**Sustainable Deer Management Project**

**Habitat Monitoring Programme Brief**

**Background**The Sustainable Deer Management Project forms part of the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP) Scheme which is delivering 28 heritage projects from 2016-2021. The Sustainable Deer Management Project involves Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage and has the following vision:

* *Support deer managers in Coigach and Assynt to develop sustainable deer management plans for the wild red deer herd. In doing so it will contribute to the socio-economic wellbeing of the local deer sector and improve woodland and open range habitats*.

Within this vision are the three main activities of the project:

* *Gathering the basic data that informs a deer management plan*
* *Providing support to land managers in the form of training*
* *Investigate and encourage opportunities for greater benefits from the wild natural deer harvest and consider whether there an economic benefit to collaborative processing and marketing of deer products.*

This Brief pertains only to the *Providing support to land managers in the form of training* component of the Sustainable Deer Management Project, specifically with regards to the Habitat Monitoring Programme, and provides further detail on the scale and scope of the works proposed.

**Habitat Monitoring Programme**

Sustainable land management in the Coigach and Assynt areas means balancing social, economic and environmental considerations. Deer range is one of the primary land uses in the Coigach and Assynt areas and so deer management is vital to:

* the local economy by generating income
* the community by employing stalkers and support workers
* the environment by controlling the level of impacts that deer have on habitats

Deer are a shared resource and can only be managed effectively by the co-operation of land managers. Deer management is currently organised by land managers on a voluntary basis through local deer management groups. In terms of deer management, the Coigach and Assynt areas are sub groups within the larger West Sutherland Deer Management Group (WSDMG) boundary.

The Scottish Government now requires deer management groups to have an agreed deer management plan in place that addresses all aspects of sustainable deer management and gives due consideration to the public interest issues that arise from wild deer.

At present the Coigach and Assynt areas have draft deer management plans. Within the plans there is a requirement for land managers to undertake habitat monitoring of the dwarf shrub heath and blanket bog, the results of which will give an indication of the impacts of deer on the habitat. The Habitat Monitoring Programme aims to assist land managers to set up a robust and practical system to collect and display data which will assist with ongoing deer management across the WSDMG area.

**Programme Aim**

To create a robust and practical system enabling collection and meaningful display of data for habitat monitoring as required in the individual WSDMG sub groups Deer Management Plans.

**Habitat Monitoring Programme activities/ Scope of the work**

The Coordinator will arrange with suitable individuals experienced in the practical process of habitat monitoring, data recording and working within, and with the CALL/WSDMG area estates to carry out the following.

1. **Habitat Monitoring Training**: Group training day(s) for estate representatives to introduce the habitat monitoring process, including the principals of plot marking, measuring, data recording and entry (for those that will be carrying out the practical habitat monitoring e.g. Volunteers, estate managers, project staff, landowners).
2. **Individual training days for habitat monitoring estate representatives and location of Practical Monitoring Plots**: Consultant to visit each participating estate to locate and mark plots with the individuals who will be carrying out habitat monitoring. The SNH generated plots will be used as a basis, to identify the practical plots for recording data. Training will also include inputting data into supplied recording spreadsheet.
3. **GPS Training**: Group training days - GPS training for habitat monitoring estate representatives.
4. **Provision of habitat monitoring packs for all participating estates**: A physical pack containing quadrat, GPS, waterproof notebooks, etc. to be compiled by consultant and given to estates as part of the individual training days.
5. **Data Monitoring System**: Work with the WSDMG Secretary and SNH to set up a system for accepting and displaying data at DMG meetings.

**Budget and Timescales**

An additional budget is available for the delivery of training and production costs relating to the habitat monitoring packs. An indicative budget is shown below.

**Indicative budget for Habitat Monitoring programme**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **number** |  **cost**  |
| Group training days | 2 |  £ 700.00  |
| GPS training day(s) | 3 |  £ 2,250.00  |
| Individual training days | 5 |  £ 1,750.00  |
| Provision of habitat monitoring packs | 5 |  £ 1,750.00  |
| Data display system | 5 |  £ 1,750.00  |
| WSDMG Secretary project input time | 5 |  £ 1,000.00  |
| **Indicative total** |  **£ 9,200.00**  |

It is envisaged that the project will be undertaken within the following timescales, to be completed by end of July 2019. However the dates up to the end of July 2019 are given purely as a guideline and it is for the Coordinator and estate representatives to agree suitable dates:

* By 30th July 2018: Contractor appointed
* August to October: establish final numbers of participants for training programme and appoint/arrange training dates.
* Autumn 2018: GPS training day(s) delivered
* Feb to Spring 2019: Habitat Monitoring training delivered and individual training given.
* End July 2019: All training completed, habitat monitoring packs distributed and data display system in place.

**Key contacts, experience and information sources**

It is important that the Coordinator has a working knowledge of deer management in the West Sutherland Deer Management Group area and preferably experience of working with the esates within the area in a deer management capacity.

CALLP Partners who are directly involved in deer management within the WSDMG are Scottish Wildlife Trust, Assynt Foundation, Culag Community Woodland Trust and John Muir Trust.

Other key contacts inculde the Scottish Natural Heritage Wildlife Management Officer for North Highland, CALLP project team, the West Sutherland Deer Managament Group Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, the Chairs of the Deer management Sub groups (particularly the Assynt Peninsula Sub Group and the South Area sub group).

Key documents are the draft Deer Management plans which can be found on [www.wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk](http://www.wsutherlanddmg.deer-management.co.uk) and SNH Wild Deer Best Practice Guides: Habitat Impacts. [www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk](http://www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk)

**How to apply**

Interested parties should send a CV and cover letter detailing why they would be suitable for this piece of work to CALLP Scheme Manager Boyd Alexander either by email to balexander@coigach-assynt.org or by post to Boyd Alexander, CALLP, 1 Old Coach House, Lochinver, IV27 4LE.

The closing date for applications is 12 noon on Monday 23rd July.