

From: Westmeath Env. Group.

To: Minister Heather Humphreys.

1. The present closed period for hedge-cutting and hill-burning should, on evidence, be from FEB 1st to Aug. 31st.
2. The balance between biodiversity and “farming” interests has been totally skewed under recent [and present] Ministers of Agriculture.
3. Farmers claim to be guardians of the environment but they seem to be extremely clueless or uncaring about the larger pictures of biodiversity unity and protection where it does not suit them.
4. So-called “Health and Safety” exemptions should be dropped completely. The fatality and injury figures would indicate that removing all possible natural “hazards” from the path of motorists and cyclists results only in more so-called “accidents”. Speed and distracted drivers are the culprits, not hedges and trees.
5. In days gone by any farmer with an ounce of sense would not dream of cutting hedgerow while any berries or other fruits remained.
6. Burning for nutrients is ignorant farming. Any intelligent land owner or user would surely see the risk to ground-nester birds, frogs, newts, insects etc, all with their specific role in life.
7. Before any change to Section 40 is even attempted the Minister should seek a full oversight of these matters from ALL interested bodies/parties. The most up-to-date international evidence should be sought and only then should a decision be made.

For Westmeath Env. Group,

From; Richard Murphy. P.R.O. W.E.G .Hightown, Coralstown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.