

Sent: Monday, January 05, 2015 6:04 PM

Subject: Submission from Kildare Game and Wildlife Council on Review of Section 40 of the Wildlife Acts

In response to your Public Consultation Process we in **Kildare Regional Game and Wildlife Council (KRGWC)** make the following submission.

Introduction:

Kildare Regional Game and Wildlife Council (KRGWC) was established in 1958 with 26 affiliated Game and Wildlife Conservation Clubs throughout County Kildare. It is a registered Recognized Body under the Wildlife Acts

KRGWC and its affiliated clubs are committed conservationist with one of its primary objectives being the conservation and development of wildlife habitats. KRGWC organize roadshows and seminars on Game and Wildlife Management and provide a free advisory service to landowners, communities and clubs on all aspects of wildlife management.

Our submission is focused on hedgerows and lowland bogs which are a major feature of the Kildare Landscape.

As this landscape was shaped and managed by our farming ancestors since the Ice Age any legislative change envisaged must enable these farmers to continue to manage these landscape features as part of their agricultural activities.

Changing weather patterns in recent decades have reduces the opportunities to manage scrub containing bracken, gorse and heathers by burning during the prescribed burning season. It is impractical to burn during the Autumn because the livestock are still on the land and the risk of fire damage to the dry underlying soils and peat.

This has resulted in a accumulation of vegetation on bogland and marginal lands, which is an increased fire risk and the potential for destructive wildfires. Where boglands, heaths and other marginal lands are managed on a rotational basis there is a greater diversity of flora and fauna present.

In response to the questions posed in your Consultative Paper we propose;

1. That the closed period, of March to August Inclusive, for hedge cutting be retained as defined with exceptions in the present legislation. Farmers should be allowed to cut hedges for stock proofing and fencing purposes and the should be allowed to cut hedges during August while preparing for Winter Sown Crops.

2. We propose that the closing period for burning of vegetation on scrublands , bogs and moorland be extended to March 31st for the following reasons.

A. Springtime burning is safer as the vegetation has died back and the underlying soils and peat is damp.

B. There is little risk of underlying peat catching fire in springtime as burning temperatures are lower

C. Livestock are still on the land in the Autumn as farmers are required to stock their land for a minimum of seven months under the Single Farm Payment Regulations.

D. March was the traditional burning month as climatic conditions were more likely to be favorable.

E. Autumn burning is more destructive to the shelter and food provision for wintering fauna.

3. We propose that the minimum height for cutting hedges, except roadside hedges, should be 6 ft as hedge nesting birds prefer to build their nests some 18 inches off the ground and 10 inches from the top of a hedge to afford them maximum protection from ground and aerial predation.

4. We propose that Derogation be introduced for burning bogland and moorland during the closed period for specifics related to farming and forestry, such as tree planting, land reclamation or a specific habitat project.

5. We propose that a Statutory Instrument be allowed in the legislation to extend the springtime burning period to April 15th where the weather was unsuitable for burning during January and February.

In conclusion as farmers are the custodians of these landscape features they must be encouraged through the least restrictive regulations to manage these habitat features within their normal farming activities.

For and on Behalf of Kildare Regional Game and Wildlife Council,

James Fitzharris.

Public Relations Officer