

# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

## **DEER MANAGEMENT STATEMENT 2019 – 2024**

### **Appendix 1: Background Information & Analysis Document**

#### **PREFACE**

This document sets out essential background information and analysis of a range of public interest outcomes for Scottish Borders Council. This is a supporting document and main Appendix to the Deer Management Statement.

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2. Working Plan (Separate Actions Summary document)	
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Also included are recommended larder sheets for males and females.

## Part One - INTRODUCTION

### 1. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide some background information and analysis to inform the production of a Deer Management Statement for Scottish Borders Council. This document sets out the current position, as it is known, allowing that much of the information available is partial or incomplete in nature.

A series of public interest criteria are assessed one by one, and from this a Working Plan is drawn up, listing a series of action points to be addressed by Scottish Borders staff in the coming five year period.

The “Deer Management Statement” is a much shorter document, which sets out the necessary legal and strategic framework within which the Council should operate, as well as the communications structure that should be in place in order that deer management issues can be assessed, prioritized and implemented as required.

### 2. AREA

The Scottish Borders Council (SBC) area extends to 4743 sq km, and has its administrative HQ in Newtown St Boswells. In 2015, there was an estimated population of 114,030 people living in the area which includes towns such as Eyemouth in the east through Kelso, Jedburgh, Hawick, Galashiels and Selkirk to Peebles in the west. SBC borders the local authority areas of: East Lothian, West Lothian, Dumfries & Galloway and South Lanarkshire. The area borders with England to the south and the North Sea forms part of the boundary to the east. For a map of the Scottish Borders Council area, see **1. SBC Location Map**.

There are four deer management group areas either within the local authority area, or which border with it. See **2. SBC DMG Areas map**.

The Borders DMG covers an area within the north west of the local authority area. While this DMG achieves a high participation rate among owners, it is primarily focused on sika deer and the small fallow deer population around Peebles. The DMG area does not really co-incide with SBC owned land, except for the common good area around Peebles. Information on the Borders DMG can be located at: <http://www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-groups/deer-management-group-map/borders-dmg/>

The Eskdalemuir DMG lies within the SW part of the local authority area, and is focused mainly on deer management within extensive National Forest Estate woodlands. The area does not co-incide with any SBC owned property.

The Edinburgh & East Lothian DMG borders the local authority to the North east, and is focused almost entirely on roe deer management issues.

Finally, the local authority shares a very small boundary with the West Lothian DMG. This is a very small group who major on training for low ground recreational stalkers. A West Lothian Council Deer Management Plan will be available during the first half of 2019.

### Scottish Borders Council ownership

Land owned and managed by SBC can be seen on the **3. SBC Owned Land Map**. At this scale, it can be seen that SBC ownership is clustered around settlements with very little or no interest in the 99% of the area in between. Some of the larger areas of Common Good land do stand out at this scale, but the detail of the rest is not apparent.

The information received on ownership falls in to four categories:

- 1 A general database of SBC owned land which includes recreational ground and woodlands, housing land and land set aside or managed for service provision.
- 2 A smaller database of parks and recreational ground, most but not all of this contained in the general database above.
- 3 A database of woodland areas, most of which is contained in the general database, but with some additional areas. While some of these areas are managed recreational areas, others are woodlands with minimal management intervention.
- 4 Finally, areas of Common Good land of which SBC are now the legal owner, but which have to be accounted for separately due to their long history and local connections. It is only the towns in the former Royal Burghs that have any Common Good land. For the purposes of this analysis and plan, there are three towns with quite extensive common grazings extending up to approx. 700 in one case. They are Lauder, Hawick and Selkirk. Peebles and Selkirk have much smaller areas of Common Good land which might be relevant to this plan.

Some of the GIS information provided may not be up to date, but it is sufficient to outline the broad picture and it highlights the possible priority areas which are analysed below. This caveat therefore applies when it comes to looking at the picture around each settlement.

The **4. SBC Ward Map** shows what wards the priority areas lie within. Lauder lies within the Lauderdale and Melrose ward, Selkirk within the Selkirkshire ward, while Hawick is split between the Hawick & Denholm and Hawick & Hermitage wards. Of the smaller Common Good land areas, Peebles lies within the Tweeddale East ward, while Galashiels lies within the Galashiels & District ward. In addition, there are a significant number of deer- vehicle collisions along the A1 in the East Berwickshire ward that SBC should stay aware of. Otherwise, deer management interest in the other SBC wards should be fairly minimal.

### 3. AREA COVERED BY PLAN

This plan covers the area owned and managed by Scottish Borders Council. While effective deer management in some areas may require co-ordination with other parties, the focus of this document is setting out priorities and justifications for Scottish Borders Council land only. It is not a document covering the wider Scottish Borders area, although some recommendations for effective liaison with others are set out.

**3a. REPORTING UNITS**

Perhaps the most important function of this document is to set out at what level deer management issues should be reported on. With almost all SBC land being concentrated around settlements, it would not be appropriate to report information at a ward level. It is therefore recommended that the most appropriate “reporting units” will be at a settlement level.

For the purposes of this plan, those settlements are: Coldstream, Duns, Eyemouth, Galashiels, Hawick, Jedburgh, Kelso, Lauder, Melrose, Newton St Boswells, Peebles & Innerleithen, Selkirk and Stow. There are areas of SBC owned land in smaller settlements, but it is suggested that the above listed towns and villages be considered in the first instance, and other reporting units can be added if that is appropriate.

Of the thirteen areas listed, Hawick, Selkirk, Lauder and Peebles & Innerleithen should be prioritized above the others although, as noted above, SBC should also keep a note of deer- vehicle collisions on the A1.

**3b. SETTLEMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

A short summary description of each of the settlements listed above is given here below:

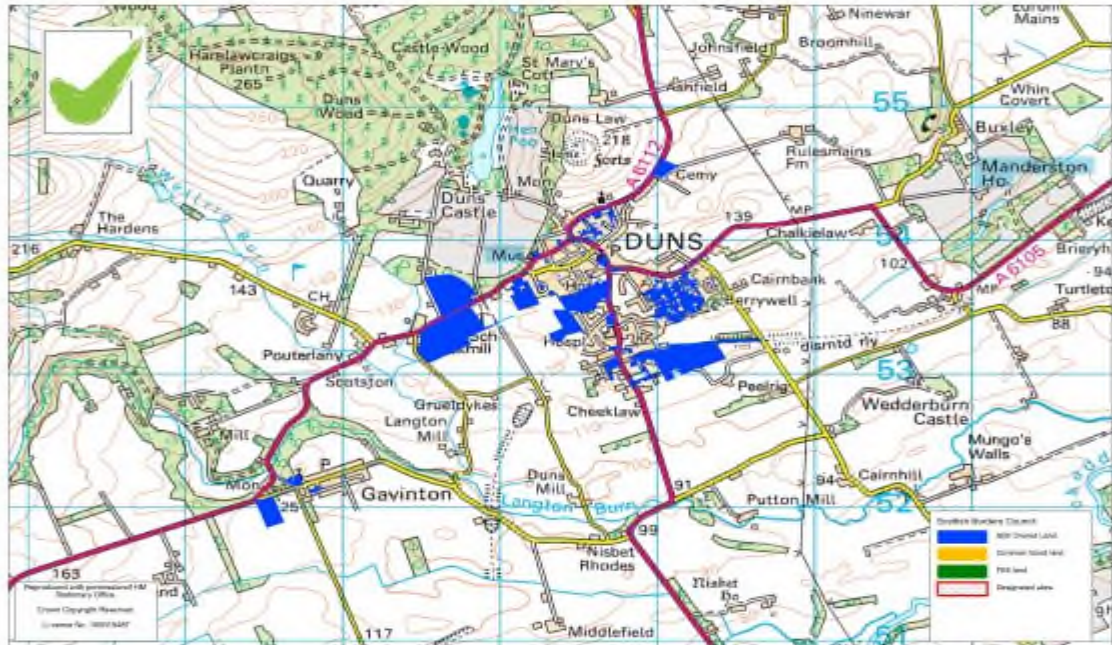
**Coldstream**

SBC land in and around Coldstream is restricted to a small number of areas in the centre of the town, and this is highly unlikely to have any relevance to deer. The priority to be given to deer here is therefore very low.



**Duns**

The SBC land at Duns is restricted to ground in and around the centre of town, although there are obvious areas of open, recreational land. The priority to be given to deer management is low.



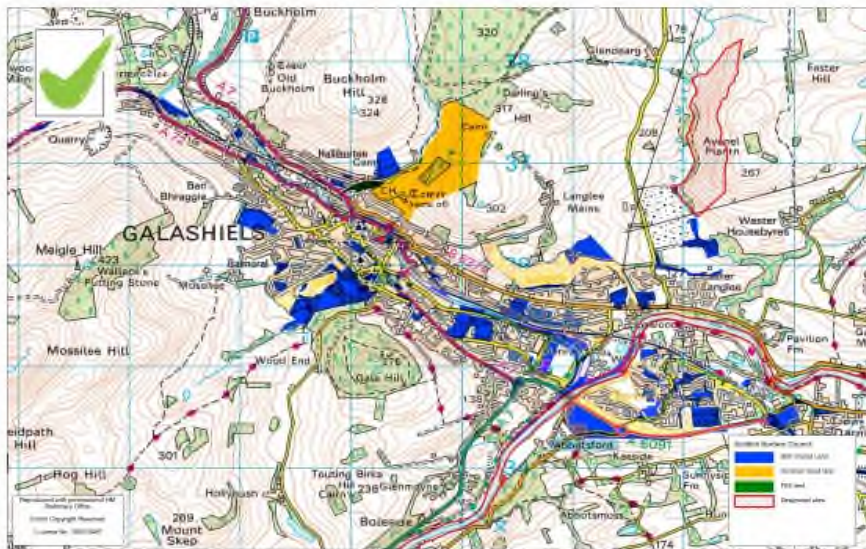
**Eyemouth**

SBC own a significant proportion of land in and around Eyemouth, which includes a golf course next to the cliff top. The priority for deer management is low, but there a number of deer- veihle collisions annually on the A1 more generally, and SBC should be aware of that. This does not relate to their land ownership witin and around the town itself.



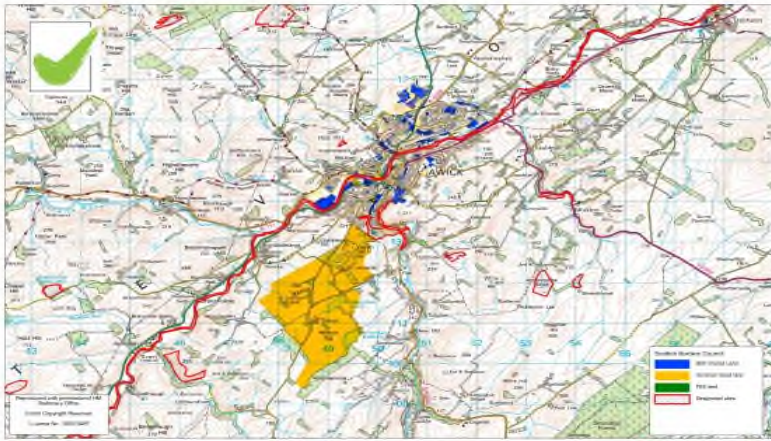
**Galashiels**

SBC do own a significant amount of land in and around Galashiels, which includes a variety of open spaces and an area of Common Good land which extends to c 55 ha. It is very unlikely that deer issues would arise on a holding of this size, although it would be possible to cull on the Common Good site if there was a reason for doing this. There is no obvious reason to do so. There are a number of deer- vehicle collisions annually on the main A7 road which passes through the town, so SBC should be aware of that issue in a more general sense. The nearby Avenel Hill and Gorge SSSI is detached from any SBC ownership and has been classified as being in Favourable condition. It is an upland oak woodland.



**Hawick**

As with neighbouring Galashiels, SBC own and manage a range of recreational, amenity and other land in and around Hawick, but these areas are generally very small and do not justify deer management input. There is a significant area of Common Good land to the south of the town, extending to c 450 ha, and leased to a number of farmers and landowners. Deer management activity could be targeted on this site, but there appears to be no obvious public interest rationale for doing this. The one designated site within the town boundaries is the Lynnwood- Whitlaw Wood, Slitrig SSSI, which is deemed to be in Favourable condition. It is a mixed upland ash woodland. As with Galashiels, SBC should be aware of the deer- vehicle incidents on the A7 more generally.



**Jedburgh**

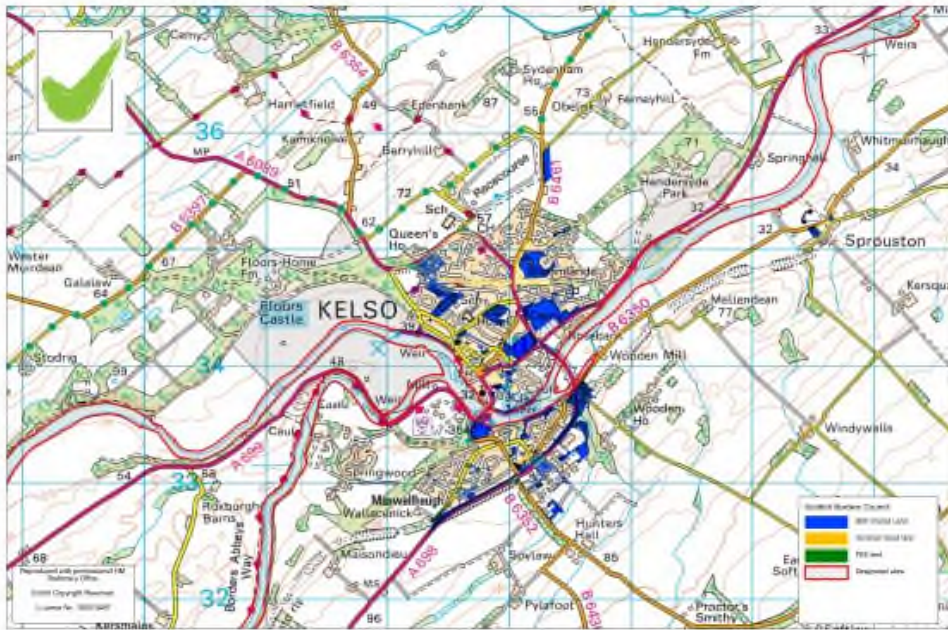
SBC do have a significant landholding within Jedburgh, but the relevance to deer management is likely to be low. The Jedwater Woodlands SSSI which lies to the south of the town is in Favourable condition as an upland oak woodland. SBC should be aware more generally of the main A68 being one of the roads in the Borders which has a significant number of deer- vehicle collisions annually.



**Kelso**

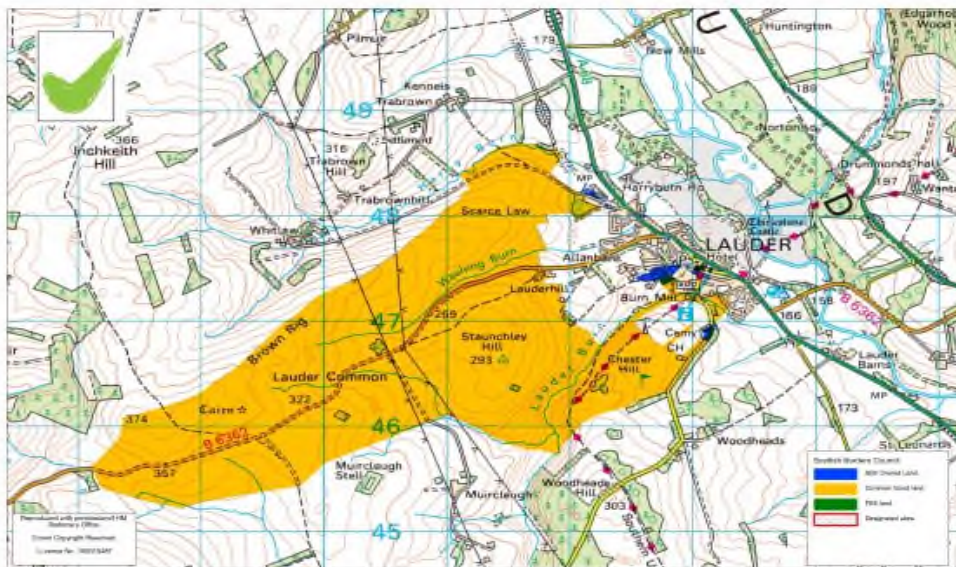
SBC own and manage a number of open spaces in and around Kelso, but there are few obvious public interest issues locally, and the priority for deer management is very low.





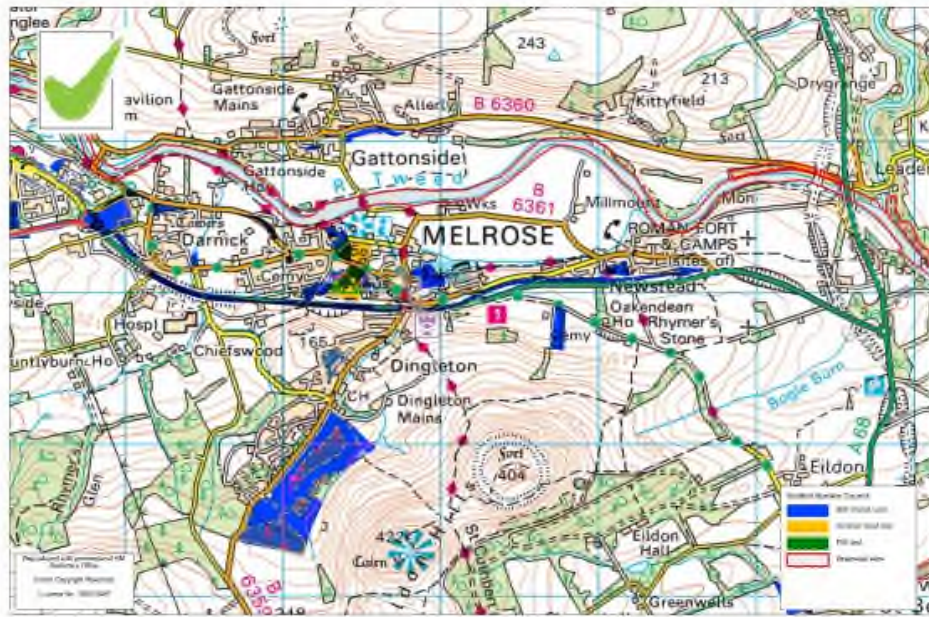
**Lauder**

SBC own a very small area of land in and around the village itself, but there is a very large area of Common Good land, Lauder Common, immediately to the west of the town, extending to approx. 670 ha. It is leased to a number of farmers who tend to undertake any deer management themselves. There are few, if any, public interest criteria of relevance to deer on this site, so while it is possible to cull deer on such a area, the priority for becoming more involved is almost certainly very low.



**Melrose**

There appear to be no obvious public interest reasons for SBC culling deer in and around Melrose. SBC do own one sizeable 34 ha site to the south of the town but there do not appear to be any issues associated with this. SBC should be aware of the situation regarding deer- vehicle collisions more generally around the area.



**Newton St Boswells**

There is no reason to suggest that deer management in and around Newton St Boswells should be an issue for SBC.



**Peebles & Innerleithen**

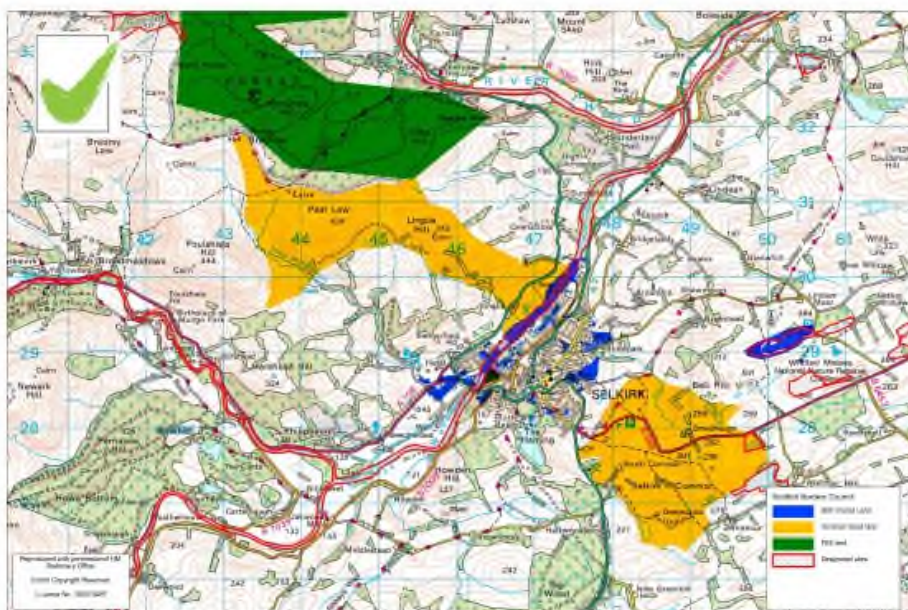
SBC do own a variety of recreational and amenity land in and around Peebles, with a much smaller area at Innerleithen, in addition to the Common Good property at Peebles which extends to c 75 ha. There are small numbers of deer-vehicle collisions in and around this area, including within Peebles itself, and it would be possible to target some deer management within the Common Good if it was thought this would be beneficial, although the priority is relatively low. FES do own a significant area of land locally, and would represent an additional public sector organization to work with if there was a general need to reduce

deer numbers in this area. The Borders DMG are active in the Peebles area, so this is certainly one location where targeted ation could be taken if that was necessary. It is believed that there is a population of fallow deer in the Peebles area.



**Selkirk**

Selkirk is characterized by two large areas of Common Good land either side of the town and extending to c 700 ha in total. The ground is leased out. Such areas are big enough to allow for targeted deer control if that is required, but it is not clear from the information available what the justification for that might be. One of the sites lies adjacent to FES land, and that would provide options for collaborative working if this was required. There are a number of designated sites around the area, but these are almost all focused on freshwater lochs and therefore have little relevance to deer management.



**Stow**

There is only a very small area of SBC owned land in and around the village, although SBC should be aware of deer- vehicle collisions on the A7 in the wider area. The Lauder Common lies a short distance to the east.



**4. DEER INFORMATION REQUIRED & CULLING OPERATIONS**

Scottish Borders Council are currently not involved in any deer culling activities.

Should the need for deer culling arise and activity undertaken or delegated on SBC land, then Scottish Borders Council will report all deer management activity on a settlement by settlement basis, as set out above, this to especially include any cull and count information. The information required is set out in [Appendix 4. SBC Deer Cull Information.](#)

Recommended cull record sheets are appended to this document.

SBC agree to make sufficient resources available to carry out necessary deer management activities as they arise.

All culling operations will be conducted in a low-key manner, and priority always given to spreading activity throughout the normal seasons using existing resources.

## 5. THE DESIGNATED SITES IN SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL AREA

The wider SBC area is very heavily designated, dominated by the SSSI & SAC designated river systems, but with a variety of smaller sites as well. However, other than the river designations on which deer will have relatively little impact, almost none of the other designations overlap with SBC owned or managed land, and certainly none of them contain features that might be impacted by deer. More detail of this is given later on in this section.

Within the Scottish Borders Council area there are five different types of designation:

*National Nature Reserve (NNR)*  
*Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*  
*Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*  
*Special Protection Area (SPA)*  
*Ramsar Site*

### **National Nature Reserves (NNR)**

The first National Nature Reserves were designated 50 years ago, and at that time they were the cornerstone of nature conservation policy, safeguarding sites of national conservation importance as well as providing interpretative material and allowing the public to enjoy these sites. These days although NNRs must be well managed for wildlife, people are also encouraged to enjoy these special places too. Visitor facilities are designed and managed to ensure that people can enjoy the reserves without harming or disturbing the wildlife that lives there. There are currently 41 National Nature Reserves in Scotland.

### **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) represent the best of Scotland's natural heritage. They are 'special' for their plants, animals or habitats, their rocks or landforms, or a combination of such natural features. Together, they form a network of the best examples of natural features throughout Scotland, and support a wider network across Great Britain and the European Union.

Scottish Natural Heritage chooses sites after detailed survey and evaluation against published scientific criteria. SSSIs can include freshwater and sea water, down to the mean low water mark of spring tides, as well as land. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008, there were 1,456 SSSIs, covering a total area of 1,036,000 hectares or 12.9% of Scotland.

SNH designates SSSIs to protect the best of our natural heritage by making sure that decision-makers, managers of land and their advisors, as well as the planning authorities and other public bodies, are aware of them when considering changes in land-use or other activities which might affect them.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 provides the legislative framework around which all SSSI sites are administered.

### **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are areas designated under the European Directive commonly known as the 'Habitats Directive'. Together with Special Protection Areas, which are designated under the Wild Birds Directive for wild birds and their habitats, SACs form the Natura 2000 network of sites. Most SACs on land or freshwater in Scotland are also underpinned by notification as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The additional SAC designation is recognition that some or all of the wildlife and habitats are particularly valued in a European context.

### **Special Protection Area (SPA)**

A Special Protection Area (SPA) is an area of land, water or sea which has been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within the European Union. Together with SACs, Special Protection Areas are designated under the European Wild Birds Directive which forms the NATURA 2000 network of sites. A number of SPAs include areas notified as SSSIs and the additional SPA designation affords these areas enhanced protection.

### **Ramsar Site**

Ramsar is the name of a town in Iran where the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance was adopted in 1971. The UK Government signed up to the Convention in 1976.

The mission of the Convention is *"the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international co-operation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world"*.

Currently 164 countries have signed up as Contracting Parties to the Convention with 2083 wetland sites designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Because of the sheer numbers of designated sites in the wider SBC area, no attempt is made to summarize them all here.

However, the SSSI and SAC designated sites can be viewed at **5. SBC SSSI & SAC Designated sites map**.

A range of other designated sites, including landscape designations, can be seen on **6. SBC Other designated sites map**.

Listed here below is a list of the designated sites which are to be found on SBC owned land.

### **Site Descriptions**

#### *Abbey St Bathans Woodlands SSSI*

Web link: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/4>

Size: 62.9 ha

*Feature:* Upland Oak Woodland/ Lichen Assemblage

*Status:* **Unfavourable No Change**

*Pressures:* Invasive species, no pro-active management, over grazing by cattle. The lichen assemblage suffers from undergrazing.

*Relevance to Deer:* Deer are not a significant pressure on this site.

*Ownership:* SBC

*Burnmouth Coast SSSI*

*Web link:* <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/278>

*Size:* 161.48 ha

*Feature:* Caledonia Structures of the Southern Uplands/ Fly Assemblage

*Status:* **Favourable Maintained**

*Pressures:* No negative pressures

*Relevance to Deer:* Deer are not a pressure on this site.

*Ownership:* SBC

*Lindean Reservoir SSSI*

*Web link:* <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/935>

*Size:* 13.36 ha

*Feature:* Base rich loch/ Beetle Assemblage

*Status:* **Favourable Maintained**

*Pressures:* Agricultural operations, invasive species./ Game/ fisheries management

*Relevance to Deer:* Deer are not a pressure on this site

*Ownership:* SBC

*Pease Bay Coast SSSI*

*Web link:* <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1276>

*Size:* 69.51 ha

*Feature:* Lower Carboniferous rocks/ Maritime Cliff

*Status:* **Favourable Maintained**

*Pressures:* No pressures/ invasive species

*Relevance to Deer:* Deer are not a pressure on this site.

*Ownership:* SBC

*River Tweed SSSI*

*Web link:* <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1366>

*Size:* 2597.58 ha

*Feature:* Atlantic Salmon/ Beetle assemblage

*Status:* **Favourable Maintained/ Unfavourable Recovering**

*Pressures:* Agricultural operations, Climate change, Forest Operations, invasive species (American signal crayfish), Overgrazing, water management/ Flood & coastal defence works, Game & fish management

*Relevance to Deer:* Deer are not a significant pressure on this site.

*Ownership:* SBC

The River Tweed SAC covers a wider area at 3742.65 ha.

<https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8369>

At this level, salmon are **Favourable Maintained**, as above, but with similar pressures. Brook lamprey are **Unfavourable Recovering**, with water management being the main pressure. Deer are not a significant pressure on the site.

*Selkirk Racecourse Moss SSSI*

*Web link:* <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1416>

*Size:* 4.34 ha

*Feature:* Basin Fen/ Vascular Plant assemblage

*Status:* **Unfavourable Recovering/ Unfavourable Recovering due to management**

*Pressures:* No pressures/ Natural event, water management

*Relevance to Deer:* Deer are not a pressure on this site.

*Ownership:* SBC



Whiteadder Water SSSI

Web link: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1629>

Size: 104.83 ha

Feature: Palaeobotany

Status: **Unfavourable No change**

Pressures: Natural event, dumping or storage of materials

Relevance to Deer: Deer are not a pressure on this site.

Ownership: SBC

Whitlaw Bank to Hardies Hill SSSI

Web link: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1635>

Size: 6.61 ha

Feature: Lowland neutral grassland/ Small blue (Cupido minimum)

Status: **Favourable Maintained/ Unfavourable No Change**

Pressures: No pressures/ No pro active management

Relevance to Deer: Deer are not a pressure on this site.

Ownership: SBC

## Part Two - OVERALL AIMS & OBJECTIVES

### 6. LONG TERM VISION

Scottish Borders Council supports the long term vision for deer populations and their management as laid out in *Scotland's Wild Deer – A National Approach*. SBC also fully support the *Code of Practice on Deer Management*, and all work is carried out in accordance with the *Best Practice Guides*, which continue to evolve.

- Deer populations will be managed sustainably so that their management is fully integrated with all local land uses and land use objectives.
- Such management will ensure high standards of deer welfare and public safety, and play a constructive role in the long term stewardship of local habitats.
- Local deer management will continue to deliver and further develop its positive contributions to the rural economy. Deer management and wildlife management more generally within the council area will be seen as an attractive and worthwhile occupations and activity associated with high standards of skills and employment practice.
- Mindful of the considerable amenity value placed on deer by local residents, SBC will always seek to carefully justify any interventions with deer before being actioned. There must be a clear public interest reason for doing so.

### 7. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The main objectives for the council's deer management during the period of this Plan, are as follows, in all cases adhering to Best Practice Guidelines:-

- (i) To achieve an appropriate balance between deer and their habitat, and between deer and other land uses, to minimize unacceptable damage to agricultural, forestry or local amenity, and to maintain and improve the condition of the natural heritage.
- (ii) Specifically, to try and reduce road traffic accidents involving deer to minimal levels
- (iii) There is no sporting requirement on Scottish Borders Council land.
- (iv) To market and utilize and venison produced to best advantage, where/ if appropriate.
- (v) To safeguard and promote deer welfare within the Scottish Borders Council area
- (vi) To ensure that such resources, training and monitoring capacity as are required to achieve the above objectives are made available.
- (vii) Where appropriate, to provide site specific management advice or information.
- (viii) To sure that an effective system of communication is in place for the internal purpose of staff and members, for the wider community of the area and for external agencies and other interested parties.

## Part Three - MANAGEMENT POLICIES & INFORMATION

### 8. ROE DEER

#### 8a. POPULATION SIZE

As is the case in almost every other lowland area in Scotland, there is no count information about roe deer in the SBC area, although they can be assumed to be present throughout, and in many of the mixed agriculture/ woodland areas, populations are likely to be locally significant.

There is more information available within the Borders and Esdalemuir DMG areas, and within FES land, but none of these areas co-incides with much SBC owned land.

#### 8b. ROE DEER CULL DATA

SBC have not been involved in the culling of deer on any sites in the past, and so there is no data available.

It is likely that farmers leasing ground within the Common Good areas will cull small numbers of roe deer, but there is no data available on this.

#### 8c. MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The following factors have been identified as issues that should be addressed or acknowledged as part of this exercise to inform deer management within SBC owned and managed land.

#### *The overall justification for culling deer on SBC land is low*

Later in this document, deer management by Scottish Borders council has been assessed against a range of public interest criteria, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the present time, the rationale/ justification for deer management on SBC land is very low. There are no designated sites affected by deer, woodlands generally have low or medium impacts, and the actual area owned by SBC is very low, with private owners being in a much stronger position to deliver deer management if required. Perhaps the most prominent deer issue is that of Deer- Vehicle collisions within the area generally but, even here, that is not really a specific issue for SBC.

#### *Deer- vehicle collisions*

The maps **7. SBC Deer- Vehicle collisions map- Wider View** and **8. SBC Deer- Vehicle Collisions- Closer** show the recorded DVC incidents taking place from 2000-16. The records will be only a proportion of those actually occurring, and may only be, say, 20 percent of the total. The map suggests that DVCs in the SBC area are significantly lower than in adjacent areas, and even the DVC clusters of reported incidents constitute only 1-2 incidents per ward per year, with the majority of wards being much less than this. However, the actual incidents will be higher than this.

Information received from Police Scotland suggests that the current areas with most incidents are Carolside Woods, north of Earlston on the A68, the A6091

(Melrose bypass) near to the Borders General Hospital, and Berwickshire as a whole, mainly the A1.

*Retaining a capacity to deliver deer management when appropriate, and selecting personnel to carry out necessary work*

SBC have not undertaken deer management in the past, but there may be occasions where targeted control may be required, or where a situation needs to be addressed, perhaps at short notice. It is important that SBC retain some capacity for delivering actions, and the suggestion in this report is that there should be a nominated controller and substitute within each ward area. It may be that some people can cover multiple areas, and some of them may never be called to action, but it is important that a structure exists throughout the area, even if it is never used.

The criteria for selecting people are important. All candidates should have DMQ Levels 1 & 2, be on the SNH Fit & Competent register, preferably have had professional experience in the past with a public sector organization, be familiar with the area and be resident within the area for rapid response if required. They should be fully insured, have an unblemished record and be willing to go along with any other reasonable demands that the local authority might make of them.

An SBC employee should be designated as main contact/ line manager within each ward area, duplicating as necessary. It may well be that one person is able to cover the entire SBC area.

The most likely source of personnel is through the neighbouring deer management groups, who should be able to provide a list of suitably qualified people to help should the circumstances require some deer management input or advice. It should be made clear at the outset that likely demand for services will be very low.

*Relationship with the Borders Deer Management Group*

The Borders DMG area overlaps with part of the SBC boundary. It comprises a relatively small group of recreational stalkers, with some professional input. Training levels are comparable to or higher than many professional stalkers, and personnel are familiar with and resident in the area, often shooting on adjacent ground.

For SBC going forwards, such a group are capable of providing the kind of occasional retained capacity that might sometimes be required, and Borders DMG personnel will satisfy the necessary criteria for stalkers who are both safe and respectful in a lowland/ built up environment.

SBC need to make it a priority to formalize their relationship with Borders DMG although, in practice, their input may be seldom required. The Edinburgh & East Lothian DMG might be a better option in Berwickshire.

*The apparent lack of supervision of deer larders*

The Borders DMG have suggested that SBC have very little or no input in to checking deer larders within the area, and that no larders have been registered as food businesses. There may well be an issue that is worth checking up on in this regard. Local authorities are responsible for environmental health, although it is not unusual for them to have little knowledge about deer larders or those selling venison within their areas.

*The potential for deer welfare problems*

There will unquestionably be significant numbers of roe deer in and around many of the settlements within the SBC area, with the potential for deer welfare issues caused by dogs or air rifles. Discussions suggest that while these issues exist locally, they are probably not a major concern, but this is an area of which SBC staff should try to stay informed, liaising with local police as required. Police Scotland report no particular hotspots within the area, although occasional incidents do occur. Coursing hares is a much more significant issue.

*The presence of other species*

SBC should be aware of other deer species within the area, other than just roe deer.

Sika deer are locally abundant within woodland to the west and south of the SBC area, although there is good deer management expertise within these areas, and that appears to be appropriate to the circumstances.

There is a population of fallow deer in the area around Peebles. This too lies within the Borders DMG area, and that population appears to be contained.

There do not appear to be any red deer within the Borders area, although they will be present to the west of the area in Dumfries and Galloway.

## **9. OTHER DEER SPECIES**

As mentioned above, it is known that both fallow and sika reside within the area, with the latter in particular being common enough to warrant ongoing management effort. There is no overlap with SBC land.

## **10. MOORLAND MANAGEMENT**

Other than the areas of designated peatland, there is little moorland as such within the area, although there are considerable areas of rough pasture and heather dominated ground lying between some of the peatland areas and the good agricultural ground. A proportion of the designated ground is used for grazing livestock. There are no particular issues surrounding moorlands, deer and Scottish Borders Council.

## **11. FORESTRY & WOODLAND MANAGEMENT**

Scottish Borders Council have a good capacity for managing their woodland area. The default silvicultural system is to avoid any clearfelling or other management interventions that would require subsequent restocking, and hence the need for deer interventions. Much of the woodland is small scale and amenity in nature, and is managed on a low input or non- intervention basis, and this is appropriate for minimizing the need for deer input.

## **12. SUPPLEMENTARY DEER POLICIES**

### **SNH Authorisations**

SBC will look to cull any deer necessary within existing seasons, with males being culled in addition through the winter months as well if needs be.

The need for additional authorizations will be kept under review by SBC staff.

### **Deer Related Traffic Incidents**

It is agreed that SBC will keep records of any collisions between deer and cars in their area, together with relevant information (eg. location, species of deer, fate of deer, damage to vehicle, human injuries), while also recording dead deer in their annual cull returns and where appropriate, on larder sheets. SBC may also wish to contribute to the national project collating RTA reports which can be accessed at <http://www.deercollisions.co.uk>.

### **Deer Fences**

There are very few fences within the overall area.

SBC will take account of the Joint Agency Fencing Guidelines should there be a need for fencing in the future.

### **Supplementary/ diversionary Feeding**

No supplementary feeding of deer takes place within the area.

### **Venison Marketing**

At present, no deer are culled on SBC land.

### **Non-Native Species**

As above, it is known that both fallow and sika deer reside within the area, but it appears that both species are relatively well contained.

### 13. COMMUNICATIONS POLICY & CONTACTS

SBC is committed to the transparent communication of all relevant information to its staff, elected members, to government agencies and to the public more widely, with the caveat that some sensitive data will be distributed internally only.

The primary source of information about the deer management in SBC will be on its own dedicated website space, on which all information relevant to the subject can be located. This will include the deer management plan and associated maps, minutes of meetings, and any other documents involving deer.

The link for this website space is: [XXXXXXXX](#)

All enquiries regarding deer management in the Scottish Borders Council area should be made to the following contacts:

#### **Primary Contact**

XXXXX

Tel XXXXXXX

Email: [XXXXXXXX](#)

#### **Secondary Contact**

XXXXX

Tel XXXXXXX

Email: [XXXXXXXX](#)

Every effort will be made to deal with quickly with replies.

#### **Scottish Natural Heritage Contact Details**

Francois Chazel, Scottish Natural Heritage, Greystone Park, 55-57 Moffat Road, Dumfries, DG1 1NP. Phone: (03000) 673 202

Email: [SOUTHERN\\_SCOTLAND@nature.scot](mailto:SOUTHERN_SCOTLAND@nature.scot)

Scottish Borders Council will seek to respond quickly to any requests from media sources or the local public for information, and individual staff members may arrange, from time to time, appropriate open days and information events if these are requested or deemed to be useful.

Scottish Borders Council welcomes comment on all matters either directly or indirectly associated with deer management within the SBC area.

## 14. TRAINING POLICY

Scottish Borders Council will encourage and facilitate the attainment of all qualifications and training necessary for the delivery of effective deer management within their area of operation, and support continuing professional development (CPD) through the adoption of Best Practice Guidance and relevant courses.

The recognized and recommended industry standard for culling deer is that all personnel involved in deer management should attain Deer Stalking Certificate level 1 (DSC1) or equivalent.

The DSC Level 2 qualification is increasingly held as the de facto industry standard for professional stalkers, which requires the identification, stalking, dispatching and larding of deer under supervision.

For those expected to larder deer and prepare them for the human food chain, industry requirements are that they have attained Trained Hunter status. This is achieved with any DSC 1 course passed after 2006, or an upgraded version of DSC1 passed before that time.

All personnel requiring to take deer under special authorizations, such as at night or out of season, must be on the SNH "Fit & Competent" register. The requirement for this is to hold the DSC Level 2 qualification, or DSC Level 1 plus two references.

All personnel within the area are encouraged to be proficient in First Aid, manual handling, ATV driving and maintenance, and other tasks which are central to their job.

## 15. REVIEWING THE PLAN

This Plan provides an agreed framework for a co-ordinated and co-operative approach to deer management in the area. The actual implementation of the Plan will be decided on an ongoing basis, with scope for staff to adjust and adapt the Plan to meet changing circumstances. To achieve this, the Plan, with its attendant maps and databases, will be published on a dedicated website space. The ethos behind this plan is that it will be regularly updated, perhaps twice a year, and therefore it is impracticable to circulate hard copies of the plan.

SBC staff are encouraged to report all changes in contact details, personnel or management practices that might be relevant to deer management locally, or any potential upcoming projects that might affect deer management within the area, even if such proposals are still at a planning stage.

Scottish Borders Council agree that there will be a more systematic review of the Plan and its provisions during autumn 2024 and thereafter, 2029, and, if considered necessary, the production of a revised edition of the Plan will be actioned at those times.



## **Part Four - CURRENT DEER MANAGEMENT PLANNING AT SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

In this section, current deer management planning at Scottish Borders Council is assessed, and a range of Action Points derived from this. The structure of this section is based on the Deer Management Group Benchmark Assessment document, produced by the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG). It is appreciated that this situation is very different to Highland deer groups, but the basic criteria still apply.

### **1. Area & Boundaries**

This document covers the area of land owned and managed by Scottish Borders Council. At present, there appear to be no SBC owned areas of land which require deer intervention, but other areas may become relevant in the future, depending on what circumstances arise.

#### Action Points

- 1.1 SBC staff will, on an ongoing basis, make an assessment of any additional areas where deer control may become relevant within a rolling five year period.
- 1.2 SBC staff to develop a process for determining whether deer management is applicable at a given site if approached by a third party to consider this.

### **2. Membership**

This element is not relevant to a single ownership, but SBC may wish to consider becoming members of the Borders Deer Management Group.

#### Action Points

- 2.1 SBC to consider whether it is appropriate to join Borders DMG.

### **3. Meetings**

There is no need for deer meetings within SBC as such, but any significant management decisions should be recorded, and a short annual review completed for the information of staff, elected members and the public more generally.

#### Action Points

- 3.1 Produce short annual report on deer management within the SBC area.

### **4. Constitution & Finances**

This is not relevant to the SBC situation. SBC may wish to consider providing a small budget to deer management matters should this prove to be useful.

### **5. Deer Management Plan**

This Plan seeks to put an agreed set of actions in place for the first time in this area. Given the very modest and restricted scale of management currently

required, the Plan looks to establish some basic principles only.

### Action Points

*5.1 Endorse Deer Management Statement at 2019 SBC committee meeting as appropriate, following consultation on the draft plan.*

## **6. Code of Practice on Deer Management**

The code has been endorsed in this plan. The terms of the Code will be delivered through implementation of this plan, and the Code will guide all actions taken by Scottish Borders Council.

The code can be accessed at this link: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B949709.pdf>

### Action Points

*6.1 Ensure adherence to code at all times, both by the Council, and by individual stalking personnel as appropriate*

*6.2 At any subsequent meetings, SBC staff, elected members and stalking personnel will have the opportunity to raise any issues relating to deer welfare or other problems that they are aware of within the SBC area. All such issues to be recorded.*

## **7. ADMG Principles of Collaboration**

The ADMG principles of collaboration are accepted and endorsed by Scottish Borders Council and by individual stalking personnel, namely:

- We acknowledge what we have in common, namely a shared commitment to a sustainable and economically viable Scottish countryside.
- We make a commitment to work together to achieve that.
- We accept that we can sometimes have a diversity of management objectives and respect that diversity.
- We undertake to communicate openly with all relevant parties.
- We commit to negotiate and, where necessary, compromise, in order to accommodate the reasonable land management requirements of neighbours.
- Where there are areas of disagreement we undertake to work together to resolve them.

## **8. Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance**

All deer management within the SBC area will be carried out in accordance with Best Practice guidance, and Scottish Borders Council will input to this process and seek to influence it as it continues to evolve.

## **9. Data & Evidence gathering- Deer Counts**

It is impractical to gather and maintain deer count information over very large areas in lowland Scotland, but thermal imaging technology now exists to allow stalkers to quickly assess deer numbers in smaller, defined areas for the purposes of

monitoring and local cull setting. Looking forwards therefore, it should always be possible to quickly assess situations where deer culls are being considered, to see if they can be justified.

#### Action Points

*9.1 SBC to monitor deer numbers on any areas which are deemed worthy of assessment, prior to any actions being taken. This may involve use of Borders DMG or other personnel, depending on circumstances.*

### **10. Data & Evidence Gathering- Culls**

Cull return information to be collated on a settlement by settlement basis annually, and compared to previous years for information. Currently, SBC are not undertaking any culling of deer.

#### Action Points

*10.1 All cull information to be collated and presented in April annually.*

### **11. Data & Evidence Gathering- Habitat Monitoring**

The majority of native woodlands within the Scottish Borders Council area are at acceptable herbivore impacts, and it is not thought that deer are an issue on any designated sites within SBC ownership. Wider monitoring within SBC ownership is therefore unlikely to be necessary,

#### Action Points

*No particular actions.*

### **12. Competence**

SBC should insist on appropriate training levels and experience for any personnel used in future.

#### Action Point

*12..1 SBC will ensure that DSC Level 2 plus necessary experience and local knowledge are required for any personnel shooting deer on Scottish Borders Council property.*

### **13. Training**

A Training Policy is included earlier in this document.

#### Action Points

*13.1 SBC to promote and facilitate the uptake of appropriate deer management qualifications and skills where this is deemed necessary*

*13.2 Be aware of the ongoing development of Best Practice Guidance and any new techniques or standards that arise from that*

*13.3 Review training needs on an annual basis.*

### **14. Venison Marketing**

SBC do not undertake any venison marketing at present.

## 15. Communications

A Communications policy is included in an earlier section of this document.

It is important that all SBC staff and members receive the same information. The annual communications strategy will involve making all relevant documents available through a dedicated website page, including the opportunity to contribute to the Agenda of meetings, holding one open meeting a year, answering all requests for information from the media and arranging open days or demonstration events where these are appropriate.

### Action Point

*15.1 Implement the communications strategy as agreed, and ensure a mechanism is in place for dealing with business and issues between meetings*

## **Part Five - PUBLIC INTEREST ACTIONS WITHIN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL AREA**

In this section, Scottish Borders Council has been assessed against the DMG Delivery of Public Interest document developed by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Association for Deer Management Groups. An account is given of how SBC currently delivers public benefit relevant to deer and, where appropriate, correcting actions are listed. As in the previous section, it is acknowledged that a council deer strategy is only in the process of being set up, and therefore, delivery of some of these objectives will be patchy.

### **PI 1. Develop mechanisms to manage deer**

SBC is being assessed against the criteria contained in the Public Interest & Benchmark assessments, but it would be misleading to assess them as a deer group. It is however still possible to pick out strengths and weaknesses in managing deer within a single, albeit large and fragmented, ownership.

A series of actions have been identified to be taken forward in a Working Plan, and roles for implementing this will be assigned.

This forward-looking deer management plan is expected to be endorsed during 2019. The plan plus associated documents, maps and minutes of meetings will be published on a dedicated forum website space [XXXXXXXXXX](#)

### Action points

*PI 1.1 Endorse and publish the new SBC Deer Management Statement in 2019*

*PI 1.2 Assign roles and lines of communication between SBC members and elected members as required.*

*PI 1.3 Review the Working Plan on an annual basis and minute progress and changes.*

## **PI 2. Delivering designated features into favourable condition**

Analysis of all information available suggests that deer are not a significant pressure on any designated sites within the SBC area. An account of each designated site within the area is given earlier in this document, and all designated sites and those owned or part- owned by SBC are listed separately. The sites within the SBC area where over grazing is an issue lie outwith SBC ownership, and it is very likely in these situations that livestock will be by far the greater pressure.

Designated sites should therefore not be a major consideration for Scottish Borders Council when it comes to deer, although sites within their management are subject to other pressures including invasive and non native tree species, inappropriate recreational usage and dumping rubbish etc.

### Action point

*PI 2.1 Be aware of ongoing SNH monitoring of sites and whether pressure from deer becomes noted in any of those involving SBC.*

## **PI 3. Manage deer to retain existing native woodland cover and improve woodland condition in the medium to long term.**

There were 886 ha of native woodlands assessed during the NWSS survey in the Scottish Borders Council area. Of this area, 787 ha or 89% was at Low or Medium impacts, making this area one of the best in the country. Although no data is readily available for the SBC owned property only, it is likely that impacts on such land will be lower still as many of their woods will have high public access pressure which will deter deer usage to some extent.

The likelihood therefore is that within the Scottish Borders Council area, deer impacts on native woodlands are very low by national standards. Other threats to native woodlands are likely to be more significant factors, including invasive species, non native tree species, disease, inappropriate development and inappropriate recreational usage.

### Action point

*PI 3.1. It is not apparent that deer numbers are having any significant impact on native woods within the area, and this is not a priority in the context of this plan.*

*PI 3.2 SBC staff may wish to ascertain the current situation in their own woods if they have resources to do so.*

## **PI 4. Demonstrate DMG contribution to woodland expansion target**

Plans for woodland expansion going forwards are extremely limited on SBC land, with few obvious opportunities to do so. This being the case, there are few deer management implications.

### Action points

*PI 4.1 A record will be kept of all woodland creation activity within the area.*

*PI 4.2 SBC staff will be encouraged to share future plans for woodland creation with neighbours and others within the area so that they can plan around this if*

*necessary.*

### **PI 5. Monitor and manage deer impacts in the wider countryside**

SBC do not undertake habitat monitoring outwith woodland restocking areas. It is highly unlikely that deer cause significant pressure to open ground habitats more generally in the Scottish Borders, and this element should be regarded as low priority.

#### Action point

*No action points for this element.*

### **PI 6. Improve Scotland's ability to store carbon**

This element refers to the management of woodlands, woodland creation and the management of blanket bog areas.

SBC have a good woodland management capacity and are pro-active in their operations and strategies.

There are few opportunities for woodland creation going forwards, but this should be kept under review.

There are a number of significant bog habitats in the Borders area, some of which are under SBC management or ownership. While there are pressures on these, it appears that deer are not one of these from available information, and that livestock pressure, burning, inappropriate drainage and recreational use are much more significant threats.

#### Action points

*PI 6.1 Put in place a habitat monitoring scheme to determine the current status of blanket bogs within the SBC- owned area, and take action necessary to lower impacts on these as required. Determine the relevance of deer to these sites.*

*PI 6.2 Discourage any burning that might impact on peatland sites*

### **PI 7. Reduce or mitigate the risk of invasive, non-native deer species**

A non-native deer policy is included earlier in this plan. It is important to note that fallow and sika deer are present within the area, and vigilance must be maintained to ensure that they do not become established in the wild beyond their current distribution. While a native species, red deer are also present to the west, and they could quickly become a problem if they were to start expanding their range.

#### Action points

*PI 7.1 PI 7.2 WLC staff to report any sightings of suspected muntjac deer or non native deer species more generally to SNH.*

### **PI 8. Protection of historic and cultural features**

There are very few archaeological sites within the area. Evidence from other deer management group areas is that deer are virtually never a threat to such sites.

Action points

*PI 8.1 SBC to maintain communication with the local community and look to address any issues that are identified with regards to sites of cultural interest and herbivore grazing*

*PI 8.2 As required by Forestry Commission, all potential woodland creation projects, including natural regeneration schemes, will be assessed by the applicants for any negative impacts on cultural or archaeological sites.*

**PI 9. Delivering higher standards of competence in deer management**

A training policy and audit is provided earlier in this document. SBC recognises that professional and well trained personnel are a key element of delivering public benefits as well as private objectives.

Action points

*PI 9.1 SBC will only engage with deer management personnel who have the necessary levels of experience and qualifications, and who are familiar with the area.*

**PI 10. Contribute to public health and well-being**

As previously discussed in this document, deer- vehicle collisions with the SBC area are relatively low, at least those which are reported. SBC should look to identify any local hotspots over which they may be able to exert control, and consider any action which might be implemented to mitigate against incidents in these areas.

Food safety and meat hygiene is best maintained through appropriate training and facilities. The Borders DMG have suggested that SBC take more interest in deer larders and encourage them to register as food businesses.

SBC staff are reminded to be aware of the risk of tick borne diseases, especially Lyme's Disease. The risks of tick borne diseases should be communicated through suitable channels to all staff, workers and members of the public who might frequent SBC land.

It is not thought that there are any access/ deer stalking conflicts within the area, but the presence of the public is a very significant consideration for anyone managing deer locally.

Action points

*PI 10.1 Liaise with local Community Councils regarding DVCs. Information on road accidents should be sent to [www.deercollisions.co.uk](http://www.deercollisions.co.uk). SBC will look to increase culls around particular hotspots where deer are known to cross public roads, or instigate mitigation measures such as cutting roadside vegetation if this is more practicable.*

*PI 10.2 SBC to highlight the risks of ticks and Lyme's Disease to their staff and the public more generally through all appropriate channels.*

*PI 10.3 SBC to promote a positive and welcoming message to all those visiting the area throughout the year.*

*PI 10.4 SBC to consider whether greater attention needs to be paid to deer larders within the area, to ensure greater inspection and their registration as food businesses, where appropriate.*

**PI 11. Maximize Economic benefits associated with deer**

At present, no deer are culled on SBC land.

Action points

*PI 11.1 Increase awareness of the value of deer in and around areas of population, to emphasize the point that deer in these areas provide positive outcomes as well as some negative ones, but only if the population is within manageable limits.*

**Larder/ infra- structure sharing**

As above, the current justification for culling deer is minimal within the SBC area.

Action point

*No action points as such.*

**PI 12. Minimize the economic costs of deer management**

Small numbers of roe deer will be regarded as an asset within most areas of the Scottish Borders Council area. SBC will undertake appropriate management where deer numbers impose on woodland restocking practices but, in practice, there are likely to be few other areas where economic cost has to be borne in relation to deer.

There can be a considerable financial cost associated with deer- vehicle collisions, but it is extremely difficult to attribute a cost to this at a local level, and incidents in the SBC area appear to be lower than many other local authority areas.

Action points

*No actions points as such.*

**PI 13. Ensure effective communication in deer management issues**

The Deer Management Statement, minutes of meetings and other relevant information is being made publically available through SBC's own dedicated website space.

[XXXXXXXXXXXXXX](#)

Action Point

*PI 13.1 Publish the Deer Statement on a dedicated website space in spring 2019.*

*PI13.2 Ensure that community councils, elected members and other relevant interests are aware of the existence of the deer plan/ position statement, and that they have the opportunity to contribute to it going forwards if they wish to do this.*



**PI 14. Ensure deer welfare at individual and population level**

There is no information available to inform this element.

In practice, deer productivity and general welfare is likely to be good, with food supplies unlikely to be limiting.

Welfare issues may arise from deer- vehicle collisions or from unlawful use of air guns or dogs to target deer. There is little evidence to suggest that there is a particular problem with this in the SBC area, but liaison with Police Scotland should be maintained to establish if there are problems in particular areas.

**Action points**

*PI 14.1 Identify any particular hot spots for deer- vehicle collisions, assess the nature of the issue and draw up mitigating measures if it is appropriate to do so.*

*PI14.2 Maintain liaison with Police Scotland should unlawful or inappropriate use of firearms or dogs become evident within the area.*