

*Loch Kemp Storage - EIA Report (Additional Information)*

*AI Appendix 10.10: Deer Management Strategy – Statement of Intent*

*September 2024*

**ash**

---



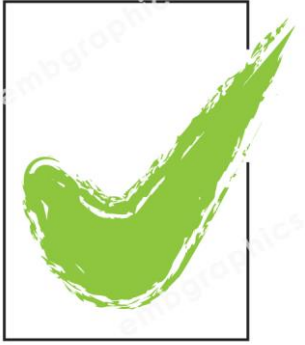
**Loch Kemp  
Storage**  
A STATERA COMPANY



ash design + assessment  
Suite 2/3, Queens House  
19 St Vincent Place  
Glasgow, G1 2DT

Tel: 0141 227 3388  
Fax: 0141 227 3399

Email: [info@ashglasgow.com](mailto:info@ashglasgow.com)  
Web:  
[www.ashdesignassessment.com](http://www.ashdesignassessment.com)



## Victor Clements: Native Woodland Advice

c/o Mamie's Cottage,  
Taybridge Terrace,  
Aberfeldy, Perthshire,  
PH15 2BS

[victor@nativewoods.co.uk](mailto:victor@nativewoods.co.uk)

Tel: 01887 829 361 or

Mob 07787 520 987

12th September 2024

### **LOCH KEMP STORAGE: DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY- STATEMENT OF INTENT**

#### **Introduction**

The proposed Loch Kemp Storage pumped storage hydro (PSH) scheme will lie on the south side of Loch Ness, and would be located wholly within the Dell Estate, which extends to approximately 1500 hectares (ha). The scheme would impact upon a modest area of woodland habitat both within and outwith the Ness Wood Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Any damage or loss of woodland habitat will need to be compensated for, and for this reason, a habitat management plan (HMP) is being developed that will help restore woodland areas and demonstrate clear overall biodiversity net gain across both woodland and open hill habitats. An outline HMP for the non-SAC areas of the site is included as Volume 4, Appendix 10.7 of the EIA Report for the Loch Kemp Storage PSH Scheme. Furthermore, a compensatory measures package is included in the Case for Derogation for the Ness Woods SAC, which identifies herbivore management as a key component to improving the condition of the SAC. The implementation of a robust deer management strategy will be key to achieving the outcomes of both the final HMP and the final Compensatory Measures Package for the Ness Woods SAC.

The purpose of this short document is to set out the approach to deer management that is currently being developed, and which it is anticipated will be finalized and agreed with participating neighbouring landowners and NatureScot before the start of construction.

#### **The Designated Woodland Habitats**

The proposed Loch Kemp Storage will impact on the Easter Ness Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), details of which can be found at this link <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/591>, as well as part of the much wider Ness Woods SAC <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8337>, which extends to over 840 ha, with the Easter Ness Forest SSSI being but one component. The designated features associated with these sites, especially the SAC, are the focus of the compensatory measures package included in the Case for Derogation Report for the Ness Woods SAC.

### ***The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd***

Registered Office: Mamie's Cottage, Taybridge Terrace, Aberfeldy, Perthshire, PH15 2BS

For the SSSI, the designated features are:

- Upland mixed ash woodland
- Upland oak woodland

For the SAC, the designated features are:

- Mixed woodland on base rich soils associated with rocky slopes
- Western acidic oak woodland
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*).

All of the woodland designated features are listed as being in Unfavourable (No change) condition. However, having been assessed last in 2008, sixteen years ago, and with no evidence of improvement since that time, it is reasonable to expect that the actual condition of the woodland features will be declining in practice by now. The main negative pressures are from overgrazing by deer, and non native conifers. It is accepted that the Unfavourable status is a fair reflection of the current condition of the site, and a key objective of habitat restoration will be to address this across as large a proportion of the designated sites as possible.

### **Deer Species**

It is known that both red (*Cervus elaphus*) and sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) are both present on the site, moving to and from adjacent woodland and open hill. Nature Scot regard south Loch Ness as a particular problem area for Sika deer, and the area is currently subject to a trial aimed at increasing the sika hind cull. Deer culls on Dell Estate are typically 150-200 animals annually, or 10-13 deer per sq km culled on a 1500 ha property. This suggests that actual numbers present could be very high indeed. The combination of fertile soils, extensive forestry, access to farmland and open hill and the relative inaccessibility of parts of the site will all drive the local population. Numbers of roe deer in and around the area are likely to be much more modest, but these are likely to increase as the other species are reduced unless they are taken into consideration as well.

It is also known that there are feral goats using the wider area.

### **Deer Management Objective**

In their consultation response to the Loch Kemp Storage Scheme dated 6<sup>th</sup> August 2024 (Ref: CDM173569), Nature Scot has requested a deer management strategy that delivers low herbivore impacts within and adjacent to the Ness Woods SAC, and which allows all component species of the woodland to regenerate freely, including the very palatable species such as oak, ash and rowan. This implies a very low deer density of less than 3-5 deer per sq km, which will then need to be maintained for a long period of time, several decades at least.

### **Delivery**

Achieving such a population density in a wooded area like this is extremely challenging, particularly as the Dell Estate in isolation is a relatively small area from a deer management perspective, and it exists as part of a much wider woodland network in which deer densities are likely to be high throughout. Sika deer in particular can be very difficult to stalk and are very productive and resilient within a woodland context like this. The woodland types to be regenerated are among the most palatable and susceptible to browsing.

Target culls are currently still being assessed, but it is anticipated that they will need to be considerably more than the 150-200 being culled at present on Dell Estate, and deer

## ***The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd***

numbers will need to be reduced on adjacent ground so that a lower population can be properly sustained without immigration.

To this end, the Applicant is developing three strands of an appropriate deer plan which should be able to sustain a low enough deer density to encourage regeneration across what is a potentially difficult site:

- 1 The redeployment of current stalking capacity and priorities on Dell Estate to deliver the conservation objectives, with additional resource being used as required;
- 2 Negotiation with adjacent landholdings to allow an increased stalking input over a much larger area, with personnel being able to cross boundaries as required to reduce deer numbers across the wider designated woodland and adjacent hill, effectively creating a buffer around the core restoration areas. This approach will allow neighbours to better deliver their objectives as well, and will be secured through an appropriate management agreement; and
- 3 The Applicant will guarantee the necessary resource for the full 75-year term of lease for the Loch Kemp Storage PSH scheme. This will represent a very considerable investment over a long period of time, but this is the sort of input required to achieve and then maintain favourable conservation status over as wide an area as possible, including any open ground habitats restored.

There are two secondary considerations:

- 1 Any feral goats using the wider area will be culled, to try and ensure that a breeding population no longer exists; and
- 2 Full woodland WHIA monitoring will be implemented by independent contractors across each of the properties involved, and conducted every second year, with results being shared with all parties involved, including Nature Scot. Circular or transect plots of 0.01 ha in size will be located on a 200 m grid basis throughout the woodland area with an agreed open ground buffer so that any new regeneration outside the woodland can be monitored and quantified.

Impact targets and precise monitoring schedule will be agreed with Nature Scot, but it is suggested here that the objective of deer management will be to achieve 90 percent Low and Medium impacts by Year 5, and then 90 percent Low impacts only by Year 7. This timeline recognizes the sustained effort that will be required. While the full WHIA methodology will be used, priority will be weighted towards impacts on woodland regeneration and preferentially browsed ground flora in the short term.

### **Standards**

All deer management will take place in a low key and discreet manner, aiming to remove animals principally within daylight hours and within season where possible, but appropriate authorizations and technology will also be used, including the use of thermal imaging and drone technology to locate animals as necessary, if this is required to achieve the deer densities envisaged.

All deer management will take place according to the Code for Deer Management, Best Practice Guidance and relevant Health & Safety standards, and there will be an ethos of Continuous Professional Development for all staff employed.

Sporting use of deer will only take place at a level where this does not conflict with the woodland restoration objectives, which will retain overall and absolute priority.

### ***The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd***

Registered Office: Mamie's Cottage, Taybridge Terrace, Aberfeldy, Perthshire, PH15 2BS

In summary, the applicant will ensure such resources, training and monitoring capacity that are required to achieve the above objectives are made available for the duration of the lease period, and this should result in a very good outcome for the designated woodlands and adjacent habitats, delivering a woodland and open ground restoration project that the applicant, neighbours and Nature Scot will all be happy to be associated with.

The detail, background information and analysis for the agreed deer management plan will be finalized and available before the start of construction.

*Victor Clements*  
*Native Woodland Advice*

***The Native Woods Co-operative (Scotland) Ltd***

Registered Office: Mamie's Cottage, Taybridge Terrace, Aberfeldy, Perthshire, PH15 2BS