

Woodland Improvement Grant – Planning – Deer Management Plan

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Date published: 6 October, 2015

Date superseded: 13 January, 2016

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Aim

This option provides grant aid to help owners or occupiers of forested land obtain and prepare the data they need to formulate a robust Deer Management Plan. The plan will help them control deer populations in order to secure the regeneration of broadleaved and/or diverse conifer species.

This grant is for the work required to carry out the population survey and baseline damage assessment at a landscape scale.

The aim of the Deer Management Plan must be to reduce deer densities to an agreed target. We would normally expect this to be in the range of five to 10 deer per square kilometre within three years, and then to maintain them at that level for a further two or more years.

The actual deer density and the target population will depend upon the quality of the habitat and carrying capacity of the woodland, and the level of damage being experienced.

The Deer Management Plan must be based on an accurate, independent third-party assessment of deer densities. The survey results will be used to develop a deer population model for the area in question, and hence a robust culling plan.

This survey method may not be appropriate for all situations and so it is important that you discuss the proposal with local Forestry Commission Scotland staff as soon as you can.

Grant support

The grant rate for assessing populations, undertaking a baseline damage assessment and subsequently preparing a Deer Management Plan is:

- £12 per hectare for the first 500 hectares
- £1 per hectare thereafter
- Minimum £5,000
- Maximum £15,000

Once your Deer Management Plan is approved you can apply for grant towards deer control through the [Sustainable Management of Forests – Species Conservation – Reducing Deer Impact](#) option.

Application eligibility criteria

Check that you are eligible to apply for Forestry Grant Scheme funding before progressing.

[Woodland Improvement Grant](#)

This option is also available to existing holders of deer management contracts under legacy schemes who either:

- wish to reapply for further annual grants
- want to work more collaboratively with their neighbours
- want to carry out a landscape-scale deer population assessment to improve their deer management planning
- have an existing legacy grant scheme for deer control but have not been able to reduce deer impacts to acceptable levels

All of the woodlands within the Deer Management Plan must have an approved Forest Plan for woodland areas of 100 hectares or more. 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](#)

Please see 'Supporting information' below for the information you need to supply us when applying for this option. You must use the appropriate standard template to give this information.

Collaboration

Deer Management Plans will often need to be prepared at a landscape scale in collaboration with neighbours in order to be most effective. Involving a number of woodland properties will achieve the scale necessary to cover a significant proportion of the deer population in that area and so reduce the impact of immigration and emigration on the population. This could mean an area in the range of 500 to 10,000 hectares.

This approach will help to ensure that deer populations in the area can be reduced and then maintained at the level required. Exceptionally, smaller woodlands may be eligible, but a rationale must be put forward regarding the ability to reduce local deer populations.

Collaboration is particularly encouraged with neighbouring Forest Enterprise land (Forest Enterprise land is not eligible for funding) or with Scottish Natural Heritage moorland management areas (deer control on moorland is funded through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme).

Survey and cull targets

You must carry out the survey of the deer population across the entire area identified for deer management – the deer management unit – by using the methods described in [Estimating deer abundance in woodlands: the combination plot technique](#) (Forestry Commission Bulletin 128). We may allow a variation to this approach if this can show clear benefits.

You must carry out the baseline damage assessment survey and planning process as outlined in the Deer Management Plan Technical Guidance. A Deer Management Plan template is also available.

[Deer Management Plan Technical Guidance](#)

You must set annual cull targets for the area to ensure deer density will meet agreed targets. We would expect this to be in the range of 5 to 10 deer per square kilometre within three years of the plan

being approved. The targets must be agreed and implemented by all participants, to deliver successful regeneration of broadleaved and diverse conifer species.

Survey methodologies are based on a number of sample plots located across a chosen area. The number of plots varies depending on the size of the area being surveyed. To gain an accurate picture of population density the number of plots in your survey must relate to the size of your forest area as per the table below. The survey must contain a minimum of 50 plots.

Minimum areas (hectares)	Maximum areas (hectares)	Plots required
9001	10,000	150
8001	9000	140
7001	8000	130
6001	7000	120
5001	6000	110
4001	5000	100
3001	4000	90
2001	3000	80
1001	2000	70
501	1000	60
401	500	50

Deer Management Plans must comply with the UK Forestry Standard.

Other eligibility criteria

You can include larger areas of open ground/moorland in the plan if appropriate, but funding for culling on these areas will only be available under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option [Open-range Deer Management](#).

We will pay grant for open ground to a maximum of 20 per cent of the grant aidable area.

The Deer Management Plan must compliment any existing Long-term Forest Plans or Management Plans. If further diversification of woodlands results from the development of a Deer Management Plan and subsequent culling, this should be addressed through a Long-term Forest Plan amendment.

All Deer Management Plans must include a commitment to monitor the effectiveness of culling on an annual basis through damage assessments. Details of the annual monitoring process must be included in the Deer Management Plan.

Supporting information

We need supporting information to help us assess your application. You must give the details as listed below using the template provided.

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

Applicants, or their representatives, and Forestry Commission Scotland must meet at an early stage of the application process. This meeting will identify the best way to proceed with an application and should outline the risks and issues that need to be addressed in the application.

Land ownership

Please provide a list of the landowners and their contact details. Confirm which party will co-ordinate preparation and delivery of the Deer Management Plan (where there is more than one owner in the deer management unit).

Provide a signed letter of agreement between the majority of landowners within the defined deer management unit that they will fully engage with the process and will implement the cull level agreed in

the Deer Management Plan (generally at least 95 per cent of the land in the deer management unit needs to be 'signed up').

Deer management unit woodland details

You must provide information on the woodland area including:

- if there are any designations, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), or Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands (ASNW) present and their condition
- a summary of the current species diversity
- the restructuring history and damage levels measured in the first two years following planting
- the planned restructuring over the next five years
- information on existing fencing

Current deer management

You must provide information on the deer species present within the woodland and background information on the current deer management arrangements within the deer management unit as follows:

- deer controllers currently involved within the deer management unit and their qualifications / experience
- levels of cull taken for each deer species in the past 10 seasons, broken down by sex and age class
- deer controller contributions to the annual cull by per cent
- a brief explanation for the cull trend over the 10 year period of records supplied

Methodology for assessment

You must provide a proposed methodology for deer population assessment based on dung counting. Unless a more accurate method can be proposed for the particular area in question, the method described in [Estimating deer abundance in woodlands: the combination plot technique](#) (Forestry Commission Bulletin 128) should form the basis of the assessment. Some variation might be allowed depending on circumstances.

You must maintain records of your population assessment survey; these must include GPS plot locations and details. The plots must be clearly marked on the ground. Forestry Commission Scotland must be notified within seven days of the survey completion, prior to the preparation of the Deer Management Plan, and we may request a copy of the survey for sample checking.

Quote for survey work

You must provide a quote for carrying out the survey work and preparing the Deer Management Plan as confirmation of who will be used and their qualifications and experience. Please confirm the independence of the contractor(s) to be used in a written statement.

Map requirements

You must provide a map that shows the perimeter of your proposed deer management area (the deer management unit) and a map showing the boundaries of each of the land ownerships involved in the application. Within the deer management area you must show the woodland area and species present.

Please include areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites, and SSSI/SAC designated woodlands that are threatened by deer browsing.

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

Scoring criteria

We have set agreed financial budgets for each of the options under the Forestry Grant Scheme. In order to ensure that we make the most cost effective use of the money 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. We will set a minimum score that an application for any particular option must achieve to be considered for approval.

Threshold score = 2 points

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 form part of a collaborative approach within an active deer management group

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 or improve the condition of ancient semi-natural woodland 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 supporting information should clearly describe the activities proposed to reduce the deer pressure on 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

You can submit a capital claim once we have approved your completed plan.

You cannot make a claim for an area that exceeds that agreed in your contract. You must claim for the areas as detailed in your schedule of works. For example, you cannot make an interim claim for part of the area shown on a single line of your schedule of works.

Technical guidance

- [UK Forestry Standard](#)
- [Deer Management Plan Technical Guidance](#)
- [Estimating deer abundance in woodlands: the combination plot technique \(Forestry Commission Bulletin 128\)](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change	Previous text	New text
Deer management unit woodland details	New section	(New text)	You must provide information on the woodland area including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if there are any designations, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), or Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands (ASNW) present and their condition • a summary of the current species diversity

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the restructuring history and damage levels measured in the first two years following planting • the planned restructuring over the next five years • information on existing fencing
Current deer management	<p>Addition of requirement to provide information on the deer species present</p> <p>Removal of requirement to provide 'historic information on damage assessments'</p>	<p>You must provide background information on the current deer management arrangements within the deer management unit as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deer controllers currently involved within the deer management unit and their qualifications / experience • levels of cull taken for each deer species in the past 10 seasons, broken down by sex and age class • deer controller contributions to the annual cull by per cent • a brief explanation for the cull trend over the 10 year period of records supplied • historic information on damage assessments 	<p>You must provide information on the deer species present within the woodland and background information on the current deer management arrangements within the deer management unit as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deer controllers currently involved within the deer management unit and their qualifications / experience • levels of cull taken for each deer species in the past 10 seasons, broken down by sex and age class • deer controller contributions to the annual cull by per cent • a brief explanation for the cull trend over the 10 year period of records supplied
Methodology for assessment	Addition of requirement to maintain records of the population assessment survey	(New text)	<p>You must maintain records of your population assessment survey; these must include GPS plot locations and details. The plots must be clearly marked on the ground. Forestry Commission Scotland must be notified within seven days of the survey completion, prior to the preparation of the Deer Management Plan, and we may request a copy of the survey for sample checking.</p>
Map requirements	Amendment to the map requirements	<p>Within the deer management area you must stratify the habitat types to ascertain high or low deer usage.</p>	<p>Within the deer management area you must show the woodland area and species present.</p>

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