

MILL OF PLUNTON WOODLAND CREATION

APPENDIX 3: DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

This plan covers woodland creation proposals on a site extending to 72 ha, with roughly 55 ha being planted, of which 25% is coniferous and 75% broadleaved. The woodland is primarily designed for carbon sequestration and timber production in the medium-long term, with areas of native broadleaves by watercourses, wetlands, and on the site's margins and by existing woodlands.

There are no statutory designations within the site and no known recreational use currently made of the site.

Objectives

The main objective of deer management is to ensure deer numbers and levels of damage are sufficiently controlled to allow satisfactory establishment and growth of the proposed woodlands, with leader and stem damage restricted to 5% of stems.

Assessment of Risk

Deer numbers on site are presently relatively low due to the lack of suitable shelter, but there are relatively high levels of roe deer in the surrounding area, notably in neighbouring small to medium scale woodlands, and there is a deer farm immediately adjacent to the south-east of the site. There are red deer in the wider locality.

Protection Proposals

Given the relatively large numbers of broadleaved and vulnerable coniferous species being planted and the significant threat posed by deer in the locality, the proposals include for the erection of deer fences around most of the site, with the exception to the north-western compartment north of the public road where tree shelters will be used.

The exact line of the fence will be chosen to minimise the potential for intrusion (e.g. at low spots) and for damage to the fence, and deer jumps will be created if required to allow any deer within the enclosed area to escape. The number of gates will be limited to those required for sound property management, and management gates will be padlocked. Prior to completing the fence erection, every effort will be made to drive deer out of the site.

In recognition that deer incursion will remain a threat the proposals include for regular monitoring of the site to check for the presence of deer (both for signs of deer and for signs of deer damage to the planted trees). All fences, gates and watergates will be regularly inspected, and any repairs required will be undertaken promptly. The fence lines will be inspected following heavy snowfalls and freezing temperatures, both to check for signs of incursion, and for signs of snow/ice damage.

In the event of signs of deer being detected, culling will be undertaken to remove all deer from within the enclosed area, and fences will be checked to identify potential incursion points.

Cull records will be kept and will be submitted to NatureScot as soon as feasible after March 31st each year.

If feasible, deer control outwith the enclosed area will be carried in cooperation with neighbouring deer managers.

Control Principles

- Control will be by shooting by contracted experienced local stalkers to ensure that all deer are culled
- Control will be exercised in co-operation with neighbouring woodland owners
- All shooting will be carried out under a formal lease naming the authorised controllers
- All controllers will hold suitable insurance and a current firearms certificate, covering rifles of suitable calibre to meet legal requirements
- All controllers will have a minimum of Deer Management Qualification DSC level 2, and be familiar with best practice guidance
- If deemed necessary, out of season and/or night shooting permits will be applied for in order to meet the objectives of the plan
- Cull records will be kept detailing - date shot, species, sex, location, age and female reproductive status
- An annual review of the DMP will be undertaken with a new plan prepared after five years