

Forestry Commission Scotland Guidance Note 25 Reduction in Deer Numbers Stewardship Grant (S2) and SFGS July 2003

Background

The purpose of this note is to clarify eligibility for the S2 Reduction in Deer Numbers grant and to explain the specific requirements of the associated Deer Management Plan (DMP). It is also intended to help FC staff to gauge whether applications contain all the required information and qualifying criteria.

Purpose of the Grant

The purpose of this grant is to improve the economic and ecological value of woods and forests by reducing deer numbers. Grant aid is available for reducing and maintaining numbers at levels which prevent damage to trees and important woodland habitats.

The primary objectives are to reduce deer grazing pressure on planted and regenerating tree species; to reduce bark stripping in existing woodlands; and to benefit other important associated woodland habitats eg SSSIs and Natura sites.

Eligibility

Applicants have to demonstrate that there is a need for this grant. It is important to bear in mind that the applicants will need to show that beneficial changes will take place to the woodland and/or habitat and that the deer population will be subsequently reduced or maintained at sustainable and acceptable levels.

Areas of woodland under existing Woodland Grant Scheme contracts and approved Forest Plans will be eligible for this grant, providing that the deer management work activities proposed are not already being funded under AMG or WIG.

This grant is also intended to contribute towards the cost of deer management in woodland expansion areas where this is essential to ensure woodland establishment.

Application Process

All applications for this grant must be submitted on the Deer Management Plan application form attached as Appendix 1 to this note.

Grant Rates

Grant rates will normally be based on 60% of agreed costs relating to net cost of deer control. However, grant rates based on 90% of agreed costs will be paid for the following:

- Work relating to woodland SSSIs, Natura sites
- Areas with particularly complex deer issues where voluntary deer control agreements (under section 7 of the Deer Act 1996) are in place.

Mapping Requirements and defining the Boundaries

Accurate mapping is a key requirement. It is important to identify clearly each woodland area where deer management is required. In each of these woodland areas it is critical that either the vulnerable crop or the important habitat is identified. If there is no vulnerable crop or habitat the Forestry Commission will need to know the reason(s) for including these woodlands, which should be made clear within the Management Plan text. Applicants should also provide an operations map showing what work will take place on site within the woodlands throughout the ten year Plan period, eg ride management, high seat construction, carcass extraction routes, deer fencing.

Who can apply

Individual property owners or lessees. Groups of adjacent woodland owners may apply where the Forestry Commission can be satisfied that there is a clear benefit both practically and financially by including different ownership areas. We will expect you to nominate one person or agent to receive the grant, although all woodland owners (or their agents) will be required to sign and agree the SFGS contract document.

Open Ground

Open ground is an important component to enable effective deer control. The Forestry Commission can pay up to 20% of the total grant-aidable area as open ground providing this area actually contributes to the DMP. This open ground area must be an integral part of the existing woodland within the ownership: it is not acceptable to simply add on an additional 20% of open ground. Although there may be cases where the total area of open ground within the woodland exceeds 20%, the Forestry Commission will not under any circumstances contribute towards any areas above this 20% threshold.

Deer Management Plan (DMP)

This is split into three main areas.

(1 Scheme Details; 2 Plan; 3 Supporting Information)

1 Scheme details

We need to know who owns the woodland, who the agent is (if any) and the author of the DMP. We also need to know the nature of the woodland and deer that are present.

In this initial section we want to know what public benefit will be achieved from proposed grant aided activity, current and proposed deer management practice and the desired future condition of the woodland and associated habitat. We also need to know what activities are planned for the ten year period and the applicant's estimated net cost of the operations.

Grants will be available from the year of planting for work that achieves the following:

- preparing a DMP and collecting associated data
- reduction culls and ongoing management culls
- monitoring and assessment

2 Plan

We need to know the applicant's policy for deer management. For example this may be "To reduce the population numbers from x deer per 100 hectares to x-3 deer per 100 hectares by the end of the Plan period". The DMP must provide a statement about the habitat condition that is expected to result as a consequence of the reduction in population. For example "There will be no more than 5 % evidence of deer browsing on native natural regeneration within the vulnerable areas".

Setting Cull Targets

A key part of the DMP is to identify planned cull targets for the first five years. There are two identified types of culls:-

- a) Reduction Culls. This is where additional effort is required from applicants in the initial years to reduce the population levels as soon as practicable.
- b) Management Culls. This is the ongoing and sustainable culling that could be achieved on an annual basis.

Although these culls are inter-related, it is expected that in most cases the overall combined cull levels achieved in the first five years should exceed those levels of annual kills recorded before the SFGS contract was approved. However, provided that applicants can demonstrate that cull levels are contributing towards achieving a cull level agreed in the DMP then grant will still be available. Alternatively it will be essential for the applicant to demonstrate that habitat enhancements are occurring as a result of this additional effort.

Suitability of deer controllers

It is important that we are satisfied that the individual(s) identified to carry out the planned culls will be able to deliver what is planned. The applicant needs to provide evidence of the qualifications, suitability and availability of the stalker(s).

Record keeping

We will agree details of which records need to be kept. DCS Best Practice will highlight what is required, for example, date killed, species, sex, estimated age, body weight, female reproductive status.

Annual assessment of damage

It is important that sample plot information, browsing levels and factual evidence of deer damage, is monitored annually to ensure there is a formal record of what is taking place. The applicant must therefore identify and agree with us what

method will be used. The DCS practice guide will define the most suitable options for each different woodland situation.

Review progress of Plan

When the annual assessment is undertaken it is important to review the options that might be necessary to amend the culling practices taking place. This should ideally be done with adjacent landowners as part of a collaborative approach within the local Deer Management Group (if one exists for the area). It is also important to state how the Plan will be reviewed.

3 Supporting Information

This is part of the Deer Management Plan and provides the factual information necessary to support the objectives, targets and proposals set out in the DMP.

Known information about deer populations

In many cases there will already be useful information on deer populations, for example estate count, or census information from DCS. It is important that only current, accurate information is used to inform the basis of the DMP.. Ideally we need to know the estimated population densities both on the open hill and within the woodlands.

Indicators of woodland deer densities

In conjunction with DCS we have compiled a chart that indicates the evidence for the likely level of deer present in woodlands. This can be used to inform the DMP.

<u>Evidence</u>	1-8/ 100ha Low Density	8-15/100 ha Medium Density	15+/100 ha High Density
<u>Tracks</u>	Difficult to find deer slot marks or defined paths.	Defined paths slot marks easy to find in areas of soft ground.	Many well defined tracks and paths often black with constant use.
(Tick)			
<u>Dung</u>	Difficult to find with just the odd isolated pellet group.	Pellet groups relatively easy to find, particularly on woodland edges and good feeding areas.	Pellet groups very easy to find. Highly concentrated on favored feed areas.
(Tick)			
<u>Browsing of Vegetation</u>	Natural regeneration of broad-leaved trees taking place with no or little damage to current year's incremental growth.	Broad-leaved saplings present but showing significant damage.	No seedlings growing above dominant vegetation height. Often well-defined browse lines on established shrubs and plants.
(Tick)			

Previous Cull data

There may already exist good historic information of previous culls. This information will help to understand what has taken place before and help to predict an appropriate management cull level and reduction (if appropriate).

Habitat information

It is important to detail the different vulnerable crops and habitats present within the ownership. This information will enable us to identify the main benefits to be derived from our assistance.

In Natura and SSSI sites we can contribute up to the higher level of grant of £3.60 per hectare (ie 90% of £4.00). In other areas the maximum rate per hectare payable will be £2.40 per hectare (ie 60% of £4.00).

Integrated or Adjacent Land Use

Explaining the different types of land use and pressures within and adjacent to the application area will enable us to understand what different factors and constraints apply to the management of the deer in the area. This information will help explain many of the intended operations such as high seats, the need for any deer fencing and any specific control areas being designed into the DMP.

Factors which influence deer use (*Mainly relevant for Red Deer ranges*).

It is important to explain if there are seasonal differences, which influence how deer might use certain areas (eg for shelter during the winter months). There may also be traditional use of certain areas by hinds or stags (eg moving from one area to another). This information will help inform of likely fluctuations in populations as well as the variable need of control resources at different times of the year.

Compensatory Culls

If there are plans to expand woodland areas by erecting deer fences into open hill of known red deer ranges it is important that deer which rely on that area for forage and shelter, are culled to compensate for the loss of this range. It is recommended that several visual counts are undertaken at times when all the red deer associated with the area are likely to be present. Fewer visual counts may be necessary if dung counting is used to assess numbers. In these situations we will not contribute towards the cost of compiling this information, unless a DMP is already in place and approved.

Evidence of historical and existing deer damage to woodlands and habitats

It is important to quantify and describe accurately, past and current deer damage within the woodlands and associated habitats.

Deer Management Group (DMG) Participation

We strongly encourage applicants to take an active part in these groups to ensure there is good exchange of information about deer and sharing of resources and intelligence. It is hoped that these groups will enable good partnership working to ensure that the shared common goal of effective deer management is achieved.

Best Practice Guides-

In collaboration with many other organisations DCS have produced a comprehensive suite of “Best Practice Guides” related to deer management. For SFGS applications these are key Guides which help to identify the methods and practices which both we and DCS expect to see applied. Currently the most relevant DCS guides relating to this grant are: Tree Damage: Recognition of cause, Damage assessment :Woodland, Deer Management Plan, Woodland design, Population Assessment:dung counting and cull records.

The DCS Best Practice Guides can be downloaded from their web site at www.dcs.gov.uk or obtained from Laura Fenton on 01786446282, Laura (Fenton@deercom.com)

Deer Fencing

The Forestry Commission Scotland’s Guidance Note 11 “Deer and Fencing” (revised March 2001) should be referred to for full details. It is FC Scotland policy to support the use of deer fencing only when no reasonable alternative is appropriate. Where fencing is proposed it is important to ensure that any potential adverse impact is minimised by planning careful siting, design, marking and removal. In sensitive locations if bird strikes are a possibility a “Risk Assessment” needs to be carried out. Details of how to do this are available from the local Conservancy Office.

Grants for deer fencing will not be paid under this Stewardship grant. Grant payments for deer fencing is currently available under the SFGS Expansion and Restocking grants.

Eligible Operations

Work that will be eligible for funding includes:

- Preparing a DMP and collecting associated data – costs associated with preparation of a DMP, writing reports, liaising with neighbours, including representation at DMG.
- Reduction culls and ongoing management culls – costs which are directly associated with culling deer includes wages, running costs of vehicles, high seat construction, deer glade construction, creation of extraction route costs and contractors cost.

- Monitoring and assessment - keeping records of deer shot, collection of data. This includes assessment of tree crops and important habitats and regular monitoring for deer incursions.

(See example in Appendix 2, together with associated grant calculation.)

Review of DMP progress

The approved Deer Management Plan will be reviewed before the end of Year 5. This will be done by the local Forestry Commission Woodland Officer and in some occasions jointly with the local Deer Commission staff.

Points which will need to be considered at that time will be

- Deer population levels year 1 to year 5,
- Actual cull records (compared to predicted),
- Natural tree regeneration evidence, year 1 to year 5
- Damage assessment information, year 1 to year 5, site inspection to verify results,
- Progress of agreed work within DMP.

For the second five year period it will be important to consider whether there needs to be:-

- A need to change the cull targets,
- Any change in intensity / location of monitoring information.
- A change in the method and type of information provided to reflect changes in woodland management or adjacent land use and deer habits,
- A need to revise future years payment levels to reflect changing circumstances, rentals, wage levels, venison prices, new legislation etc.

Appendix 1

SFGS Application Number

**Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme,
Reduction in Deer Numbers (S2).**

Part 1 Scheme Details

(Application For Funding under Stewardship Grant)

A) Scheme details

Location:

Owner(s)

Agent

Deer Management Plan Author

Type of woodland:

Deer Species

Application area of deer management unit (hectares)

For FC USE Only		
Agreed S2 total application area	<u>Area</u>	
Agreed overall cost per hectare	<u>£</u>	
<u>Agreed areas % rate contribution of 60% or 90% (SFGS column 12).</u>	<u>60%</u> <u>Area</u>	<u>90%</u> <u>Area</u>
<u>Agreed S2 payment rate per hectare</u>	<u>60%</u> <u>£</u>	<u>90%</u> <u>£</u>

B) Rationale to justify SFGS payments for deer controller Clarify planned work with indicative costs (see table D below to quantify by year).

(Include description of current deer control methods, clarify what sensitive areas and habitats are vulnerable and briefly describe what needs to be carried out during the ten year duration of the Plan. Please be specific so that FC Scotland will be able to assess to what extent these plans have been achieved.)

C) Describe Rationale for boundary of grant-aided area on map

Mapping: Please attach map(s) which clearly delineate the application area to be included as eligible woodland and appropriate relevant open ground. Identify adjacent land uses which may impact on the DMP, any internal different ownership boundaries, location of vulnerable crops, intended monitoring areas and any relevant "operations" maps.

D) Costs

(Specifically related to deer management costs only)

- Production DMP
- Reduction and management culls
- Monitoring and assessment

Anticipated Itemised by individual years (1-10)

	<u>Year</u> <u>. 1</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 2</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>3</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 4</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 5</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 6</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 7</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 8</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 9</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>10</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>										
<u>Revenue</u>										
<u>Net Costs</u>										

Part 2 **Deer Management Plan**

A) Management Plan Objectives

(Include Statement of intended outcomes)

B) Cull Targets (i) Reduction Culls

Year	Male				Female				Juveniles				Totals
	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	

Comments / Additional Information

C) Cull Targets (Cont) (ii) Management Culls

Year	Male				Female				Juveniles				Totals
	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	

<u>Comments / Additional Information</u>

D) Nominated Controller/s
(Notify FC if any changes occur)

	Nominated controller	Owner	Estate ⊕ Employee	Contract Stalker	Shooting Tenant	Place of Residence	Firearms Certificate No
1							
2							
3							

⊕ Section 26(i) of the deer act clarifies definition of “employee”.

	Controller's Relevant Experience and Calibre of Rifles Authorised
1	
2	
3	

E) Record Keeping. (As Per DCS Best Practice Guide).
(To be provided to DCS)

Must include:-Date killed, species, sex, estimated age, body weight, female reproductive status.
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F) Method(s) used to annually assess damage to woodlands.
(Annual returns must be compiled by applicant. These will be reviewed at year 5 or as requested).

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G) Applicant's brief description of methods used to evaluate and review progress of Deer Management Plan

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Part 3 Supporting Information

A) Information Relating to Known Deer Densities (counts etc)

	Present	Density in Woodland Per 100ha	Density On open hill Per 100Ha	Source of Count		Dung Count Info	Year Of Count
				DCS	Estate		
Red							
Roe							
Sika							
Fallow							

Comment /Additional; Information

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B) Woodland Deer Density Indicators

<u>Evidence</u>	4-8 Low Density	8-15 Medium Density	15+ High Density
<u>Tracks</u>	Difficult to find deer slot marks or defined paths.	Defined paths slot marks easy to find in areas of soft ground.	Many well defined tracks and paths often black with constant use.
(Tick)			
<u>Dung</u>	Difficult to find with just the odd isolated pellet group.	Pellet groups relatively easy to find, particularly on woodland edges and good feeding areas.	Pellet groups very easy to find. Highly concentrated on favored feed areas.
(Tick)			
<u>Browsing of Vegetation</u>	Natural regeneration of broad-leaved trees taking place with no or little damage to current years incremental growth.	Broad-leaved saplings present but showing significant damage.	No seedlings growing above dominant vegetation height. Often well defined browse lines on established shrubs and plants.
(Tick)			

C) Previous Cull Data

<u>Year</u>	<u>Stags/Bucks</u>	<u>Hinds/Does</u>	<u>Calves/Kids</u>	<u>Totals</u>

Comments / Additional Information

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D) Habitat Information

<u>_Habitat</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Vulnerable to deer pressure</u>	<u>Comment</u>
SAC/SPA			
SSSI (Geology, Flora, Fauna)			
Vulnerable Crop			
Open Hill Ground			
Internal Open Ground			
Native Woodland			
Broadleaves			
Conifers			
Other			

E) Integrated or Adjacent Land Use

	<u>Comment</u>
Existing Woodland	
Mixture of Woodland / Arable Land	
Unimproved Pasture / Open Hill	
Other (Specify)	
Public Access / Recreation Facilities	
Deer Road Traffic Issues	
Public Safety issues	

Please sign the declaration below

This form, if signed below, can be used for applying for SFGS Deer Control grant aid. There is no requirement to complete the suite of SFGS application forms unless you are applying for other SFGS grants.

Declaration and Signature

I/We agree to any disclosure and exchange of information about my/our participation in the Scheme(s) with other organisations or consultants which the Forestry Commission or SEERAD considers necessary for the administration, monitoring and evaluation of the Scheme. Details may also be passed to successors in title to the land.

I/We agree that information about my / our participation in the Scheme(s), including that contained in the application, contract or Undertakings and any other relevant documentation, including the amounts of grant may be made available to the public.

I/We have read and understood the contents of the relevant Rules and Procedures booklet and accept full responsibility for the answers given in this Application Form.

I/We note that the Forestry Commission will consider this Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS) Application as an application for their opinion (if this has not already been given) under Regulation 5 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (Scotland) Regulations 1999.

I/We confirm that there are no legal or other restrictions affecting the land that would prevent the work or maintenance from being completed.

I/We agree to inform you if grant aid from another public body or bodies is either approved, or is being sought in relation to SFGS work grant aided by us.

Signature of applicant, owner or *representative:

Name (BLOCK LETTERS): _____

Status: _____ Date: _____

- *If you are signing on behalf of an owner or lessee you must have written authority to do so.*

Appendix 2 (Example Costs)
Anticipated Net Costs Itemised by individual years (1-10)

	<u>Year .</u> <u>. 1</u>	<u>Year .</u> <u>. 2</u>	<u>Year .</u> <u>3</u>	<u>Year .</u> <u>. 4</u>	<u>Year .</u> <u>. 5</u>	<u>Year .</u> <u>. 6</u>	<u>Year .</u> <u>. 7</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 8</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>. 9</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>10</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>										
<u>Keeper Wages + costs (30%)</u>	<u>£3000</u>	<u>£3000</u>	<u>£3000</u>	<u>£3300</u>	<u>£3400</u>	<u>£3500</u>	<u>£3550</u>	<u>£3600</u>	<u>£3700</u>	<u>£3800</u>
<u>DMP compile</u>	<u>£300</u>									
<u>Quad Bike (Access)</u>		<u>£2000</u>			<u>£1000</u>					
<u>High Seats</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>					
<u>Ride Management</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>
<u>Monitoring plan</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>
<u>Fence inspect and repair</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>
<u>Revenue</u>										
<u>Clients</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>	<u>£1000</u>
<u>Venison</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>
<u>Rental</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£?</u>	<u>£?</u>	<u>£?</u>	<u>£?</u>	<u>£?</u>
<u>Net Costs</u>	<u>£1800</u>	<u>£3600</u>	<u>£1500</u>	<u>£1900</u>	<u>£2900</u>	<u>£2400</u>	<u>£2350</u>	<u>£2500</u>	<u>£2500</u>	<u>£2700</u>

(Total Net cost over ten year period (as anticipated at year 1) = £24,150)

FC Grant Calculation (Example)

Total Woodland Area= 350 hectares (includes eligible open ground).
 (Outwith SSSI and Natura Sites therefore all eligible areas paid at 60%)

Eligible expenditure anticipated at year 1 (see above)

£24,150. X (60 %) = £14,490.

350 hectares x £2.40 (60 %) =£840
 Total paid over ten year period= £8,400.

FC net contribution over the entire Plan period= £8,400 / £24,150 (eligible costs)
 = 34% of costs.