

From: Seamus [mailto:seamuscosafitzgerald@eircom.net]
Sent: 23 December 2014 08:22
To: Nature Conservation
Subject: public consultation on the burning of Gorse and Hedgecutting
Importance: High

Dear Dermot,

Being a part time farmer on the foothills of Mount Brandon and a public representative I want to make the following observations. The burning of gorse is allowed from the 1st September to the end of February as per the present legislation.

From September to Christmas gorse can remain very green and extremely difficult to burn even if the weather permitted. Obviously most Autumns can be very wet and damp, which prevents gorse being burned away.

From Christmas onwards until the 1st May the gorse turns white and dull in growth, hence the best time to get a good burn. Unfortunately many years in the past have been very wet, heavy rainfall snow and ice e.t.c which prevented burning taking place.

Therefore to give farmers a better chance to burn ,and to take account of the wildlife situation, with birds nesting e.t.c a better compromise would be to allow the burning of gorse up until the 1st April. Observing nature on the mountains I have never witnessed any activity until at least the middle of April. For instance I am led to believe that in the North of Ireland burning of gorse is allowed up until the 16th of April.

Presently the same rules apply to hedge cutting, again an extra month should be allowed for cutting up until the 1st April. However in my view the growth of vegetation along our roads don't become a problem until well into the summer- June, July & August. when growth along the countryside is in full bloom.

During these months I get phone calls from constituents about scratched paintwork on cars, broken mirrors on coaches etc. costing anything up to €1,500 to replace. People who walk jog and cycle along these narrow Country roads often get their faces and hands torn by overgrown hedges and briars and it's a miracle that no one's eye hasnt been torn out of their head.

Landowners where overgrown hedge issues arise along roads should be made aware immediately and notice given to encourage immediate cutting the following September and October. Cutting of hedges along the sides of the roads transforms the road width and most importantly gives better visibility to oncoming traffic which will result in fewer accidents and lives being saved.

Presently the enforcement of hedge cutting is very weak because of several factors ie. lack of human resources to ensure hedge cutting takes place is a very time consuming and expensive issue. Local Authorities are strapped of funding to implement the scheme.

Landowners who engage in cutting their hedges along the roads should be financially encouraged by way of an additional payment to their GLAS scheme or an additional refund on their income. taxes.

The state would in turn be refunded by way of additional work for hedge cutting contractors giving much needed employment during the Winter months as well as the additional taxes being created from the use of the diesel and oil by the machinery operators. It's a win win for everybody.

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Cllr. Seamus Cosáí Fitzgerald