

Irish Deer Management Forum

Fourth Meeting MINUTES

2pm Wednesday, September 16th 2015
Venue: Knights Building, 7 Ely Place, Dublin 2

Independent Chair: Judith A. Annett.

Attendance:

Chris Fox	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA)	Farming
Pat Hennessy	Irish Farmers Association (IFA)	Farming
Tom Short	Irish Farmers Association (IFA)	Farming
Sean Eustace	Wicklow Forest Owners Group	Forestry
John Fenton	Association of Game Shoot Operators (AGSO)	Hunting
Paddy Purser	Pro Silva Ireland/SIF/AIFC	Forestry
Barry Coad	Coillte	Forestry
Liam Nolan	Deer Alliance	Training
Jim Walsh	Individual	Research/Technical
Declan Little	Woodlands of Ireland	Conservation
Declan O'Neill	Wicklow Deer Management Partnership	Deer Management Group
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
Tim Burkitt	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Government Department
Sean Doris	National Association of Regional Game Councils	Hunting

1. Chair's Business

The Chair began the meeting with a statement acknowledging the work of the Forum to date.

Dr. Ferdia Marnell of DAHG was welcomed to the forum as a DAHG representative. Dr Marnell is a zoologist in the Scientific Unit of the National Parks & Wildlife Service and will replace Dr. Tim Burkitt, who has recently retired from the Department. The Chair acknowledged the work of Dr. Burkitt in developing knowledge of Deer in Ireland, and for his work in developing the Forum as a response to the issue.

2. Apologies

Mr. John O'Neill Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Mr. Gerry Leckey, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Mr. Damien Hannigan, Wild Deer Association of Ireland
Mr. Paddy Purser, Pro Silva Ireland/Society of Irish Foresters

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were presented to the Forum and a discussion ensued.

Some members objected to the inclusion of the term 'prescribed legal season 2015/2016' in action point 4. The chair and a number of members expressed a clear recognition of a proposal to hunt within season. A discussion centred around a specific proposal to reduce deer populations in the Calary area within the specified season. It was felt that a 'concerted effort' should not unnecessarily block Section 42/ Section 23 Licence availability.

The issue of the interim report from the IDMF were raised, and several members expressed issues with the process of the issue of the letter of recommendations to the ministers. The Chair stated that the recommendations were based on the outcomes of the meeting of June 16th.

A discussion regarding the process of draft minutes then followed. It was proposed that the letter of recommendations would be corrected collectively by the forum and reissued and current versions replaced on websites.

To date no acknowledgement of the letter and recommendations have been received from Ministers. S Dunne (DAFM) stated he would check with his Minister regarding receipt and acknowledgment and DAHG representatives undertook to do the same with their Minister.

4. Matters Arising

Action Point arising: Arising from the discussions regarding the minutes and Letters it was proposed by the chair that all decisions would be recorded as proposed actions and clearly defined as such, as a decision is made, recorded, proposed, seconded and approved by the forum.

It was also suggested that some form of on-line members forum be used for exchange of minutes/synopses and that the difference between DRAFT MINUTES and AGREED MINUTES be clearly defined.

In principle, a record of decisions made by the Forum will be kept versus proposed actions, as a decision is made, recorded, proposed, seconded and approved. Any response shall be as a collective forum, and not as an individual.

Minutes of the Third Meeting were adopted, subject to amendments.

Action Point – The issue of a Deer Species Action Plan will be raised with NPWS.

This issue was discussed and NPWS members present at the forum were of the view that this approach was unlikely to receive priority attention at present given competing demands from species which are actually threatened or endangered.

3. Correspondence

Correspondence from Mr. Barry Coad was received in relation to suggestions regarding the handling of minutes and outputs from the Forum Working Groups.

Further correspondence was received from Mr. Damien Hannigan, of the WDAI, in relation TB in deer and the outcomes of recent meetings between his organisation and DAFM in relation to the issue. This statement will be circulated to the forum and the TB working Group.

4. Action Plan and Further Information:

This item was dealt with comprehensively under Chairs Business.

5. Presentations

FORDEER PROJECT

Dr. Simon Harrison and Dr. Fidelma Butler of UCC made a presentation to the forum in relation to recent work related to a deer activity index, a method for rapid assessment of deer populations. Preliminary results appear promising and the DAI technique is now being used by UCC to query the Indicative Deer Conflict Map and refine this further.

A copy of this presentation will follow in due course.

6. Reports from Sub Groups

6.1 IDMF HOTSPOT SUB GROUP

Mr. Sean Eustace is convenor of the Deer Hotspot Group.

A full report from this group is attached.

A new Deer Management group is to be established in the Manor Kilbride area, and will operate under the umbrella of the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership.

The presentation from UCC regarding DAI has immediate relevance to the deer conflict hotspots issue.

6.2 IDMF DATA GROUP

Dr. Tim Burkitt is the convenor of the Data Group and made a brief presentation.

A report by the group is attached.

There are issues around existing data, future data requirements and current and future research requirements, and the need for applied research to meet some of these needs.

IDMF agreed Action Point

The Data Group will request a meeting with NPWS as a matter of urgency, towards coordination of effort on a national online database of hunting returns. Unified data on licencing and cull returns, including a tagging system are an eventual objective.

The system currently being implemented by the Loughs Agency in relation to electronic licence/data management presents a useful model to inform development of similar structures for Deer Management and should be explored further.

IDMF agreed Action Point

The Chair will write to DAFM/DAHG in relation to research requirements and opportunities that may be available.

6.3 COMMUNICATIONS AND BEST PRACTICE GROUP

Mr. Liam Nolan is the Convenor of the Communications and Best Practice Group
A report by the group is also attached.

The question of whether the Communications Group or the Chair should deal with Media issues was raised.

Regarding a Deer Management APP, Deer alliance have approved funding for such an app. And need to revisit design of such an app vis a vis the work of the IDMF Data Group in this area, as there is a high degree of crossover on the issues involved.

A core objective of this group is to reconfigure best practice regarding deer management in Ireland. There is Broad approval for the UK BP guides adoption, and based on current costings and proposals it is proposed to produce 12 BP guides adopted for Ireland and produced in hard copy.

In relation to mandatory certification, there is no broad agreement between hunting bodies and departments in relation to this, and a clear distinction is needed between the issue of certification v.s training.

The deer alliance training package is being restructured and it may be possible to reshape this to IDMF requirements, and again a high degree of integration with the activities of the Data group is required. There are also issues around hygiene, gralloch disposal that need to be explored with the TB group

Proposals for Training and hygiene issues can be presented at the next IDMF meeting.

6.4 TB GROUP

Mr. Tom Shortt is Convenor of the TB Group.

Minutes of the TB Group meeting on July 1st are attached.

The TB issue is not simply a Wicklow issue.

The question was raised as to whether the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership should manage a cull in the Calary area.

Proposals from the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership will be brought to the forum. It is also vital that these issues are brought to the attention of ministers. DAFM should take account of Deer TB levels when assessing the risk of TB in an area.

Action Point The Forum should request DAFM to take the lead on the issue of TB and Deer populations.

Organisation is required to reduce deer populations and local deer management groups offer an avenue to delivering Deer Management Inputs. Coordination is also an issue and there is an assumption that the WDMP will operate as a coordinating body for deer management.

There is not full support within the forum for DAFM to lead any operations, however it is acknowledged that DAFM may be in a position to coordinate operations.

Action Point Tom Shortt and a small number of other members will meet with the Chair and DAFM to discuss DAFM involvement with that Calary issue.

7. Media/Public Relations

Media issues were again discussed and it is intended to establish an IDMF website in due course. In the interim, DAFM/DAHG are providing space on departmental websites. Documents etc. can be found at

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/forests-service-general-information/deer-management/>

A more comprehensive discussion of media issues

It was also proposed that a statement by the IDMF chair would issue at a point in the future where sufficient consensus exists to define such a statement on behalf of the forum.

8. Members Update

No issues arising.

9. AOB

No issues

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 16th, 2015.