

Annex

- 1) How often do NatureScot and Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) monitor the actual deer numbers in and around Clashindarroch Forest (The Clash)? Over-killing in the area over the last two years has literally led to collapse of the population.

Ans: FLS takes an evidence based approach to cull setting. Cull levels are based on population modelling to achieve sustainable deer numbers that support land management objectives, such as habitat restoration and biodiversity. Target densities vary by location and habitat type, typically ranging between 2 and 8 deer per square kilometre.

Population model indicates an overall deer density of 21km². There is also however considerable migration which is challenging to quantify. FLS are part of the Wider Cabrach & Glen Fiddich stakeholder group, set up to engage in a landscape collaboration to reduce the deer numbers over 14 different properties (including FLS), and managed by Nature Scot.

The 2022 open range count recorded 3,749 Red Deer. 2024 open range count resulted in 3,801 Red Deer. There were 2,619 deer counted around the western periphery of the Clashindarroch, with no real barriers to prevent accessing into the forest. These figures from the wider area do not include the deer which were within woodland across this far wider area and including the FLS properties.

Year	Red	Roe	Total
2025 target cull	250	480	730
2024	321	363	684
2023	213	490	703
2022	205	412	617
2021	101	275	376
2020	48	144	192

The increased culling carried out -shown in the table above is a result of an increasing deer population across the landscape, FLS have taken a robust approach and are delivering towards Scottish Government targets.

- 2) Do NatureScot and FLS practice deliberate over-killing in the Highlands to compensate for the high number of deer in the Lowlands and paint a false picture of acceptable numbers countrywide? Does NatureScot and FLS agree that deer numbers in the Highlands should be at least double that in the Lowlands? More land for them and more animals relying on them for winter food up north.

Ans: As Scottish Government agencies both NatureScot and FLS are committed to working with other land managers to reduce deer numbers to sustainable levels across Scotland. Currently deer numbers in Scotland are estimated to be around 1 million (up from 500,000 in 1990). In order to enhance Scotland's biodiversity and climate resilience the deer populations across both the uplands and

lowlands need to be managed to achieve lower and appropriate deer densities. This will help deliver a wide range of land management objectives. The SG's Strategic Deer Board has indicated that Scotland's deer cull must increase by at least an additional 50,000 deer per year in order to reduce deer numbers and deer damage impacts.

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- 3) **Isn't this the main winter food source (dead old deer) for the protected species of the Clash – Scottish Wildcats, raptor birds, pine martens, etc. Could this lead to total collapse of the local ecosystem if the killings continue?**

Ans: During winter in periods of prolonged snow, the species mentioned may scavenge on any dead animal and bird. However, the main prey species of wildcat and pine marten are voles and rabbits or other small mammals, similarly for raptors although some raptor species will also prey on pigeon, crow and other small birds

- 4) **Why does nobody know the names, contact details, etc of the deer hunters? Why they are allowed to drive past private properties without prior warning, behave in an aggressive and intimidating manner on the public roads of the Clash (photos) and use firearms any time of the day and night on public roads and next to private land? Killings on public road, leaving empty bullet casing, pools of blood. Who will pay a sick dog's vet bill when it eats some of these guts and blood? What happens when a child walks past? What if someone comes round a blind corner on these roads after a bullet has been fired?**

- 5) **The indiscriminate killing of male animals all year round is hugely dangerous too. Lack of competition among males doesn't reduce the numbers. It doesn't matter if you have one or 15 males, come mating season you'll still get the same number of pregnant females. But this does open the possibility for a weak or sick male to create offspring that will also be weak and/or sick, which could lead to total collapse of the entire population. I guess NatureScot has a way to monitor all that?**

Ans: FLS culls male and female deer throughout the year, adhering to the seasons for female deer. It uses authorisations for out of season and night shooting as appropriate in order to protect and enhance Scotland's National Forest Estate (SNFL) and to protect past and present public investment. Our culling is carried out by trained, qualified and competent operatives and to the highest standards of safety, hygiene and deer welfare. Our aim is to achieve low deer densities appropriate to delivery of our many land management objectives. All deer culled on SNFL are inspected during the on-site preparation/gralloching process by the culler and any identification of disease, emaciation etc is recorded in the FLS Deer Dashboard Database. Any concerning trends in deer population health would be identified during our monitoring process.

- 6) When was the last time NatureScot or/and FLS synchronised their biodiversity map with the vast local knowledge? Who will know better than people that have lived for 50+ years in the same area what wildlife activity is to be found and exactly where near their homes? Is this blatant refusal to accept the existence of wildlife done deliberately so industrial activities can continue?

Ans: FLS regularly conduct ecological surveys in Clashindarroch which comprises both of pre operational surveys and routine monitoring. We also facilitate monitoring by partner organisations.

- 7) Who allows people with zero military training to use suppressors and all other manners of military-grade equipment? How many of the deer hunters have military background? Do NatureScot and FLS know how many people have felt threatened and intimidated by their behaviour?

Ans: All deer cullers operating on SNFL are trained, qualified and competent. The use of equipment including firearms, moderators and night-sights is monitored by FLS's Regional Area Wildlife Managers. Each year around 11 million visitors use SNFL for a wide range of activities throughout the year, and do so safely.

FLS do not hold or require information on deer controllers having a military background, therefore are not in a position to provide that information.

FLS have not received any complaints regarding people feeling threatened or intimidated by deer controllers in the Clashindarroch Forest.

- 8) Also of the tens of thousands of killed deer every year where does all the meat go? It doesn't stay where it is killed so wild animals can benefit from it? No local resident, not me anyway, or community food bank has seen any venison delivered? Who profiteers from it? Last time I checked every live deer in Scotland is public property so why all this secrecy about the meat? Who makes money from selling it and how much?

Ans: Currently around 41,500 deer are culled on SNFL annually. Around 600 deer are culled by recreational stalkers. The vast majority however are culled by FLS Wildlife Rangers or professional contractors and the carcasses supplied to Scotland's venison-processing industry to be made into a range of venison products for retail to a wide range of outlets. In 2024/25 FLS produced around 39,700 Scottish Quality Wild Venison Assured carcasses. The income derived from the sale of deer carcasses is used to partly offset the overall cost of FLS's deer management operation.

FLS contracts for the supply of carcasses to the venison sector are publicly advertised and notifications published on award.

9) How often do FLS and NatureScot check the deer hunters for drug and alcohol use? Empty beer cans and other litter have been discarded next to the spot where the deer management caravan was parked for months last winter, still there in March 2025 and in October 2025. How can NatureScot allow someone that drinks alcohol and litters the forest to use a firearm in public?

Ans: FLS is not aware of drug or alcohol use by its deer cullers or that deer culling activities on SNFL are in any way compromised.

Police Scotland is responsible for vetting all firearms holders as part of the firearms certification process. This includes thorough background checks to ensure individuals are fit and proper to hold a firearm certificate.

10) Can FLS or NatureScot confirm that the thermal scopes the deer hunters are allowed these days are not used to look into local homes at night? How is this monitored?

Ans: FLS operatives use specialist equipment such as thermal scopes at night to help safely deliver the required deer cull. FLS is not aware of any suggestion or concern that thermal imaging equipment has been used for any purpose other than for deer culling.

The conditions of any contract or permission includes clauses on the appropriate and lawful use of equipment.

11) Also, how does NatureScot make sure their guidelines are followed by FLS? According to NatureScot's own guidelines, no trees within 200 yards of a tree hosting a nest of a raptor bird should be felled for timber. Yet last winter Speyside Harvesting Limited (SHL) and FLS cleared every tree around a buzzard's nest, leaving it to stand alone (photo). The tree was marked too, with a bright ribbon around the trunk to indicate it has to be left standing, as well as the surrounding trees.

Ans: All FLS operations are carried out in line with NatureScot guidance. Work in Clashindarroch was undertaken outwith the breeding season in line with guidance, at which time no buffer is required and the tree could be felled. The tree would have been marked during surveys prior to work starting.

12) Who authorised SHL to do what I believe is illegal driving on public roads of heavy harvesting machinery. Rules are they should stay off the main public forestry roads at all times. Now they have damaged them almost beyond use (photos). Why haven't NatureScot/FLS checked these sites?

Ans: All forestry contracts include a level of monitoring throughout the works. Site entrances and exits are carefully selected to ensure machinery remains off public roads wherever possible.

From the photos provided, the roads appear to be internal forest roads. These are specifically designed and constructed for forestry operations. While members of the public may access them on foot under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), their primary purpose is for forestry use.

We do request that heavy machinery avoids travelling along forest roads and only crosses them where necessary. However, in some cases, particularly in remote or difficult-to-access areas, this may not be possible. During wet or winter months, these roads are more prone to wear and degradation due to

their construction. For this reason, we have measures in place to repair and maintain them as required.

13) Who monitors and checks what SHL does while working on public land? Images show multiple items of plastic garbage left behind by them, some potentially harmful to the environment.

Ans: Anyone working on FLS land are monitored and have a waste management procedures they must adhere to.

14) And now for the big elephant in the room – VATTENFALL! The Swedish Government-owned company already built a hugely controversial wind farm right in the middle of the Clash 10 years ago for a massive environmental cost. Not allowed by any level of local community or councils, it was forcefully put there by the Scottish Government. This doesn't seem to be enough as another development, Wind Farm 2 for Vattenfall, is about to start construction right in the middle of the Clash again. This will see hundreds of thousands of mature trees cut down [a bit strange since for the last five years all FLS have been doing is cutting down trees, hardly any new planting has been done], large-scale construction of new industrial roads, a huge amount of harmful gases from peat land released in the atmosphere so thousands of tons of cement foundations can be laid, all so the Scottish and Swedish Governments can share profits. The most interesting thing is why FLS and Vattenfall started building the roads and clearing the forest for this new wind farm in December 2023? Thousands of trees were cut and rough roads built right where it will be. However, the Scottish Government didn't vote on the development until June 2024. In early 2024 there were still public inquiries, lots of objections and concerns, rejections at every level of local government. Does the Scottish Government take the taxpayers for fools? Why did FLS start preparing the site months before the project was even approved?

Ans: FLS did not undertake any works, felling, preparation of the site or otherwise, in relation to the Windfarm. The only operations that FLS undertook within Clashindarroch prior to October 2025 (when the planning permission was discharged) were part of the usual forestry operations set out in the Land Management Plan. This would include forestry operations and upgrading of forest roads to allow for timber extraction.

The current felling operations are being undertaken by Vattenfall under the Town & Country Planning Act and only once all the planning conditions had been discharged. The initial felling was undertaken under licence which commenced on 08 September 2025 and finished on the 07 November. The lease came into effect on the 8th November 2025 as the area is now under lease.

Total 530 ha of land restocked in Clash LMP area in last 5 growing seasons of which 45% was Broadleaves and 55% conifers as per the LMP. Its primary purpose is as a productive block as per the LMP.

15) FLS are getting large sums from Vattenfall regularly. How much money has Vattenfall paid directly to FLS for projects over the last 10 years? Vattenfall also pay £200,000 every year to Foundation Scotland but it gives the residents of the Clash nothing. Why is that? I hear the turning of the existing turbines from my own garden every time there is wind. What plans do FLS and NatureScot have to make sure nearby homes are properly compensated for the proposed Wind Farm 2 development?

Ans: FLS seeks to ensure that community benefit is delivered as part of these developments and a community benefit payment of £5000 (index linked) per MW installed capacity is mandated as standard within FLS windfarm leases. Any queries regarding monies paid to Foundation Scotland should be directed to Vattenfall. FLS are not involved with how community benefit or any other financial benefits are distributed.