

From:
Sent: 08 January 2015 16:47
To: Nature Conservation
Subject: Consulation Input

Dear Sirs,

I would like to comment on the consultative questions as a smallholder living in a rural area of West Cork.

Hedge-cutting.

I have no objection to the hedges being trimmed back from the end of July onwards, but this should only be when there is a need to trim for road safety.

Trimming hedges, and the underlying shrubs at this time of year cuts off the berry/seed harvest that is growing to keep the birds fed in the winter-time, and so should be restricted to those hedges that are causing obstruction.

I cut back arching brambles as they become a problem around my borders, other than this it is perfectly adequate to do any trimming over the winter months when the hedges are dormant.

Burning of Vegetation

A) Yes the dates should be maintained because the wildlife is already busy nesting by the beginning of March, especially with the mild winters of recent years.

I have seen a hare running away from burning scrub, screaming with it's fur on fire, this is totally unacceptable at any time.

B) C) and D) No. Definitely not.

E) No. I understand that Springs like 2014 being so wet meant that burning could not be carried out before the deadline, but the fact remains that the wildlife was still nest building at the same time and so the same negative impact exists.

In fact it was even more important to the wildlife that burning was not started once the weather dried because they were under pressure from the long wet spell of weather, needing all the resources they could find.

I am sorry to say that there were a number of fires started on Mizen Head and Sheeps Head despite the fact that it was well into March and then into April.

I would like to add the following:

I am lucky to live amongst farmers as my immediate neighbours who do abide by the law, never burning or cutting during the closed season.

All around me on Mizen Head however and also on Sheeps Head, which I can see clearly from my land, there is indiscriminate burning well into April and sometimes even into May.

Very often this is completely uncontrolled as the Fire and Rescue Service records will for the area will show.

Whenever this is investigated, which is rarely, there is very little effort made to prove that the land has been deliberately fired, with no resulting prosecution. The farmers are very good at claiming innocence, putting the blame on tourists, or kids.

This situation causes much damage to wildlife, and just as importantly a lot of worry to the human population, some of it with very good cause.

Two years ago a neighbouring farm let his hillside fire get out of control and the fire was finally stopped by the fire service 3 metres away from a domestic oil tank.

They all went home.....the fire was not properly out and then proceeded to spill onto the road before a passing motorist raised the alarm again.

Lo and Behold three days later, the same farmer was firing a field on the other side of the road, very close to his own home.

What I would like to see is a strategy developed so that the burning is only done when necessary, (which very often it is NOT) and is done under licence and supervision.

A permit to burn, with a minimum number of people supervising who are capable of handling the burning, with prosecutions when the permit is flouted or burning is done without one.

I come from the UK where controlled burning takes place regularly without all the drama I have seen every year in West Cork.

yours sincerely,