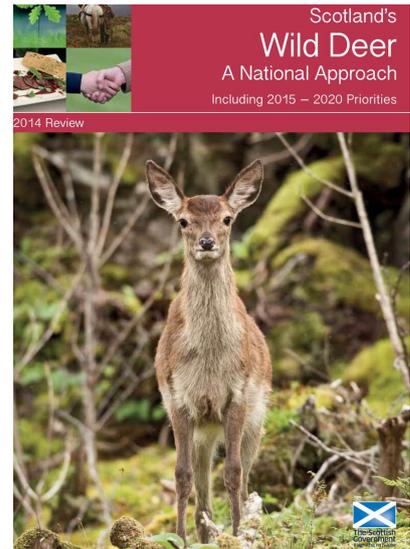




1.2 The initiative for a new DMP followed the recommendation of the Association of Deer Management Groups [ADMG] and the consultative process by Scottish Natural Heritage [SNH] towards a 'Code of Practice on Deer Management' (2012). The Wildlife & Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 has implemented this process and the 'Code of Practice' strongly recommends wider and pro-active consultation and formulation of deer management plans to deliver the terms of the Code. The MDMG has adopted the Code of Practice on Deer Management and seeks to deliver the terms of the Code through the DMP.

1.3 Deer management is carried out at a local level drawing on the experience and competence of the MDMG and with ongoing updating of skills. At present the group acts on a voluntary basis but is aware that voluntary and regulatory systems of deer management under the 2011 Act will be reviewed by the Scottish Government in 2016 and thereafter to ensure fitness for purpose. Procedures and focus for deer management planning have meanwhile been refined with increased emphasis on public interest aspects of deer management. This is addressed in detail in the re-issue (2014) of the Government's twenty-year policy document, *Scotland's Wild Deer – A National Approach*.



1.4 The MDMG now requires a practical and effective framework within a 'deer management plan' for the management principally of Red Deer and their environment and for assessing the differing uses demanded of land within the Moidart peninsula. The range of land uses within Moidart is within what is recognised as a national aim to deliver a sustainable and economically viable countryside for future generations. This aim is shared by those living and working in Moidart and the current process of developing a management plan by the Group encourages dialogue between managers and stakeholders and highlights a range of expectations for achieving better collaboration and understanding of management challenges within both local and national contexts in the pursuit of this national aim.





1.5 The MDMG is committed to best practice in sustaining and managing a Red Deer population within an agreed density range and to the conservation and enhancement of designated habitats within its area. The MDMG is engaged in a rural 'industry' with strong cultural and traditional links with the past and is sustained by robust views on responsible action. It requires however to define and refine itself for the 21st century, for public engagement and the explanation and justification of its actions.



Margaret MacAlpine,
Glenaladale, 1905.



Mr Bainbridge (seated centre),
Duncan MacLaren, Duncan
MacAlpine and Na Balaich a
Blathaich – the 'lads from Blaich' -
Glenfinnan, 1908.



2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 The principal purposes and of the MDMG are:

- the management of wild deer with regard to their welfare as well as to their environment;
- the protection in the public interest of 'heritage' elements of that environment;
- the management of wild deer for their economic and environmental impacts, including an appropriate balance with other land uses. The MDMG is mindful of the contribution that deer and the 'deer sector' make to the rural economy of Scotland and aims to sustain and enhance this contribution;
- the assembling of a 'deer management plan' to provide an ongoing best-practice guide and a basis for collecting and analysing information necessary for formulating management decisions in the short, medium and longer terms;
- the holding of regular meetings towards management decision-making and the regular and annual review of a 'deer management plan';
- the defining of an appropriate and sustainable deer population model and a cull target programme for the short, medium and longer terms;
- the provision of information in dialogue and open discussion with neighbouring deer management groups and local community interests, and in pursuance of the public benefit at local and national levels.



The hay field, Gasgan, Moidart, 1907.
Bringing a stag off the hill.



3. MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The process of consultation for a DMP serves to identify management objectives and these should be measurable and achievable. The DMP also identifies methods of achieving objectives. The MDMG DMP objectives are to:
1. **safeguard welfare of all deer species, taking account of relevant local issues such as food availability/access, shelter, climate change, disturbance, poaching, DVCs;**
 2. **manage deer sustainably, and agree cull levels in a co-ordinated manner across the MDMG area;**
 3. **maintain a balance between deer management, forestry, agriculture, sporting and recreational interests, and the natural heritage, giving due attention to the care and conservation of habitats and species as well as the sustainable use of natural resources;**
 4. **carry out deer management proactively and to an industry-recognised standard of 'best practice', as defined in SNH's 'Code of Practice on Deer Management' which came into effect on 1 January 2012;**
 5. **minimise adverse impacts from wild deer in the public interest;**
 6. **provide an agreed number of mature stags and/or hinds for the annual culls and for stalking clients;**
 7. **contribute to a safe and healthy environment for people;**
 8. **clarify objectives within the MDMG and for use outwith the MDMG, and resolve conflicts and pre-empt potential conflict both within the MDMG and outwith the MDMG.**

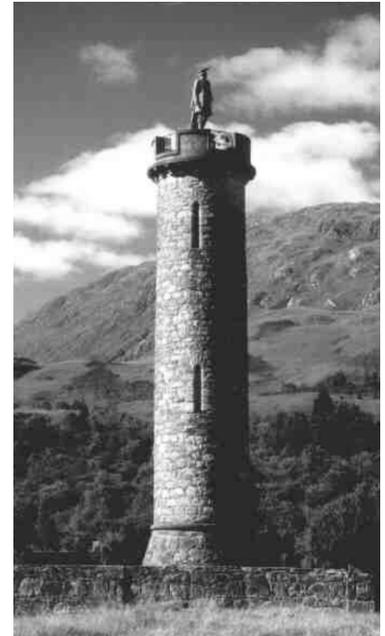


4. PERSPECTIVES

- 4.1 Moidart is a large district of approximately 80 square miles or 200 km² situated to the west of Fort William and within the larger Lochaber district. Much of its character derives from its peninsular topography, with the freshwater Loch Shiel forming a south-east boundary, the sea and sea-loch Loch Moidart forming a western boundary and the sea-loch Loch Ailort and freshwater Loch Eilt forming northern boundaries.
- 4.2 The district name 'Moidart' (an anglicised rendering of Gaelic *Mùideart*) may plausibly derive from the Old Norse for 'Mud Fjord', since the area was under the control of Norse settlers from the 9th century. Loch Moidart itself is a shallow arm of the sea with extensive mud-flats, and the coastland viewed from the west has a distinctive fjord-like character. The peninsula as a whole is vividly recalled as part of the 'Rough Bounds' – *Na Garbh Chrìochan* – being the traditional name assigned to the mountainous country between Loch Shiel to the south and Loch Hourne to the north.



Castle Tioram



Glenfinnan Monument

- 4.3 Public awareness of the history of the area is enhanced by monuments in the landscape such as the Glenfinnan Monument marking the 1745 Jacobite Rising and Castle Tioram as the former stronghold of the MacDonalds of Clanranald. In terms of serving the public interest, other marks of an historical landscape such as a rich tapestry of former settlement place-names, and place-names indicative of land use are preserved and transmitted by those living in Moidart. Historical (even ancient) land management regimes in Moidart tended effectively towards the conservation of woodlands and grazings; but these attitudes were abandoned with the introduction of large-scale sheep husbandry in the closing decades of the 18th century. The ecological impact of extensive long-term sheep grazing was one factor behind Dr Fraser Darling's characterisation of the West Highland landmass as 'a devastated terrain' (Fraser Darling 1955, viii). Long-term population decline is another factor contributing to the characterisation of the area as 'wild land' although use of this terminology is not always in the best interests of those who live and work here (see APPENDIX 2).



5. CONSULTATION DYNAMIC

- 5.1 Consultation is an important element of the planning process and collaboration is the catalyst for an effective outcome. The MDMG has adopted the 'Principles of Collaboration' propagated by the ADMG and endorses the principle that collaboration is essential to meet the standards set by the Code of Practice on Deer Management (see APPENDIX 3).
- 5.2 Preparation of the DMP has promoted the work and clarified responsibilities of the MDMG and has involved the provision of information by respective landholding and business interests on the peninsula. A plan should promote good deer management, adhere to and promote best-practice guides as in the Code of Practice, and build positive management and the fostering and raising of skills levels. It will clarify objectives such as population targets and culling policies, and make and record regular habitat impact assessments [HIA] in some of the most challenging environments of upland open-range hill and open unfenced marches.
- 5.3 A deer management plan should contain specific objectives for sustainable management, and for informing landholders, land managers and individuals who deliver actions such as professional deer stalkers (see below). The gathering and circulating of information is in the public interest and serves to maintain good communication between all involved, avoids misunderstandings and achieves clarity of purpose. It should take account of the views of other interested parties or groups such as a local community or communities. It should also be of interest to the general reader and the 'country-sports tourist'. The steep and rugged terrain of Moidart, its recreational potential and the interest of the general public in Red Deer as *Ferae naturae* – 'beasts of wild nature' - are matters of general interest in the 21st century. A deer management plan is formulated to improve dialogue and public perception for outdoor recreation, and should aim to balance the interests of shooting, stalking, hill-walking, fishing and water-sports and also the more general interests of residents and visitors.