

APPENDIX 20

DEER MANAGEMENT

Current Situation

Threestoneburn Forest at present consists of approximately 80% Polestage conifers and 20% open space out of a total forest area of 712 ha. Much of the open space is barren hill tops covered in rank heather, but there are also grassy areas adjacent to the riparian zones, providing much better feeding for deer.

At present only Roe deer are resident, but an occasional Red deer has been seen in the vicinity and a small feral population exists approximately 15km to the south east.

No population survey has been carried out, but based on previous surveys (Radcliffe et al) extrapolated to the habitat type of Threestoneburn, it would be safe to assume that the forest could hold a resident population of between 80-100 Roe deer.

Under the ownership of the Forestry Commission, the deer stalking was let to a private individual and the cull levels were relatively low (10-15 animals/year).

More recently the stalking has been let to a small syndicate and the cull levels increased in excess of 20 animals/year. The current lease expires in 2009.

Future Proposals

Over the course of the next 3 years it is intended to fell all of the conifers within Threestoneburn and convert the forest to open moorland. The resident Roe deer will be displaced by this activity and are likely to disperse into suitable habitat in the Langleeford Valley to the North, Breamish Valley to the South and Ilderton Dene to the East.

Lilburn Estates who own the surrounding land to the North and East employ a team of gamekeepers, who as part of their remit, control deer numbers. On average they have been shooting 90 deer per annum on the estate.

It will be the estates intention to cull the deer more heavily during the period of the deforestation to prevent excessive damage caused by the dispersing Roe deer. This culling will be undertaken in cooperation with the landowners to the South, Linhope Estates to ensure that the culling is coordinated.

All of the replacement tree planting to be undertaken after the deforestation, both within the forest boundary and on the adjoining land, will consist of Native Broadleaves. These trees will be protected from deer damage by 1.2m shelters, as it is expected that Roe deer will re-colonise the area immediately after the deforestation phase is completed.

Summary

- The resident Roe deer population will be largely displaced by the proposed deforestation.
- The numbers of animals culled will be increased to reduce the level of damage caused by the displacing deer.
- Culling will be undertaken by estate staff in coordination with the neighbours.
- Replacement trees will be protected by 1.2m shelters.