

File Note on deer management on Blickling Estates.

At the parish meeting on 12/09/23 a parish resident noted that his garden was suffering from deer damage and asked whether the National Trust could do anything to help alleviate the problem, with a specific request to allow 3rd parties to use firearms on National Trust land to cull deer. The issue was discussed and I agreed to gather information, discuss colleagues and report back.

At the OPC meeting on 24th October I gave verbal update. Summary of our discussions and update are as follows.

- Deer are wild animals, and they are not the responsibility of any one owner over another.
- Deer browsing is recognised as problematic to agriculture, forestry, and gardens. Landowners can fence out deer or protect individual plants on their property albeit at a cost which may be prohibitively expensive. It is not the responsibility of a landowner to fence deer IN but some choose to such as in historic deer parks. Blickling is not imparked. There are examples of residential gardens being fenced including a Garden at the Oulton Chapel where the PC meet.
- Deer prefer to eat some garden plants and prefer to leave others. There is a lot of advice on the internet on which species to plant that deer prefer to leave.
- Deer culling reduces browsing pressure, but the surrounding deer population will inevitably fill any gaps created. Effective annual culling programmes work in enclosed land holdings. In unenclosed countryside, better results are achieved where adjoining landowners all work together through a deer management group.
- Deer can only be legally culled using firearms by individuals licensed by the police to use them. Firearms are significantly different from shot guns and require a great degree of competency for a user to be licensed by the police. The Deer stalkers certificate Level 2 being the qualification that is often recognised as a certificate of competence.
- The map below shows the Blickling estate boundary and woodland and Oulton parish. It shows that Oulton is outside NT boundaries, but Oulton Street is within, with approximately 60% of Oulton Parish outside National Trust land. It is not known where the resident that raised the question lives, but it is assumed that deer management is an issue that attracts interest from more than one individual. Outside NT land there are several smaller woods in the parish which may be contributing to deer populations. We are unaware of any deer management that may be taking place in these woodlands and generally off our land.
- The National Trust conduct deer culling within its own woodland. This is based on an understanding of overall population and impact on habitat and biodiversity. It is generally not policy to cull populations unless it is necessary to meet conservation objectives. Observing the impact of deer in Blickling woods it is evident that natural regeneration is abundant. Some deer damage can be observed in young trees but not all, indicating that regeneration and quality of mature trees is at least adequate for habitat management of the Blickling woodlands.

As part of our overall conservation aims and objectives, we will continue to monitor deer population, acting when it has a negative impact on those objectives. Currently, we do not have a confirmed deer management programme, and due to the complexities of risk assessment, safety of people, licensing and so on we do not intend to provide access to third parties undertake deer management.

Adam Curtis. National Trust Countryside Manager 09/11/23



High levels of natural regenerating woodland are evident throughout Blickling Woodlands.