

Limekiln Plantation Deer Management Plan

The landowner has been managing deer populations for many years to allow successful woodland establishment and to maintain healthy populations of deer.

A map showing the location of the existing perimeter fence and the proposed internal fences accompanies this plan.

The proposed internal fences will have the effect of dividing the forest into three blocks or fenced areas. For the purposes of deer management these are identified as Zones 1,2 and 3 on the accompanying map.

The key deer management objectives are as follows

1. Prevent unacceptable levels of damage to enclosed woodland
2. Establish and enhance long term deer habitat with the successful establishment of woodland cover, increasing future deer quality, habitat, shelter and forage
3. Monitor deer populations to ensure they remain at acceptable levels
4. Monitor deer welfare
5. Maintain the condition of the SAC peatland habitats

These objectives will be met by implementing the following procedures.

1. Restock areas will be fenced off in blocks easily managed and with as few road/access crossing points as feasible to ensure integrity of the fences. Felled compartments will not be fenced off individually as to do so would involve installing in excess of 28000 metres of deer fencing and a recently installed perimeter deer fence is already in place. The fencing off of individual compartments or felled areas would have a negative impact on wildlife movement. The internal fences will be installed at the northern and southern ends of the development area containing the proposed wind turbines. This will allow remaining deer to move from areas containing mature trees to open ground and restock areas. Deer culling in the restock areas will be implemented to keep numbers at levels required as noted below. Areas of restocked broadleaved species will be focused on to ensure successful establishment.

In Zone 1 shown on the plan, there will remain an opportunity for the sporting interests of the landowner, and the deer population will be reduced to between 7-10 per 100 hectares.

In Zones 2 and 3 the aim is to keep deer numbers to a minimum (less than 3 per 100 hectares) to ensure successful tree establishment in Zone 2 and to minimise impact of deer on the SAC peatland habitat in Zone 3.

The Limekiln Wind Farm Planning Consent includes an obligation to put in place a Habitat Management Plan for the forest. The Condition is in place in the interests of good land management and the protection of habitats.

To address this condition a Plan has been developed which includes an obligation to monitor the condition of the area of land designated SAC within the fenced boundary and to put in place measures to maintain the condition of that area.

The results of this monitoring of deer impacts during the initial construction period will result in target deer numbers being defined and action taken if deer impacts exceed agreed thresholds.

24. Stringent culling of resident and marauding deer (red/roe) within the fenced areas will be carried out by the landowner and his gamekeeper/controller.
25. Any stray livestock will be removed from the forest.
26. Fences will be inspected frequently, particularly after severe storms or heavy snowfall and maintained to the highest standard. The permanent deer fence around the site perimeter will be kept deer proof through checking it a minimum of twice annually, and carrying out repairs to any damaged areas found as soon as possible.
27. Restock areas will be regularly monitored for browsing damage and appropriate action taken on findings
28. Regular consultation with SF on the success of deer management and the restocked crops will take place and the name of the controller will be supplied to SNH along with cull figures.
29. Neighbouring estates will be liaised with regularly to ensure efficient management control and strategy
30. Liaison will take place with the local deer management group to coordinate efforts of deer control and deer counts
31. The plan will be regularly reviewed and amendments put in place when necessary to ensure successful regeneration of woodland crops adhering to best practice guidance
32. Out of season and night shooting under authorisation will take place if required
33. Highseats will be installed in the forest as and when required.
34. The impact of the new temporary fencing on deer will be negligible. Any hefted or resident deer would be removed from newly fenced blocks.
35. Deer herd and habitat quality will be monitored with cull regimes amended should adverse impacts to either be seen. In parallel, ongoing monitoring though the habitat management plan will help inform action.
36. Deer population data will be gathered to help determine population demographics and cull targets
37. Monitoring will ensure deer control is effective and meeting the objectives of management. The use of third party information, for example best practice guidance, will be utilised where necessary. All legal obligations and best practice will be adhered to. Where appropriate information gained will be passed on to relevant authorities (SNH, SF).
38. Previous cull levels have been 15 stags and 12 hinds per year for the past 3 years.
39. The estimated population of the deer in the forest is 150-200.
40. The intention in Zones 2 and 3 is to reduce the deer population to a minimum, which will be less than 3 per 100 hectares and as stated in the HMP monitor the vegetation in Zones 2 and 3. This should allow for successful tree establishment and ensure minimal impact on the SAC peatland habitat is kept to a minimum. Baseline data collected and collated as outlined in the HMP and deer impact monitored.

41. Fences will be inspected to check for breeches. Any necessary repairs will be carried out immediately as noted above. If deer from outside the forest breach the deer fence then every effort will be made to remove the deer from the forest with the help of local stalkers.
42. The blanket bog vegetation and peatland habitats will be monitored to ensure deer levels are kept at a level where no damage or negative impacts occur.

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