



IRISH DEER
MANAGEMENT FORUM

Minutes of Reconvened Ninth Meeting

11 AM Wednesday, June 14th, 2017

Venue: Knights Building, Ely Place, Dublin 2

Attendance:

Tom Shortt	Irish Farmers Association (IFA)	Farming
Damien Hannigan	Wild Deer Association of Ireland	Hunting
John Fenton	Association of Game Shoot Operators (AGSO)	Hunting
Paddy Purser	Pro Silva Ireland/SIF/AIFC	Forestry
Jim Walsh	Individual	Research/Technical
Declan Little	Woodlands of Ireland	Conservation
Declan O'Neill	Wicklow Deer Management Partnership	Deer Management Group
Pat Meskell	DAFM/Calary Deer Project Chair	Government Department
Seamus Dunne	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Government Department
John O'Neill	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Government Department
James O'Keefe	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Government Department
Michael Fenlon	National Association of Regional Game Councils	Hunting
Tim Burkitt	Individual	Research/technical
Ferdia Marnell	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Government Department
Gerry Leckey	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Government Department

1. Chairs business

The Chair, Judith Annett outlined that she had received a letter from DAFM dated 24/04/2017 offering her reappointment as IDMF Chair until March 2018, and she had accepted the offer. The new arrangement involves an increased number of days per year from the previous 17 to 40 days in keeping with the requirements of the job.

She had since met with the working group Convenors to discuss their views on the continuation and future working of their groups.

Michael Fenlon National Chairman of the National Association of Regional Game Councils was introduced to the Forum and welcomed by the Chair and the members.

The Chair was also particularly glad to have the attendance of John O'Neill at the meeting representing DAFM

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from

- Liam Nolan, Deer Alliance
- Sean Eustace, Independent member.
- Fidelma Farrell, DAFM
- Barry Coad, Coillte
- Wesley Atkinson, NPWS
- Chris Fox, ICMSA
- Pat Hennessey, IFA

3. Minutes of the 8th meeting and non-quorate 9th meeting

Minutes of the eighth meeting were adopted without amendment.

Declan O'Neill raised the issue of wording in a previous IDMF statement regarding deer and impacts on spring grazing. He asked that the statement would be reviewed as some members had not been satisfied with the wording of the statement. Some revisions discussed at the 9th meeting had not been included.

ACTION POINT - The Chair Undertook to discuss this matter further with relevant IDMF members regarding a revised wording and amend the statement on the IDMF website if necessary.

4. Matters arising from both 8th and non-quorate 9th meetings

- 4.1 The chair stated that she had met Minister Heather Humphreys TD with Minister Andrew Doyle TD and both sets of senior officials. She briefly outlined discussions which had included the importance of acting on recommendations when agreed through IDMF. Ministers had supported full implementation of recommendations and agreed that the Forum was in the best position to chart an agreed way forward.
- 4.2 The previous action point regarding strain typing of TB samples from Wicklow has not been addressed to date due to personnel and resource limitations at DAFM. It is hoped that this issue can be addressed in the future when resources permit.
- 4.3 The issue regarding IDMF representation on the Calary Project steering group had been addressed and Tom Shortt will be the IDMF representative on this steering group.
- 4.4 There has been no contact with NPWS by the Forum regarding a Killarney stakeholder group.
- 4.5 Open Seasons order – Damien Hannigan stated that this issue has been the subject of a number of PQ's in recent weeks via Sean Fleming TD. The IDMF will keep a watching brief in this space.

5. Correspondence

- 5.1 The Chair had received written correspondence from Minister Heather Humphreys dated 12th May 2017 detailing a response to the IDMF recommendations and forward programme. (This correspondence had been attached to the agenda)
- 5.2 Jim Walsh has corresponded with the Chair via email to ask for improvements in the structure and workings of the forum.
- 5.3 There has been no further contact from Wicklow Co. Co. in relation to previous requests by the Council in relation to deer impacts on road safety etc.

6. IDMF First Report to end 2016 (for information only)

- a. For members' information – The Chair presented the 1st Report of IDMF (previously circulated) to the two ministers in March 2016. This has been accepted by the membership and transmitted to the two Departments concerned.

7. Progress of IDMF recommendations

For members information

Judith Annett had met with both Ministers and had stressed the importance of implementing the IDMF recommendations were implemented both in a timely manner and as they had been worked through by the relevant stakeholders and were the purpose of the IDMF's existence. Ministers had agreed that this should be the case.

The following progress had been made by the date of the 9th Meeting on the recommendations.

- **IDMF 1** – Calary Working Group has been convened by DAFM, chaired by Pat Meskell. A local facilitator had been appointed funded through both Departments. Local meetings had been held. Links between landowners and hunters formed and protocols agreed with the Manor Kilbride Hunter Landowner protocol forming a useful template. There had been agreement from DAFM to facilitate Section 42 licences as normal where the damage criteria were met to allow action during the closed season . The main action on the project will begin in 2017/2018 hunting season.
- **IDMF 2** – DAHRRGA has advised applicants for hunting licenses that mandatory certification will be introduced on the timescale recommended by IDMF. The Deer Alliance is facilitating applications for HCAP to assist the process.
- **IDMF 3** –DAHRRGA has accepted the recommendation that more data should be gathered from licence applicants, as a first step it has circulated a revised version of a questionnaire prepared by the IDMF Data and Research Working Group. Some 1500 questionnaires have been returned to date. No timetable has been set for the introduction of e licensing or for a carcass tagging scheme which had also formed part of the recommendation.

In relation to E Licencing Gerry Leckey said that a business case has been made to NPWS, but that funding for IT projects like this is not presently available.

Paddy Purser stated that there appears to be no movement on this issue and the IDMF group should be central to scoping and designing such a programme or project.

The Chair stated that there has been a longstanding recommendation based on voluntary inputs and there should be a response from the Department involved. She asked that the Deer Data group would be included with the scoping process for any IT system set up to deliver e licencing. A schedule for action was agreed by IDMF to be vital.

Ferdia Marnell stated that the IDMF expertise would be utilised when a scoping phase for e licencing issues arises. He stated that this issue is being treated seriously by the Department.

ACTION POINT - *Chair to Write to Minister asking to prioritise E-Licencing for hunters as a major issue in providing live and effective information for deer management. It was further agreed to ask that IDMF expertise will be utilised in scoping and designing this. The Department should be asked to provide more detail on a schedule for action on this issue by the Department.*

ACTION POINT - *As a contingency in the event of a change of one or both Ministers, the Chair will arrange to meet with both Ministers to update them on the IDMF and key issues.*

8. Working Group Review

The chair has recently met with all convenors to identify which of the existing working groups have completed their purpose and any need for new working groups or executive groups or arrangements to take IDMF work forward more efficiently during 2017-18.

Wild Deer Research and Data Working Group

Tim Burkitt- Convenor outlined his view of the continuing need for The Deer Research and Data group. The Forum agreed that the Group will continue with its programme during the next phase of the IDMF and that it should include producing a digest of existing data and research.

The Working Group should also identify more links with academic researchers and consider data and information from both sides of the Irish border. Tim Burkitt outlined returns from the recent questionnaire sent out as part of the licensing process and discussed sample results. More than 1500 questionnaires had been received from hunters.

Wild Deer Conflicts Working Group (formerly Wild Deer Hotspots Working Group)

Sean Eustace Convenor was not able to attend the meeting

The chair stated she had met with Sean Eustace and agreed that no region had emerged to date as requiring a new regional approach. The Working Group had done useful work in bringing forward the Manor Kilbride Initiative and the landowner hunter protocol to inform local deer management initiatives.

In light of the NPWS intention to prepare a management plan for Red Deer in Killarney National Park, the Working Group would meet on a further occasion to look at the potential to widen this plan to a deer range scale in view of a range of local concerns. Following completion of this advice the Forum agreed that the Deer Conflicts Working Group should stand down.

Several members made the point that it was important for local deer initiatives to emerge from interest and commitment in the local areas and that IDMF should never impose a structure.

Bovine TB in Deer Working Group

Tom Shortt – Convenor outlined that the Working Group had achieved its initial objective in bringing forward an intensive pilot wild deer management programme in the Calary Area. The Working Group chair was the IDMF link with the Calary working group formed to steer the project. Consideration of the impacts of the Calary project and disseminating any learning points from the project would be important and it was his view that the Working Group was still required. Tom Shortt stated that he would like to stand down as working group convenor but that the TB group should remain. It was agreed by the Forum that the Working Group should convene again under Mr Shortt's convenorship to consider the group's specific role now that the Calary Steering Group was in place and whether it should also have a remit for animal welfare and food safety matters. It was suggested that the TB group should advise and develop generic protocols for dealing with TB issues at local level and combine with the learning from the Deer Conflicts Working Group in producing these and incorporate these into generic deer conflicts protocols.

Communications, Good Practice and Training Working Group.

Liam Nolan- Convenor, was not able to attend the meeting. The group had established the Forum's website and had gained permission to adapt existing Good Practice Guides from elsewhere for the Ireland context. The IDMF Chair had discussed the future of the Communications Working group with Liam Nolan and identified that there was an ongoing requirement for this group in relation to finalising and maintaining the website, in completing the good practice guides in an Ireland context and in assisting with communication of IDMF recommendations and public statements. It was agreed by the Forum to retain the Communications, Good Practice and Training Working Group and also to ask it to prepare a Communications Strategy for the Forum.

Selection of Convenors for Working Groups

The Chair had initially identified Convenors for all of these groups but now members recommended and agreed that the Convenors could be agreed by the Working Groups themselves provided that each Convenor was a member of and reported to the Forum. The Forum agreed that people other than IDMF members could be members of working groups, provided that a balance of interests was maintained on the group.

ACTION POINT Sean Eustace– Deer Conflict Group to consider and advise IDMF on the merits of a regional deer management approach to address wild deer issues in Kerry, to define generic deer conflict criteria, and then stand down as appropriate.

ACTION POINT –Tom Shortt Bovine TB in Wild Deer Group will be retained and will convene as quickly as possible and select a new Convenor, and define its function under the next phase of IDMF, with reference to the IDMF Action Plan to March 2018.

ACTION POINT – Tim Burkitt The Deer Data and Research Group will be retained. The group is requested to develop a relevant research digest to guide the Forum and to establish links with suitable University Research Units to identify relevant research for dissemination to IDMF.

ACTION POINT – Liam Nolan – The Communications, Best Practice and Training Working Group should complete the suite of Best Practice Guides for wild deer management for the Ireland context. Working group to develop a Communications Strategy for the Forum in conjunction with the Chair.

Update of the CALARY Project

Pat Meskell (DAFM) provided an update on the Calary Project. The Calary Steering Group was convened and a local Coordinator Mr. Joe Sinnott, appointed. A farm meeting took place on January 13th 2017 outlining the objectives and protocols of the project. A meeting held on 4th April 2017 was attended by 60-70 people from the hunting sector and this was a very positive meeting.

Wicklow is thought to be the worst Bovine TB blackspot nationally with bTB present in Cattle, Badgers and Deer. As yet, no strain typing has been carried out, but the high level of TB prevalent in cattle in the area is thought to be a factor in the high levels of uptake in deer.

The cattle herd incidence in Wicklow had stood at 15%, but has reduced since 2010 to 5.5%. The national average incidence is 2.2%. Levels in Wicklow West remain above 10%.

The project Steering group was established in 2016, the IDMF is represented via Tom Shortt as convenor of the TB in Wild Deer Working Group. P. Meskell is chair of the group and the project is jointly funded by DAFM/NPWS. A control area away from the initial 6 DED area has been identified and protocols for deer samples is in place, hunters will provide head and lungs and GPS coordinates of deer shot. These samples are deep-frozen and despatched to DAFM laboratories for analysis en masse. Most farmers have now linked up with hunters or opened communications with the project.

Further study is required to establish limiting contact between Deer and Cattle and initial experiments by DAFM are under way.

9. Species Management and Action Plans for Deer

Members were requested by the chair to consider IDMF role and arrangements to bring forward a set of wild deer management plans for Red Deer, Sika, Fallow, and an invasive species action plan for Muntjac deer. This would inform the content of an overall Deer Management Strategy for Ireland, a requirement of IDMF work programme.

The chair stated that this initiative is intended to bridge the gap between the *Deer in Ireland Framework for Action* Document and local level wild deer management. Species action plans could provide the 'why' and the 'how' to deer management between strategic frameworks and local level plans At present there is no common

objective thread in relation to individual species. Species action plans could provide this.

Tim Burkitt stated that it was important to distinguish the role of different species on different types of property in the wider landscape. Specific objectives are required for all three species on this basis.

Jim Walsh stated that the development of species action plans will not deliver any tangible benefits over and above the stated objectives already there.

Ferdia Marnell stated that there was possibly a case for SAPs for Kerry Red Deer , and that an Action Plan for Muntjac was required under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulations.

Declan Little stated that there should be some policy for Red deer beyond national parks to protect them from Hybridisation and to minimise their impacts. It is more important to develop Deer Management Groups to actually manage Sika and Fallow than to write plans that may not be used. There is a need for action on the ground.

James O Keeffe stated that the wildlife acts primarily conserve species but measures are also needed to define what is sustainable levels of populations and outcomes, and what the sustainable densities for different areas are.

Tim Burkitt said that there are differences in tolerances between species, and the impacts of different species on different types of lands and land use.

John Fenton stated that deer species in Wicklow are now heavily hybridised and there needs to be an idea of what we want to achieve with these. There are also more hunters in recent years and a need to consider their requirements.

Ferdia Marnell outlined that the EU Regulations give Member States up to 18 months to produce a species action plan for each listed species (such as muntjac) but that in the absence of a specific plan, a 12 month open season had been put in place and efforts were being made to eradicate the species.

ACTION POINT – There is little overall support for Species action plans for Deer. IDMF will assist with imminent NPWS invasive species action plan for Muntjac. The need for a management plan for Red Deer in Kerry will also be examined.

ACTION POINT - The IDMF will write to the managers at Killarney National Park regarding a potential role for IDMF in planning for Red Deer management in the Park.

10. Technology Transfer

C Nugent (Forest Service) briefly outlined plans for a working group covering Action point WGS2 Forestry and Agriculture Technology Transfer Group. This is a targeted training programme aimed at professionals in the Forestry and Agriculture sectors.

This work package is intended to address current Deer Management technical capacity requirements within the forestry and agriculture sectors.

A number of work outputs are required to develop this capacity, including the development of professional deer management training for land management professionals operating in areas where deer are a land management constraint, and development of general deer awareness and education programmes for use in the wider agriculture sectors.

Work package outputs will include the development of accredited deer management training, in partnership with a suitable accreditation institute. This training will be integrated with existing CPD programmes within the professional sectors concerned, and current third level agriculture and forestry training and education programmes. A wider deer awareness programme will be developed for delivery via agriculture and rural development stakeholders such as farming organisations.

1. The sub-group should examine suitable deer management training programmes abroad, and make recommendations regarding curriculum content.
2. The sub-group will identify a suitable training/education establishment and develop an accredited professional training curriculum for delivery in conjunction with this establishment.
3. Once developed, the module can be integrated with existing CPD programmes and third level training/education programmes.
4. A basic deer awareness programme for use by general agriculture sectors and rural communities can be developed from 1,2,3 above. This programme will be delivered in conjunction with relevant farming and rural development organisations.
5. WP1 will be delivered not later than December 2015.
6. The project management team for WP1 will be drawn from qualified deer management professionals within the Forestry, conservation and agriculture sectors.
7. WP1 package will be operated and funded via the Forest Service Technology transfer programme 2014-2020.

The proposal outlined was supported in principle by the Forum who requested a formal proposal and objectives.

ACTION POINT – Proposal for Objectives and Programme to be finalised and circulated to the forum. Two main threads are to be considered – capacity building within Teagasc to provide advice on managing wild deer to farmers, and a programme in wild deer management and forest design for foresters. A project implementation group should be convened and start work on this item. This working group will be linked to the Communications, Best Practice and Training Working Group.

11. **AOB** No topics were raised.

12. **Dates of the next meetings** -

The forum should consider day long working meetings to allow for working groups in the morning, longer discussion of proposals and a plenary meeting in the afternoon.

Wednesday, 13th September, 2017 (request for Killarney NP venue to allow time in the field)

Wednesday, December 13th, 2017

Wednesday February 14th 2018