

REF: 2015S40/0040

From:

Sent: 07 January 2015 10:07

To: Nature Conservation

Subject: Review of Section 40 of the Wildlife Act: Public Consultation

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to the Review of Section 40 of the Wildlife Act public consultation on hill burning and hedge cutting.

Fires

Since 2010 there has been little change. Fires are repeatedly lit out of season, in designated habitats without any of the requirements being met. Only on one occasion have I seen the Dingle Gard step in. The culprit in this case was a part time employee of NPWS and OPW! It has been suggested that the Gardai are reluctant to even record these fires as of course they could represent serious crimes (arson) and they prefer to turn a blind eye. The last fire I witnessed was in Chough SPA and one of the last places we recorded Twite breeding. Twite is now extinct as a breeding bird on the Dingle Peninsula.

I would add that these uplands should be managed in an integrated and sustainable way for

- Biodiversity
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Flood control
- Water Quality

These are all major Kerry and National issues.

As is the case in Wales where, despite comments about extended firing season, you will find comprehensive policies based on these five priorities, enforced to the benefit of the entire community.

Hedge Cutting.

As with fires there is minimal observance of existing rules and I don't imagine for a moment any request for enforcement would be taken seriously. If anything cutting should be left as late as possible as hedgerows provide important winter feed and shelter.

In addition discerning cutting should be part of the programme. High hedges near Barn Owl near nest sites should be left to help protect owls from becoming road kill. Native species, ash (given the Die Back concern) should be protected, and Hawthorn, Holly, Oak (barely any oak, one mature oak I think, left on the peninsula) etc should not be slashed.

Currently hedge cutting spreads alien invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Fuschia, Montbresia as cuttings are dumped, often on native species (Ballyferriter next to the church an excellent example) or scattered to spread downhill.

Recently spraying of public roadsides with Glyphospates has become popular.

All of this is public knowledge but not acted on.

In Conclusion

We would encourage you to not to underestimate the level of public concern around these issues. There is a constituency, unrepresented in Irish Political circles and the administration, who would welcome some informed leadership and action on these issues. Currently the feeling is that people are paid to manage our landscape, flood control, water quality, wildlife and built heritage, we are paying fines to Europe for failing to manage, and losing our heritage.