

**Ref: 2015S40/133**

**Sent:** 09 January 2015 17:04

**To:** Nature Conservation

**Subject:** Review of Section 40

Hi,

I am delighted to be able to have the opportunity to contribute to this discussion, so thank you.

As a nature guide with my own business I make my living from hedgerows by teaching children the merits of nature and hedgerow habitats and by guiding national and international tourists on our hills.

Hedgerows. It is clear that birds are nesting earlier in the year (plenty of studies back this statement up) so I would call for a two week extension from the 14th of February to the 31st of August on the banning of cutting hedges. I think this needs to be carried out with the backing from local county councils whom in my experience often don't know about the regulations or if they do they choose not to enforce them within their own contracts. Obviously growth that obscures road vision etc and any other public hazard must have an exemption. There is also excessive cutting of low vegetation on hard shoulders. Wicklow county council have changed their attitude to this with great results. This would be a reasonably straightforward thing to do at no cost and would tie in nicely with the dept of agriculture's new GLAS scheme which gives incentives for wild meadows. With less than 2% of the country covered in native forest and the new forestry scheme offering very little commitment to improve this our hedgerows are clearly essential for maintaining our biodiversity. As a member of the Heritage in Schools Scheme I see a great hunger from teachers, pupils and parents to learn more about our biodiversity and our last few scraps of 'wild' landscape. Proper enforcement is also essential of the existing or new laws and this is not possible with the lack of resources available to the National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation Rangers.

Hill Burning. In the last couple of years visitors that I have guided through the Donegal hills have been appalled by the destruction to our uplands by indiscriminate burning. I would appeal for the current laws to stay in place but that adequate resources are procured to enforce these laws.

Thank you again for the opportunity to voice my opinion on this matter, that fact that work exists shows the appetite for conserving and enjoying our nature and this work is supported by your department.