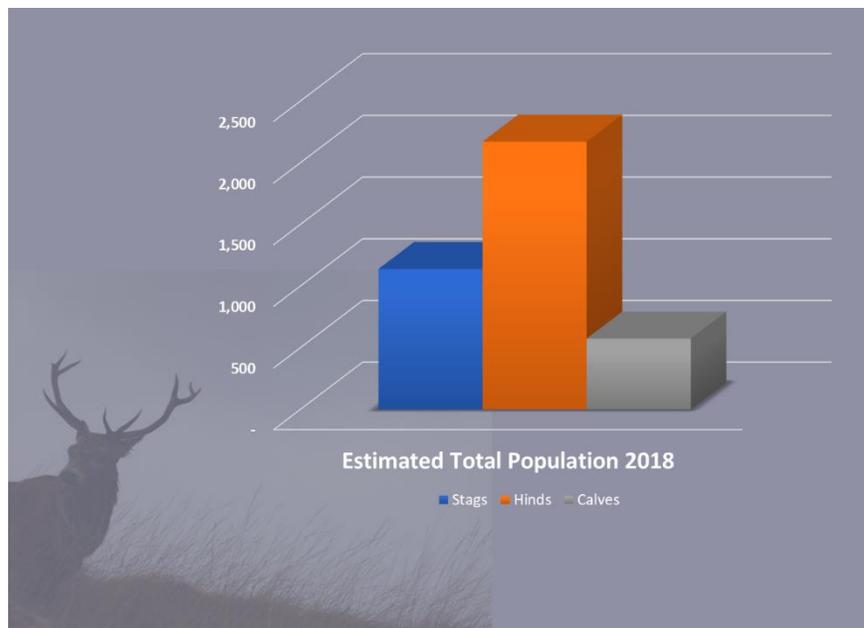
Over the next 5 years, the main deliverables of the Group are as follows:

- To have implemented management to help Designated Sites to achieve Favourable/Unfavourable Recovering management status;
- To have implemented DMG wide Habitat Monitoring of Heather Moorland and Blanket Bog to help inform future management;
- To have conducted an aerial counts of the population in Winter 2019;
- To investigate opportunities for woodland and peatland restoration;
- To investigate opportunities to add value to deer and their management for the benefit of landowners and the wider community.

2. Red Deer Count 2014

The last full helicopter Red Deer count of part of the DMG area (**107,254 ha**) was carried out in 2014 and estimated a total population of **2800 deer (2.6 deer per km²)** (Figure 1). The spring recruitment rate was approximately 36% with a sex ratio of **1:1.7** stags to hinds. The current population across the DMG area is currently estimated to be **1,139 stags, 2,170 hinds** and 574 calves – a total population of **3,895 deer (2 deer per km²)**.

Figure 1: Estimated Total Population 2018



3. Population Modelling and Deer Management

Deer management planning is an adaptive process which relies on a suite of information to be gathered and updated on an annual basis in order to help inform future management. This information includes:

- Information about habitat condition and the impacts of herbivores
- Population estimates
- Cull information about the number, sex and age of deer culled annually
- Deer welfare information relating to the health, condition and reproductive capacity of the population
- Changes in management objectives which may require different grazing/browsing pressure.

Red deer culls within the Group are set annually using population modelling techniques based upon all these factors above. All members of the Group are committed to working collaboratively to achieve agreed culls.

4. Summary of events and DMG management activities

During the start of the development of the Deer Management Plan in 2016, and the ongoing delivery of the plan, the Deer Management Sector as a whole has been involved in a series of reviews and consultations conducted by Scottish Natural Heritage and, latterly, the Scottish Government Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.

August 19 th 2016	DMG undergoes an Assessment by SNH
November 18 th 2016	SNH published Review of Deer Management
June 2017	Consultant appointed to develop Deer Management Plan
April 3 rd 2017	The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee publish a review of Deer Management .
March 2018	Consultation meetings held at Stornoway Trust office, Lochs Showground, Laxay, The North Harris Trust office, Tarbert.
March 2018	Group members undertook Habitat Impact Assessment Training
12 th June 2018	Deer Management Plan and revised Constitution formerly adopted at DMG Meeting.
12 th June 2018	New Chairman Jason Laing appointed to Group

5. Summary of activities undertaken by individual DMG Members

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

	Deer Management	General Points
Eishken	Habitat Impact Assessment completed for Blanket Bog and Dwarf Shrub Heath. Impact of eagles on calf mortality, Muirbum for deer 2017.	Regular counts required & winter effect on deer condition requires careful monitoring.
Grimersta	Habitat Impact Assessment completed for Blanket Bog and Dwarf Shrub Heath.	
Scaliscro	Scaliscro run as hill farm but sheep now gone and 9 head cattle remain -has led to deer moving onto ground that were not there previously.	Estate under new ownership.
Galson	Additional road signs put in place in conjunction with the local roads department. Raising awareness of DVCs. HIA carried out and increased cull numbers. Engaged with local leaseholders to support and implement the DMP.	Need a helicopter count to establish the baseline. The north area of Lewis (north of Garynahine) has never been counted so numbers are an estimate.
Carlway		New member of staff Ben Inglis-Grant has started as new Peatland Action Officer. Not aware of any DVCs.
Aird Beag		Widespread clean up of plastic and fishing nets.
Borve Lodge		Looking at woodland planting options.