

Sustainable Management of Forests – Species Conservation – Reducing Deer Impact

Date published: 11 December, 2024

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Table of Contents

[Aim](#)

[Grant support](#)

[Application eligibility criteria](#)

[Supporting information](#)

[Scoring criteria](#)

[How to claim](#)

[Technical guidance](#)

[Recent changes](#)

[Previous versions](#)

[Download guidance](#)

Aim

The aim of this option is to reduce deer impacts to a level that will allow the regeneration of unprotected soft conifer and broadleaved species at a landscape scale, to help promote the regeneration of new woodlands, diversify forests and improve their conservation value.

Grants are available to help reduce deer numbers or maintain them at a level where the natural regeneration and development of species vulnerable to deer browsing can be achieved, this will normally require average densities of less than in the range of five to 10 deer per square kilometre

Grant support

This is an annual grant to support the costs of labour for culling and monitoring deer populations.

The rate is £6 per hectare, per year for up to a maximum of five years.

We expect that some of your costs will be offset by venison sales, although we would not normally expect income from deer stalking at these densities.

Application eligibility criteria

Please check that you are eligible to apply for Forestry Grant Scheme funding before beginning your application.

[Sustainable Management of Forests](#)

You must have an approved Forest Plan for woodland areas of 100 hectares or more, unless in exceptional circumstances a Management Plan is deemed suitable.

For woodland areas less than 100 hectares you must have an approved Management Plan or Forest Plan.

[Long-term Forest Plan technical guidance](#)

[Management Plan](#)

This option is available through either direct entry or following the [Woodland Improvement Grant – Planning – Deer Management Plan](#) option.

In either case, you must have a Deer Management Plan approved by Scottish Forestry. It must show and identify the areas where regeneration of soft conifer or broadleaved species will take place if you successfully carry out deer culls.

For direct entry into this option, you must include damage assessments, from the past five years, to show that damage has been limited to 10 per cent across all conifer species and 25 per cent on broadleaved species [1]. Damage results on soft conifers and broadleaves will be of particular interest. There must be a planned commitment to keep damage to within these levels.

In the case of applications that have been submitted with an approved Woodland Improvement Grant Deer Management Plan, we expect that the effects of culling will show improvement in the levels of damage. There needs to be a commitment to get the damage levels down towards those indicated above during the five years of the contract.

Please read the supporting information below for the details you need to supply when applying for this option. Note that you must use the appropriate standard template to give this information.

New entrants or forest owners or managers who want to gather information about deer density should apply for the Deer Management Plan grant under the Woodland Improvements Grant – Planning option.

[Woodland Improvement Grant – Planning – Deer Management Plan](#)

If you have already surveyed the deer density, we would expect this to show a maximum average of 20 deer per square kilometre (summer density including recruitment) before you can apply for this option.

If the survey shows a density of higher than 20 deer per square kilometre at the start of the proposed Deer Management Plan period, you must reduce it to this level before you can apply for this option.

You will not be eligible for this option if you receive grant for deer control under the [Sustainable Management of Forests – Native Woodlands](#) or [Sustainable Management of Forests – Low Impact Silvicultural Systems](#) options, or a legacy grant scheme.

All of your proposed work must comply with the [UK Forestry Standard](#).

[1] The measure of damage percentages should be of the accumulated winter damage over the past year.

Other eligibility criteria

Normally, only the existing woodland area within the deer management application, including up to a maximum of 20% open space, will be eligible for support.

Funding may be available for deer management on larger areas of open habitats under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme item [Open-range Deer Management](#).

In exceptional circumstances, and by agreement with Scottish Forestry in advance, where the application aims to support landscape scale native woodland expansion by regeneration or planting without fencing (greater than 300ha of new native woodland, which can be across multiple ownerships), you can include the agreed estimated area of woodland expansion.

- An appropriate plan describing the landscape scale woodland expansion proposal in detail must be agreed with Scottish Forestry in advance of the FGS application.
- For eligible landscape scale restoration projects the application area (deer management unit) can include the wider landscape and open habitats/moorland, subject to the percentage woodland limits below.
- All woodland within the ownership/s must be included and for landscape scale expansion projects the total woodland area, including expansion areas, must be a minimum of 25% of the deer management unit.
- Associated larger areas of open habitats / moorland can only be included in the plan if Scottish Forestry agree that the deer management over these areas is essential to the delivery of the woodland expansion. Where agreed with Scottish Forestry these areas can be included in your deer management unit.

- Deer management units should follow a suitable property boundary or landscape boundary, whilst minimising the proportion of open habitat / moorland area within the application.
- Exceptionally, we will pay grant for such areas of open ground to a maximum of 75 per cent of the grant aidable area.

At least 40 to 45 per cent of the culls taken must be adult hinds or does over one-year-old to help reduce the population swiftly.

You must maintain auditable records of your damage assessments.

These records must contain a map of the surveyed areas with the recorded plots or transect lines involved including GPS reference points and a table detailing the findings of the survey.

The starting point of each survey block must be marked on the ground so that it can be revisited for survey verification.

Supporting information

From 2015 onwards you must provide a Scottish Forestry approved Deer Management Plan to support this option.

If you have a Deer Management Plan as funded through the [Woodland Improvement Grant – Planning – Deer Management Plan](#) option then you will not need to supply any further supporting information. Your Sustainable Management of Forests – Reducing Deer Impact application will be assessed using the funded Deer Management Plan and your future cull returns will be compared to those set out in that plan.

If you have a Deer Management Plan that has not been funded through the Woodland Improvement Grant you must ensure that it contains all of the necessary information as per the Deer Management Plan and it must be approved by Scottish Forestry. A general Deer Management Plan template is provided.



[Deer Management Plan template \(MS Word, Size: 396.7 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/General-Deer-Management-Plan-Template-May-24.docx>

For direct entrants into this option, you will need to provide us with five years of damage assessments from your woodland and further supporting information. You must give the details as listed below using the template provided.



[Sustainable Management of Forests – Reducing Deer Impact supporting information template \(MS Word, Size: 439.8 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/smf-deer-supp-info-template-v2.doc>

Details requested on the template include:

- summary details of the deer population you are controlling and the cull trend
- how your application is collaborative
- summary details on the submitted damage assessments
- maps that show the perimeter of the application area

[General mapping guidance for the Forestry Grant Scheme](#)



[Example FGS map SMF- Reducing Deer Impact \(PDF, Size: 1.1 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/FGS-SpCon-Reducing-Deer-Impact.pdf> Example FGS map SMF- Reducing Deer Impact

Scoring criteria

We have set agreed financial budgets for each of the options under the Forestry Grant Scheme.

To ensure that we make the most cost effective use of funding available and to meet Scottish Government objectives, we will assess each application using scoring criteria.

The criteria will be written as appropriate to each Forestry Grant Scheme option; please refer to [Scoring criteria and clearing process](#) for details.

Each option within your application must meet the threshold score to be considered for approval. In achieving the threshold score, your option must score against each criterion, except for additional benefit.

The scores will then be used as the basis for allocating funding on a competitive basis through the Forestry Grant Scheme clearing process.

Delivery of option priorities

1 POINT – for applications that meet the eligibility requirements but do not deliver any of the benefits detailed below.

3 POINTS – for applications that provide one or more of the following in addition to meeting the eligibility requirements:

- applications that are supported by a neighbouring landowner who also has an application for reducing deer impact. You must provide the case reference number of your neighbours application in your Deer Management Plan

Or

- applications that form part of a collaborative approach, or clearly demonstrate that it is seeking to control deer populations on a landscape scale

Or

- applications that aim to protect, expand or improve the condition of native woodlands or Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWs), which are threatened by deer browsing

5 POINTS – for applications that meet one of the three-point criteria above and the criteria below:

- applications that seek to protect SSSI/SAC designated woodlands which are threatened by deer browsing. Your proposal must clearly describe the threat to the designated woodland feature

Supplementary point – additional benefit

1 POINT – will be awarded, as an additional point, where:

- applications are for diverse woodlands, where the total woodland area has no more than 60 per cent of a single species

How to claim

We will pay grants for up to five years for each year that your contract is covered by a Forest Plan or Management Plan. If your Forest Plan or Management Plan expires during the five years of your contract you must ensure that it is renewed in time to be able to continue making annual claims. We cannot pay your claim for any claim year that is not covered by a Forest Plan or Management Plan.

You must claim this grant on your Single Application Form.

You must submit evidence each year to enable payment.

This must include:

- a map showing the area that is being claimed and the stratified areas that have been surveyed
- your annual damage assessment survey results
- a map of the recorded plots within your stratified areas, and the starting points
- cull records for verification

General mapping guidance for the Forestry Grant Scheme

We will make checks to ensure you are carrying out the work agreed in the Deer Management Plan.

You must register with Deer Line to record your cull returns annually.

You must **submit your annual damage assessments** to your local Scottish Forestry office once completed. The annual damage assessment period runs from 1 January to 31 December in each of the annual management claim years in your contract. The form can be submitted to Scottish Forestry **between 1 December** (of the annual management claim year) **and 14 March of the following year**. Please note that if we do not receive your annual damage assessment within this period of time you will miss payment for that annual management claim year.

Technical guidance

- [Long-term Forest Plan technical guidance](#)
- [Management Plan](#)
- [UK Forestry Standard](#)
- [Best practice guidance](#)
- [Information for deer managers](#)
- [Nearest Neighbour Method for Qualifying Wildlife Damage to Trees in Woodland](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change	Previous text	New text
Supporting information	Sustainable Management of Forests – Reducing Deer Impact supporting information template [Word document updated] Updated Deer Management Plan added		
How to claim	Guidance amended.	You must submit your evidence to your local Forestry Commission Scotland office between 1 December and 31 January. If we do not receive your evidence within this period we will not be able to pay your claim.	You must submit your annual damage assessments to your local Forestry Commission Scotland office once they have been completed. If we do not receive your evidence we will not be able to pay your claim.
Other Eligibility Criteria	Change to threshold area from 1000ha to 300ha		
How to claim	Clarification on when annual damage assessments require to be submitted		

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

Download guidance

Click 'Download this page' to create a printable version of this guidance you can save or print out.