

The Northern New Forest and South East Wiltshire Deer Management Group (DMG) Project (supported by FiPL)

The DMG area is a key nature recovery area for the New Forest, containing a number of designated sites and a good network of priority and ancient woodland, heavily impacted by deer.

Current fallow deer populations (which represent the most common species in the northern New Forest area) are one of the biggest threats to nature recovery in the area and are having economic impacts on agriculture and forestry, and on public health and safety. The main DMG objective is to work together to achieve a sustainable deer density for the landscape.

The approach to deer management is evidence based with evidence derived from night time and daytime drone population surveys, collation of cull data from landowners, population modelling and landscape scale Deer Impact Assessments.

Research studies on sustainable deer densities are discussed with deer density information and distribution maps produced from drone surveys shown. The highly mobile nature of deer distribution across the landscape is also described.

Landscape scale Woodland Deer Impact assessment results show high impacts in woodlands haloing the open Forest and across the whole of the northern DMG area, high impact correlating with high deer density.

Finally, the population model for fallow deer in the south DMG area is shown, demonstrating the need for a sustained commitment from as many landowners as possible across the landscape to achieve the required reduction in deer numbers, which are currently 4 to 5 times recommended sustainable thresholds.