

Irish Deer Management Forum

Seventh Meeting

MINUTES

2pm Tuesday, June 8th 2016

Venue: Knights Building, 7 Ely Place, Dublin 2

1. Chair's Business

The chair stated that she had no reports to make, other than that she had attended an earlier meeting with the farming representatives on the Forum.

2. Apologies

Seamus Dunne DAFM

Fidelma Butler, DAFM

Wesley Atkinson, DAHG

Sean Doris, NARGC

3. Minutes of the Sixth Meeting

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

Mr. Tom Shortt (IFA) wished to add to the minutes that he had forwarded apologies prior to the last meeting, which he was unable to attend.

4. Matters Arising from the Sixth Meeting

- Hunter Certification Recommendation. This recommendation was adopted by vote during the sixth meeting and is now the agreed position of the IDMF on the matter.
- Best Practice Guidelines
25 Best practice guidelines are now being prepared and are currently being finalised. Some liaison is required with the Deer Initiative (UK) in relation to the use of graphics etc., but this is expected to be completed shortly.
- IDMF Website – www.idmf.ie and www.deerforum.ie will be the registered addresses of the IDMF online. The website is now underdevelopment and a beta version should be available by the end of June 2016. Confirmation of grant aid from DAFM/DAHG has been received. The cost of the website and registration and domain is c. €1700, and there will be an annual recurring maintenance charge of €100.

The chair thanked Mr. Nolan and the Communications group for their work on progressing these issues.

- Media Comments in Relation to IDMF – There has been some disquiet within the Forum in relation to recent media statements by Forum members criticising the Forum. The Chair stated that criticising the forum is unhelpful to the credibility of the Forum, and the Chair has discussed this issue with the parties involved.

5. Correspondence

- Letter from ICMSA – A letter has been received from the ICMSA President requesting an update. **ACTION POINT: The Chair will meet with the ICMSA to discuss progress to date and apparent ICMSA concerns relating to the Forum.**

- Letter from Deer Data Group

See letter attached and response from DAHG*. There is a need to follow up with DAHG and ensure a more specific response on an itemised basis in relation to the measures requested.

ACTION POINT: The Data Group will follow up with a further response to DAHG, to determine if there is a role for the Deer Data group in assisting with the design for any new Deer Licencing system.

The Data group also complained regarding the timeframe for issuing of minutes by the secretariat. The Secretary outlined that his role was contingent on availability of a time resource and that these resource issues have now been resolved.

- Letter from Minister of State Andrew Doyle TD* – The Minister has written to the Chair seeking an update on Forum progress to date.

ACTION POINT- The Chair Suggested a joint meeting with both Ministers Present and Convenors of the Current Sub-Groups. The briefing will outline progress of these groups to date and also establish a plan for continuity of the Forum into the future. Sub-group convenors as delegates will prepare brief presentations for this meeting.

- **Deer Technical Group DRAFT Plan for North Wicklow Cull***

This Draft plan arose from lobbying on behalf of the Deer TB subgroup and has been prepared jointly by staff from DAHG/DAFM.

ACTION POINT – The Forum are asked to review the Draft plan and respond to Mr Wesley Atkinson DAHG within 3 weeks.

A brief initial response from Forum Members was requested and a tour de table commenced:

Tom Short – The response took a long time at over six months but is welcomed. There are concerns remaining regarding the role of DAFM as leader. The role of the project coordinator will be critical.

Declan O Neill - Positively disposed to the plan but critical of the time taken to produce the plan. Wicklow Deer Management Partnership positively disposed but more details remain to be worked out.

Chris Fox – the resources being made available to implement the plan are ultimately a political decision. The area being treated is very small and it may not be possible to measure impact of the plan on such a small area when analysing the effect of the plan. The plan may not be adequately resourced.

Tim Burkitt – the Methodology appears arbitrary. We need to know what is there if we are to measure success, and the first hurdle of initial inventory remains to be crossed, and this must be repeated after the cull takes place.

Sean Eustace – Welcomed progress after the time elapsed. The area is small and confined to North Wicklow, but similar initial TB data is still not available for West Wicklow. There are sufficient levels of evidence of TB within the pilot area and care needs to be taken to avoid duplication of issues in the plan. The plan needs to have West Wicklow included, where the costs of TB to farmers is increasing. The use of private laboratories to analyse samples should also be explored. Given the resources available, a facilitator role only is likely for the plan.

Damien Hannigan – The link between Deer and TB is not sufficiently established and there is a need to move away from hearsay, and questionnaire based evidence regarding deer densities. There is a need to carry out the required work professionally. Will external professional hunting capacity be required to complete the plan? Will the laboratory methodology for TB culture be the same as in the previous study in North Wicklow.

Jim Walsh – The outcomes of testing frozen heads and pluck from deer sampled may not be the same as in the previous study, and there is likely to be a lower level of positive TB results. Such a study may serve establishment of future baseline levels.

Chair - There is a need for IDMF to be involved in the process, the timescales are long and more detail is required to make the plan functional. The plan should be viewed as a pilot and a learning process. The effects of the plan on the distribution and potential spread of deer also need to be considered. The chair expressed her thanks to the Deer Technical group for preparing the plan.

ACTION POINT : The Deer and TB Group should reconvene to discuss and provide a detailed response to the plan. A date of 16th June was proposed.

6. Reports from Working Groups

- *Communications and Best Practice Working Group*

Report as per matters Arising with the following additions - There is a need to define a public relations/public affairs space for the Forum that will ensure a positive public profile and credibility of the forum. There is a clear need for balanced responses to inaccurate or raised reporting or public statements. A new IDMF Logo is currently being prepared by graphic designers by the Group.

- *Deer Hotspots Working Group*

There are three fundamental issues that are of concern to the group.

'Deer Conflicts' is a more appropriate title for the group, since the issues seem to be defined by deer conflicts, which are easy to define, rather than deer 'hotspots'.

The Evidence base for deer management activity and conflict definition is also critical.

The responses and actions involved in planning and the impacts on animal health, impact areas, and economic impacts of these actions are also critical.

The attached document produced by the group outlines some of these issues.

- *Deer Data Working Group*

Awaiting responses to recent letters to DAHG.

- *TB working Group*

Reconvening to consider DAHG/DAFM Deer management plan.

7. Review of Forum

ACTION POINT – A small Forum review Group will be established to review the operation and structure of the forum. Members wishing to take part in this group should contact the Secretary in this regard as soon as possible.

A number of issues were identified by members for consideration.

8. Members Updates

D 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.

D. Little stated that Woodland of Ireland would shortly produce a Woodland Design/deer management information note for Professional foresters that would provide necessary guidance etc. to the sector on dealing with deer in Native Woodland.

Liam Nolan stated that the HCAP programme continues, is being developed further, and is developing into a training system rather than an assessment system.

9. AOB

No Comments.

10. Next Meeting

2pm Thursday , September 8th, 2016.

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

