

Irish Deer Management Forum

Eighth Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

2pm Thursday, September 8th 2016

Venue: Coillte Offices, Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Chair: Ms. Judith Annett

Pat Meskell	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Government Department
Barry Coad	Coillte	Forestry
Pat Hennessy	IFA	Farming
Sean Eustace	Wicklow Forest Owners Group	Independent Appointee
Damien Hannigan	Wild Deer Association of Ireland	Hunting
Liam Nolan	Deer Alliance	Training
Jim Walsh	Individual	Research/Technical
Declan Little	Woodlands of Ireland	Conservation
Seamus Dunne	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Government Department
James O Keeffe	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Government Department
Wesley Atkinson	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Government Department
Ferdia Marnell	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Government Department
Gerry Leckey	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Government Department

1. Chair's Business

The Chair recapped on recent activities on behalf of the Forum, in particular the recent meetings with Minister of State Andrew Doyle TD. The Minister is very supportive of the work of the forum and the Chair expressed a wish that a similar relationship can be established with Minister Humphries.

A revision of the Agenda was proposed with a presentation by Declan O' Neill of the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership being postponed until the Ninth Meeting.

2. Apologies

Fidelma Farrell, DAFM

John Fenton

Declan O Neill, WDMP

Tom Shortt, IFA

Chis Fox, ICMSA
Tim Burkitt
Paddy Purser

Not present – Sean Doris NARGC

3. Minutes of the Sixth Meeting

Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the IDMF were read to the forum and adopted without amendment.

A point was raised about NARGC attendance record at the meetings. The Secretary undertook to write to the NARGC and clarify their continued membership status at the Forum.

4. Matters Arising from the Seventh Meeting

- IDMF Website – Liam Nolan outlined the new website to members. He asked members to respond within seven days with any comments or views on the website. IDMF Website – www.idmf.ie and www.deerforum.ie will be the registered addresses of the IDMF online.
- Deer licencing system – A balance of 1200 licences awaited issue at the time of the meeting. There was a call for greater coordination between NPWS and Coillte on hunting licence permit issue timeframes, ideally the two systems should overlap and coordinate better.
- Deer Data Group – in relation to the DHL issue there are additional barriers in relation to timing of hunting insurance that creates administrative issues in relation to licensing.

Action Point – Gerry Leckey(NPWS) undertook to discuss these issues with the various hunting groups and Coillte.

5. Correspondence

Letter from Minister of State Andrew Doyle TD

The IDMF will initiate contact with Minister Heather Humphries TD with a view to a similar meeting and understanding with the Ministers responsible, and to deliver a direct verbal report on the work of the Forum to date.

Action Point – IDMF to initiate contact with Minister Humphries re a meeting between Chair and Group Convenors.

6. Presentations

Wesley Atkinson/Pat Meskell – North Wicklow Deer Cull

Wesley Atkinson reported that there had been no communications in response to the proposed Calary Cull plan arising from the Action Point from the Seventh Meeting.

Pat Meskell (DAFM) outlines aspects of the proposed operation, and reappraised members of the statistics involved with the TB issue in Wicklow. TB statistics for deer in Wicklow are of concern given the density and presence of TB, and the interactions between deer and cattle in the county.

On July 13 the IDMF TB group met convened by T. Shortt. A subsequent project steering group meeting included representation by IDMF. A coordinator for the project will be recruited locally; this will be a paid role and will largely involve local level logistical and administrative support. A Survey questionnaire has been prepared and will issue to approx. 250 farmers in the area concerned.

With regard to a cull there is a stated preference for existing local hunters. Other resources issues may involve the recruitment of a Masters/PHD student to examine results. There will be a reliance on the expertise of both the IDMF and WDMP.

There is a need to visualise and determine the level of disease and population reduction in both North and West Wicklow. In a second DAFM initiative up to 1500 deer culled through normal hunting practice and patterns will be examined for TB to define wider prevalence.

In a discussion that followed it was made clear that IDMF do not support the use of bounties for provision of carcasses or other material for testing. This was supported by Mr. Meskell.

There was a request for specific strain typing of TB samples taken, to define if the strain affecting cattle is also present in deer.

The chair stated that the IDMF support a deer cull on welfare grounds, but the IDMF was not established to deal with TB issues. If the IDMF are to be involved, the objective of the project needs to be clearly defined to ensure it falls within the terms of reference for the IDMF.

Pat Hennessy (IFA) stated that the farming sector was adamant that DAFM take control of issues and that DAFM have both the authority and capabilities to carry out operations.

Wesley Atkinson (NPWS) stated that the 6DED project is a standalone procedural pilot study and precursor for more wide scale studies. There is ample hunting by licenced hunters at local level but animals are not being accounted for.

Liam Nolan (Deer Alliance) stated that the target of 1500 carcasses is reasonable and manageable. Leadership should come from farm groups to cooperate with the project and allow and encourage hunters to access land. There may be issues with carcass procurement and the small numbers submitted for examination.

Damian Hannigan (WDAI) stated that there were differences between TB incidence in Wicklow and elsewhere, and that there was a danger of misleading outcomes from comparisons of projects.

Ferdia Marnell (NPWS) said that the language used would be critical to communicate the fact that this is actually a test of 1500 deer killed in the area, not a specific targeted cull. If the strain of TB found in Deer is different to cattle, DAFM should withdraw from operations.

Gerry Leckey (NPWS) reminded members that the animals to be tested would be drawn from the 13,000 approx. animals killed in the county every year on average.

Sean Eustace stated that TB is a welfare issue for deer and therefore an IDMF issue.

ACTION POINT - James O Keeffe (DAFM) will write to the Chief Veterinarian Officer to query the status of strain testing for TB in Wicklow.

7. Reports from Working Groups

- *Communications and Best Practice Working Group*
Report as per Matters Arising with the following additions – The group will convene on September 21st to progress the outstanding BPG and website issues.
- *Deer Hotspots Working Group*
No issues to report.
- *Deer Data Working Group*
Awaiting responses to recent letters to DAHG.
- *TB working Group*
No Report.

8. Review of Forum

The Chair circulated a review document and outlined the contents to the members. The TB issue was outlined as an external item as it was not included in the initial task list for the Forum.

The final columns and suggested actions are the opinions of the Chair.

The Chair requested responses within two weeks, including feedback from members. The review group will be convened prior to the next meeting and documents circulated.

9. Members Updates

Damien Hannigan stated that his organisation had met with NPWS in Killarney in relation to the proposed deer cull, and were seeking to establish a stakeholder group on the management of the Parks Deer moving forward.

Ferdia Marnell (NPWS) outlined recent invasive species regulations at EU level that have implications for deer across the EU, and which if adopted will require the preparation of management plans for specific species identified as invasive at European level.

Liam Nolan stated that 120 new people had been certified under the HCAP programme. He also stated that Deer Alliance had attempted to establish FSAI accreditation to their programme to bring it into line with Game Meat Handling regulations, but the FSAI are presenting a number of barriers to this.

10. AOB

No Comments.

11. Next Meeting

2pm Thursday , December 8th , 2016.

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