



## North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd

### INFORMATION NOTE ISLE OF ULVA DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

#### Background

The Isle of Ulva was purchased for the community by North West Mull Community Woodland Company on midsummer's day 2018.

The purchase was financed largely by the Scottish Government through a grant from the Scottish Land Fund. The overall objectives are to bring about the Social and Economic development of the island including Repopulation.

Under community ownership, the management priorities will differ in a number of respects from those of a privately owned estate. Not least in relation to management of the deer population and how it sits alongside plans for regeneration of agriculture, protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and increased tourism.

When the island was valued in the context of the Community Buyout, the value of the "Sporting Rights" (largely Deer Stalking) contributed a large element of the total value. This reflects the continuing demand from wealthy private landowners and investment organisations for traditional, remote, Scottish estates offering privacy and recreational shooting opportunities.

The community buyout under Scotland's Right to Buy legislation looks at the value of the land from an entirely different perspective. The value to the community lies in the opportunity to increase the population, provide affordable housing, stimulate a more diverse economy, and above all give the people who live on the land the power to make their own decisions as to how the land should be managed for the Common Good.

This is the context within which a new Deer Management Plan for Ulva needs to sit.

#### The Plan

Until now, Ulva has been managed as an agricultural and sporting estate, though in the past decade or so there has been a decline in agricultural activity.

The Sales Particulars for the island stated it held a population of around 400 deer. The five-year average from 2012 to 2017 was stated as 16 stags and 21 hinds.

The true size of the deer population is not known, and although we believe the figure of 400 may be somewhat inflated, the very obvious overgrazing of the high ground suggests the numbers are currently too high. Also significant fresh soil erosion suggests the numbers may have increased in the past few years.

In order to enable natural regeneration of vegetation on the hill ground, (which is a priority under the plans for biodiversity protection and enhancement) a much reduced density of deer is necessary. We also intend to eliminate deer from the enclosed in-bye farmland at the eastern end of the island, and from the enclosed broadleaf planting blocks along the northern side.

Our target is to achieve a density of around 5 head of deer per 100ha of available deer run on the island, meaning a total herd of around 70 to 80.

The table below shows how this target is arrived at.

		<b>Now</b>	<b>Post *</b> <b>cull</b>
<b>Total Area (ha)*</b>	1854		
In bye	35		
Fenced woodland	276		
Other woodland	<u>156</u>		
	<u>467</u>		
<b>Available deer run</b>		1387	1387
<b>Number of deer</b>		400	70
<b>Number per 100ha</b>		28.8	5

\* data from sales particulars

We acknowledge that this represents a very significant reduction in numbers. It will need to be managed carefully and over a realistic timescale. Both from a practical point of view and also importantly with a regard to how the herd responds for example in terms of displacement. Animal welfare generally and minimization of stress will also be important

Of course deer can swim and there is regular movement to and fro via the Sound of Ulva, over Am Bru to Gometra and also quite possibly across Loch Tuath towards Torloisk and perhaps even southwards towards Inchkenneth and Gribun. Nevertheless Ulva is an island and we do not expect mass migrations to occur, especially as we will be trying to achieve the initial cull in a measured way over a couple or three years, leaving sufficient time between episodes for the herd to settle down.

After the initial cull period the objective will be to sustain a smaller herd in good condition to provide a steady input to the market both locally and further afield.

Habitat monitoring will be carried out to measure improvement and allow continuing review of the optimum deer population size

We have no plans to allow commercial stalking clients to shoot on Ulva.

### **Operational aspects**

We have appointed a professional stalker to carry out the deer management on Ulva

After discussion with RSPB, SNH and a number of expert stalkers, we have decided to adopt a "lead free" policy for all shooting on Ulva.

Although copper bullets do not have the same "stopping" power of lead, in expert hands, and with a large enough calibre rifle, we have concluded this is the way to go in order to eliminate lead from the food chain.

### **Contact details**

For further information please contact our office via [admin@nwmullwodland.co.uk](mailto:admin@nwmullwodland.co.uk) or phone 01688 400600