

Deer Management Incentive Scheme 2026-27



Conditions

Background

Overabundant deer populations in Scotland exert significant pressure on woodland expansion, peatland restoration, biodiversity recovery, and climate mitigation efforts.

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (“LLTNPA”) recognises the need for increased culling in areas where deer population densities exceed sustainable levels and are incompatible with Scotland’s Biodiversity Strategy, Scotland’s Climate Change Plan, and Scotland’s Forestry Strategy. LLTNPA also recognises that in some cases deer management is carried out at a net cost to deer managers.

This year two LLTNPA pilot scheme expands on the year one 2025/26 LLTNPA pilot scheme, as well as the NatureScot Central Scotland and South Loch Ness, and the Cairngorms National Park Authority, deer management incentive scheme pilots, which all ran in 2024/25 and 2025/26 and will continue for the 2026/27 season.

1. Scheme Aims and Objectives

- 1.1 The aim of this scheme is to help deliver Deer Management Plans and reduce deer numbers by incentivising the increased culling of female deer within Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (“LLTNP”).
- 1.2 This will be achieved by:
 - a) providing direct financial support to those culling deer;
 - b) assessing if this support leads to an increase in annual culling of deer within the LLTNP while not discouraging those that have been culling at higher levels; and
 - c) targeting all species of deer within the LLTNP.

2. Scheme Area

- 2.1 The Scheme Area comprises any landholding that has land within the LLTNP boundary. If a landholding lies partly within the LLTNP boundary, then the whole landholding area will be eligible for the scheme.

3. Who Can Apply?

- 3.1 Participation in the scheme is open to those with the legal right to take or kill deer on any landholding within the Scheme Area.
- 3.2 Applicants may live outwith the Scheme Area but must operate within it, on land on which they have the legal right to take or kill deer.
- 3.3 Only successful Applicants registered under the scheme for a given landholding will be eligible to receive payment in respect of that landholding. Where multiple deer controllers operate on the same landholding, only those Applicants registered to that landholding through the Deer App will be entitled to direct payment from LLTNPA for their reported culls. In such cases, the minimum

culling threshold (see details below) will apply to the landholding as a whole, rather than to each Applicant individually.

- 3.4 The scheme will not apply to deer culled on the National Forest Estate, or land on which deer management is integral to planning conditions, or to LLTNPA or NatureScot staff.
- 3.5 Application to cull deer on land subject to any other publicly funded agreement such as the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme deer management option, or an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme agreement, must be declared, and payment for deer culled must be over and above that laid out in the respective Deer Management Plan.
- 3.6 All Applicants must hold Deer Stalking Certificate (DSC) Level 1 (or equivalent) as a minimum requirement. Applicants who are currently only qualified to DSC Level 1 are expected to be working towards DSC Level 2 (or equivalent) through the duration of the scheme.

4. Important Dates

- 4.1 Applications for the scheme will be accepted between **22nd June 2026** and **16th August 2026**.
- 4.2 At its sole discretion LLTNPA may close applications to the scheme earlier than 16th August 2026.
- 4.3 The scheme will accept culls for eligible red, roe, sika, and fallow deer recorded between **1st September 2026** and **15th March 2027**. No cull returns will be accepted after that date.

5. Application Process and Cull Reporting

- 5.1 Each application form will be assessed to confirm the Applicant's eligibility to partake in the scheme. New reporting landholdings will be registered on NatureScot's Deer Online Services App by NatureScot. Personal data will be held in accordance with NatureScot's data retention policies which can be viewed at: <https://licensing-deer.nature.scot/deer-authorisations/privacy>.
- 5.2 All successful Applicants must use either the NatureScot Deer App and associated tagging system, or a NatureScot approved app, for geospatial referencing, photographic evidence, and reporting of all deer culled under the scheme. Carcass tags with a QR code and unique identification number will be provided, free of charge, to all successful Applicants either by pre-arranged collection or by postal delivery to Applicants.
- 5.3 LLTNPA will advise the successful Applicant of the landholding culling threshold that needs to be met before payments can be made. This will be based on the size of the landholding. Applicants can continue to cull over and above the threshold value.
- 5.4 Landholding size will normally be defined as hectare calculations based on whole landholding maps. LLTNPA may exclude specific areas where deer are not present, such as tightly deer fenced areas. Such exclusions will be made in consultation with NatureScot.
- 5.5 Culling of male deer can also be reported via the Deer App. Applicants will still need to submit separate annual cull return to NatureScot for the period of the scheme.

- 5.6 It is acknowledged that there will be a period of time between successful Applicants submitting an application and culls being recorded on the NatureScot Deer App. To record culls during this time, and to record out-of-season culling between 1st September 2025 and 21st October 2025, subject to compliance with the scheme conditions, LLTNPA will accept best practice larder receipts for a maximum period of four weeks after an application has been submitted. Thereafter culls must be recorded on the NatureScot Deer App or other NatureScot approved App to qualify for payment under the scheme. An annual cull return for all properties will still be required by NatureScot for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 for all deer.
- 5.7 Carcass disposal is at the discretion of the Applicants. The method of disposal will be recorded via reporting on the Deer App as one of the following: sold and to whom, given away, processed for own consumption, or left in field as unfit for human consumption.

6. Payment of the Grant

- 6.1 Successful Applicants will be issued with a bank account details form, along with instructions for registration for use of the NatureScot Deer App.
- 6.2 The bank account must be a UK bank account in the name of the Applicant (personal or business account). To receive payment the Applicant must return the completed bank account details form to LLTNPA. Payment will be made by bank transfer to the account detailed on the bank account details form.
- 6.3 Culling eligible for payment under the scheme is additional to the average levels currently recorded in the LLTNP. Payment will only be made for the deer culled above the qualifying minimum cull rate and registered on the Deer App or a NatureScot approved App.
- 6.4 A landholding must cull a minimum of **3 adult female or juveniles of any species of deer per 1 km² (100ha)** to qualify for payment. Applicants will receive a back payment for all deer (females or juveniles) culled where the threshold of at least **2 deer per 1 km² (100ha)** has been met.
For example, if a property is 10km² (1000ha), then a minimum of 30 female or juvenile deer of any species must be killed to trigger the incentive payment. A payment will then be made for every deer killed from and including deer number 20 onwards.
- 6.5 Once the minimum cull of 3 deer per 1 km² (100ha) has been met, payment will be made for all female and juvenile deer culled at or above 2 deer per 1 km² (100ha) at a rate of:
- **£100** per animal for any adult female or juvenile (male or female under one year of age) **red, sika or fallow deer**, and
 - **£70** per animal for any for any adult female or juvenile (male or female under one year of age) **roe deer**.
- Payment for each animal will be based on a dated cull return for that animal.
- 6.6 For landholdings smaller than 1 km² (100ha), payment will only be triggered for culls exceeding the first 3 adult females or juveniles culled.
- 6.7 Only deer killed between 1st September and the 15th March will count towards a landholding's cull thresholds.

- 6.8 NatureScot will track progress from the Deer App reports on a weekly basis and share this information with LLTNPA. Using declared additional culls logged on the Deer App, or a NatureScot approved App, and subject to funds being available, payments will be made at set intervals throughout the duration of the scheme:
- A payment will be made for culls reported between 1st September and 30th November 2026;
 - A payment will be made for culls reported between 1st December 2026 and 31st January 2027;
 - A payment will be made for culls reported between 1st February and 15th March 2027.
- 6.9 The funding available for the 2026/2027 female season is subject to a fixed maximum limit. If the funds spent approach the limit, Applicants will be notified that no further payments will be made for any subsequent claims. Claims submitted prior to the exhaustion of the budget shall be considered and processed strictly in the order in which they are received, on a first-come, first-served basis. Any culls reported after notification shall not be eligible for payment. Any payments made will be at the sole discretion of LLTNPA.
- 6.10 Funding provided under this scheme is a grant and does not constitute a contract for the supply of goods or services. All payments made under the scheme will be inclusive of VAT.

7. Monitoring and Compliance

- 7.1 Compliance monitoring will be undertaken by LLTNPA and NatureScot who will review the reported culls, species, age, sex, and geo-referenced location via the Deer App, or a NatureScot approved App. LLTNPA and NatureScot staff reserve the right to spot checks of shot/gralloch sites and Applicants and/or land managers will permit entry to the landholding for this purpose.
- 7.2 Further audit of financial transactions will be crosschecked against data recorded in the Deer App, or a NatureScot approved App, and payments made to Applicants.
- 7.3 Any non-compliance breaches will result in the Applicant being removed from the scheme and payment withheld.
- 7.4 Any reports of fraudulent activity will be reported to Police Scotland.
- 7.5 Within one month of the end of the scheme the Applicant must complete a short evaluation form to provide scheme feedback to LLTNPA.
- 7.6 Applicants agree to participate in and co-operate with LLTNPA to create press releases or stories for social media or other media in relation to the scheme.

8. Freedom of Information

- 8.1 As a Scottish public authority, LLTNPA is subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004. It is therefore legally obliged to consider and respond to all valid requests for access to information it holds. This includes information it holds relating to Applicant's participation in this Scheme. LLTNPA will assess all such requests on a case-by-case basis and consider all applicable exemptions and exceptions (including those for personal data, confidentiality, and commercial interests).

Where it is practical to do so, LLTNPA will consult with the Applicant before making any disclosure. The final decision on disclosure will rest with LLTNPA.