

REF: 2015S40/0028

From:

Sent: 29 December 2014 15:13

To: Nature Conservation

Subject: Dangerous Hedges

Ms. Heather Humphreys

I am writing to you today with regard to the review of section 40 of the wildlife act. I live in the area of Beaufort Co Kerry but I am very concerned with the uncut dangerous roadside hedges throughout the county and beyond. Many of these have not been cut in years and many more are cut every second year at best. As a keen cyclist I must state that this situation is at risk of causing a serious accident to either a cyclist or a pedestrian. Overgrown hedges are a danger as they significantly reduce the road space available to all road users. On numerous occasions while trying to allow space for oncoming or overtaking traffic, I have been forced to move into this dangerous growth. It poses a severe danger to the eyesight of cyclists/pedestrians and may well lead a person falling onto the path of vehicles. It is important to remember that most hedges are not along public roads, so the following changes would not have a huge impact on our wildlife.

As I see it 3 areas need changing in order to solve this problem on our roads -

(A) All roadside hedges need to be cut at least once a year during the growing season - ideally mid summer, with July/August been the preferable time. This is the peak time for tourism and when most local cyclists do a lot of mileage. To simply wait until September or October is not good enough, as this means the hedges are overgrown and dangerous through out the summer months.

(B) There would need to be one Roads Enforcement Officer in each electrical area in order to have any worthwhile effect. One officer alone could not hope to inspect and enforce a whole county. The present system of sending letters to land owners is not working. While some do get the hedges cut in September, most do not. When or indeed if, the landowners receive a second warning letter, many continue to ignore them. Very few are ever prosecuted for this offence.

(C) The best solution to this problem is for the council to hire a hedge cutting contractor for each area and add the cost to the landowners property tax. This sum would need to be calculated on the length of roadside hedges relevant to each landowner. If the landowner wished to reduce this bill, they could simply have it cut themselves before the council contractor. The local Roads Enforcement Officer could confirm that the landowner had completed the cutting themselves and then inform the LPT office to reduce their next property tax bill.

I believe that the above suggestions would solve this serious problem. I look forward to your written response.