



# Assessing herbivore impact for Cairngorms Peatland ACTION applications

Version 1.0

***This guidance note sets out the approach Cairngorms Peatland ACTION will undertake for all grant applications to assess potential herbivore impacts.***

Cairngorms Peatland ACTION projects are developed and delivered across the Cairngorms National Park. Following peatland restoration groundworks, re-wetted peatlands with low herbivore pressure respond quicker due to more rapid vegetation recovery. Conversely, higher herbivore pressure has the potential to compromise the ecological recovery and result in the intended project outcomes not being achieved.

For sites where restoration has taken place, the recommended sustainable grazing levels<sup>1</sup> on blanket bog and raised bog is less than 0.02 Livestock Units<sup>2</sup> (LUs)/Ha/Yr.

For Cairngorms Peatland ACTION applications, applicants must submit information pertinent to the restoration area, to demonstrate the current grazing pressure is within the sustainable levels (0.00-0.02 LUs/Ha/Yr). Supporting information may include:

- livestock units and deer densities
- Deer Management Group (DMG)/Deer Management Plans (DMP)
- Herbivore Impact Assessment (HIA)
- Higher stocking levels within a grazing management unit may still be acceptable with further investigation and with appropriate mitigations/adjustments if required.

This includes the cumulative impact of all herbivores on a project area. For example, applicants who are also within AECS must provide a grazing calendar where stocking is

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<sup>1</sup> As per the SRPD FAS Technical Note TN868 Developing grazing plans for the conservation of semi-natural habitats Livestock Units as defined in the Farm Management Handbook.

<sup>2</sup> Based on current/up-to-date surveys. Where no density figures are available, application must be supported by a HIA across the restoration area.



above the sustainable grazing level. Applications are unlikely to be supported where there is limited or insufficient data available as the potential risk cannot be assessed.

Table 1 outlines the key considerations which will inform our assessment of the risk. If, on balance, the overall risk is deemed to be high, then Cairngorms Peatland ACTION are unlikely to fund the project. Ultimately, this approach will allow Cairngorms Peatland ACTION to make informed and consistent decisions on the risk that herbivores pose to all proposed restoration applications.

## **Monitoring herbivore impacts on Cairngorms Peatland ACTION restoration projects**

Pre-restoration baseline information relating to herbivores including stocking densities and HIA will be referred to as part of monitoring to ensure compliance with the Grant Terms and Conditions, for which there is a standard 10-year period. The Grant Terms and Conditions state:

*“You shall ensure that site improvements are maintained for 10 years from the date of receipt of your final Grant payment. Without prejudice to the generality of your maintenance obligations in terms of this Clause 12, you shall ensure that there is: no muirburn; **no increase in livestock or deer density**; no drainage; no peat extraction; no tree planting; or no other change of use on the restoration sites during the relevant maintenance period.”*

**Please request a copy of the Grant Terms and Conditions for further information.**

The Cairngorms Peatland ACTION Monitoring Strategy identifies monitoring herbivore impacts on peatland restoration projects as a key priority. As a condition of grant funding, Cairngorms Peatland ACTION may conduct specific monitoring of herbivore impacts on peatland restoration sites.



Table 1: Herbivore Impact Assessment Matrix

Assessment criteria	Very low risk	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk
Deer density <sup>3</sup>	0-2/km <sup>2</sup>	>2-5/km <sup>2</sup>	>5-10/km <sup>2</sup>	>10/km <sup>2</sup>
Livestock grazing <sup>4</sup>	0.00 LUs/Ha/Yr	<0.02 LUs/Ha/Yr  Or, if in AECS/BPS/LFASS: <0.075 LUs/Ha/Yr	>0.02 LUs/Ha/Yr  Or, if in AECS/BPS/LFASS: >0.075 LUs/Ha/Yr	>0.075 LUs/Ha/Yr and not in AECS/BPS/LFASS
Consultation response from CNPA Deer Officer	Supportive statement	Supportive statement	Supportive statement but with concerns raised	Unsupportive statement and/or concerns raised
Landholding part of DMG or has a Section 7/DMP in place?	Part of DMG and evidence of managing levels to below the required density. DMP in place. Section 7 not required.	Part of DMG which is actively managed with evidence of a commitment to effectively controlling numbers to the levels required, supported by evidence of a history of reducing deer numbers.	Part of DMG which is actively managed, however no evidence of effectively controlling numbers to the levels required. DMP in place Section 7 (active)	Within a DMG but not effectively controlling numbers to the levels required Section 7 (inactive)

<sup>3</sup> Based on current/up-to-date surveys. Where no density figures are available, application must be supported by a HIA across the restoration area.

<sup>4</sup> Where the proposed Peatland ACTION restoration area falls within a land parcel under AECS and/or in receipt of BPS and/or LFASS payments, applicants are encouraged to seek input from RPID to ensure agreed grazing levels meet scheme rules and minimum activity. If these are not met, a derogation can be applied with RPID. An annual grazing calendar covering the restoration area will be required as part of the application. Where the restoration area is part of a larger field, the grazing calendar must reflect the full grazing area. If the field contains a mosaic of habitat types, the resultant annual grazing level can be higher, depending on the habitat types. These figures refer to the grazing pressure across a full calendar year. The same outcome can be delivered by shorter periods of higher grazing pressure alongside periods of low/no grazing. There should be lower grazing pressure over the winter months.



Assessment criteria	Very low risk	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk
		DMP in place Section 7 not required		
<b>Population density target</b>	Commitment to maintain target density of <10km <sup>2</sup> in the longer term	Commitment to achieve target density of <10/km <sup>2</sup> within a realistic timeframe (i.e. within one year following restoration).	Commitment to maintain target density to 10/km <sup>2</sup> .	Commitment to increase target density to 10/km <sup>2</sup> or higher.
<b>Population density trend</b>	Demonstrable and sustained downward trend, or very low levels being maintained	Demonstrable downward trend.	Sustained trend to maintain levels at, or around, 10/km <sup>2</sup> .	Upward trend, or a commitment to maintain levels at, or above, 10/km <sup>2</sup> .
<b>Herbivore Impact Assessment (HIA)<sup>5</sup> must be provided where available</b>	All the HIA points are Low	Majority or all the HIA points are Low, Low-Moderate.	Majority or all the HIA points are Moderate, or Moderate-High. Where no survey data is available, an HIA will be required as part of the application.	Majority or all the HIA points Moderate, Moderate-High, or any High. Where no survey data is available, an HIA will be required as part of the application.

<sup>5</sup> Only required to cover the Cairngorms Peatland ACTION project site boundary. Must follow Wild Deer Best Practice method.

