

**From:** Noel Bugler  
**Sent:** Friday 10 January 2020 14:14  
**To:** Padraig ODonnell <[padraig.odonnell@chg.gov.ie](mailto:padraig.odonnell@chg.gov.ie)>  
**Cc:** Robert Edge <[Robert.Edge@chg.gov.ie](mailto:Robert.Edge@chg.gov.ie)>  
**Subject:** Fw: Slieve Blooms visit Jan 7th 2020

Padraig,

Please see email from Fergal Monaghan. I have not responded to this yet but will discuss with you before a response is issued. I have attached Robs notes of the same meeting to this email for your info also.

[REDACTED]

I decided to ask Rob to attend last Tuesday as they were visiting the NNR and I felt it would be better have representation there.

[REDACTED]

Whilst the goal of Tuesdays meeting is something we all want - ultimately I think NPWS need to meet with HH Project on this to clarify timelines and roles.

I would prefer that the high level meeting with NPWS and Coillte takes place first as a priority but we do need to clarify with HH Project what is happening with the Fire Resilience group and where it is going and how fast it is going and maybe why is it going?)

NPWS need to be given the space to manage the issue on the NNR without having to worry about the HH project unintentionally or otherwise undermining our role in that management. I am very happy to work with them but only on our terms as managers of the Nature Reserve.

I will discuss with you before deciding on how to respond to this email from Fergal.

Noel

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**From:** Fergal Monaghan <[Fergal.Monaghan@henharrierproject.ie](mailto:Fergal.Monaghan@henharrierproject.ie)>  
**Sent:** Thursday 9 January 2020 13:38  
**To:** Noel Bugler  
**Subject:** Slieve Blooms visit Jan 7th 2020

Noel

Thanks for facilitating the visit to the Slieve Blooms Nature Reserve earlier this week. I think it was a very useful event with lessons for all concerned, Dennis Canty and Eoin O Ceilleachair from Offaly Fire Service, Declan Power and Anthony Tynan from Laois Fire Service, Conor English from Coillte, Robert Edge from NPWS and myself were present. We visited Coillte lands affected by the fire near the Cut and at the Spink and NPWS lands on Wolftrap.

Declan Power Chief Fire Officer in Laois pointed out desirability of a high table from a fire fighting perspective, we seen one of the firebreaks dug during the event and the rationale for this action was explained by the Fire Officer. I pointed out that post fire this was acting as a drain and was most likely reducing the water table over a large area and that this might have consequences in terms of vegetation development and possible lead to an increased future fire risk.

We visited Wolf trap and Robert was able to show the group some of the drain blocking that had been carried out by NPWS in the past. Part of this area was burned over in 2018 but even in the burnt areas the survival of the large Sphagnum hummocks was very apparent, the heather was also regenerating well. The Fire Service Officers felt that the fire at this location was quite a cool fire and that only the leaves and fine twigs of heather were consumed, the survival of the sphagnum and regeneration of the heather would support this. I pointed out that high water table probably reduced the vigor of heather growth and the amount of fuel at this site. I think this made a good impression on the Fire Service and Coillte personnel on site and that there was an increased awareness that a high water table could increase the resilience of the site better than a firebreak or other barrier.

At the Spink it was very apparent how the fire had been channeled up the slope through a relatively narrow corridor with the flushes and streams on the side of Wolf Trap preventing flank fires spreading to the South and that once on the ridge the fires could spread. This too was a useful perspective on what happened on the day and certainly gave me a better understanding as to how the fire developed and how the topography of the site affected this.

We had useful discussions as well about water supply and access issues on Coillte lands that could facilitate the fire service in the event of future fires, I think real and rapid progress is possible in relation to these two issues, small simple things and certainly by themselves not enough but a start.

The feedback that I got from Coillte and the two Fire Services both on the day and since has been very positive and I think there is a willingness there to explore long term landscape level solutions. I still believe that we should proceed to a larger scale event but still informal field trip involving the key stakeholders (NPWS, Coillte, Laois and Offaly Fire services, farmer representatives, farm advisors and the Dept of Agriculture) before the breeding season. I think that this would be a really valuable and perhaps essential precursor to the development of a landscape level fire resilience plan.

I understand the sensitivities regarding certain issues involving Coillte and NPWS but I am certain that both parties would prefer not to air them at such an event and to deal with them on a bilateral basis. If necessary we could plan the event to avoid sites of particular concern in this regard.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss possible next steps whenever you are free. On a separate matter I would hope to be able to demonstrate the Nest Protection Management System to NPWS Regional Management before the end of the month.

Regards

Fergal

P.S. We seen 3 Grouse on Wolf Trap, I think it was the first time some of those present seen a grouse.