

Action 1.1:

Project co-ordinator was appointed in Nov. '18.

Action 2.1:

Project steering group up and running. Monthly PSG meetings held in NPWS office Kilafin. Members and meeting schedules in appendix. Meeting held in

Jan 2020,

April 2020 (zoom)

July WUC social distance office meeting

September (zoom)

Dec (zoom)

One to one (co-ordinator + member) following strict guidelines for those not in a position to use zoom.

Further physical meetings cancelled until Covid19 regulations allow. Zoom meetings have been held

PSG zoom meeting held in April

PSG zoom meeting re Smart deer project held in May

Zoom meeting with Dept (DVO) in April

Action 3.1:

Monthly meetings updates to PSG members. All DMU's have had their separate landowner meeting setting out the approach and explaining of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Each landowner is updated regularly on the progress on their holdings and how it compares with the group as a whole.

Action 3.2:

January 2020 a strategy meeting was held where it was decided that 5 DMU's as currently exist is the maximum number that can be served. 2020 focus on data collection with the

- Purchasing of grass cages for forage loss estimation
- The Woodland Herbivore Impact Assessment Methodology once training is provided as agreed by DAFM
- Field evenings training and engagement

Coordinator attends meetings of farm/other organisations as requested,

All physical coordinator meetings in (4) 2021 are fully Covid compliant

Action 4.2

Monthly PSG meetings held in NPWS office Kilafin. It is has been agreed to move to quarterly meetings in 2020 along with regular updates as required by members or coordinator. **Covid guidelines**

Action 5.1

5 DMU's progressing very well meetings have been held with all to discuss issues and solutions and all DMU's have signed their M.O.U.

Action 5.2

Data collection in relation to sightings /culling set up by secure WhatsApp / text to coordinator phone and laptop.

RTA data is being sought from Garda Siochana.

A significant area of Public Health, but also animal welfare, is in mitigating the risk that deer can pose to vehicles using public roads. Members deal with deer vehicle collision issues on sections of roads in their areas and provide a service to the general public and the local authority and emergency services in the control of problem animals or and the humane dispatching of injured ones and the removal of carcasses.

Grass measurement protocol agreed with Teagasc on a simple credible methodology based on the limited resources available.

Action 5.3

- Ongoing assessments on the ground with local stakeholders and coordinator.
- Meeting with the lead stakeholder in each DMU at least monthly.
- The collaboration with Teagasc and the development of an agreed strategy for credible measurement of grassland deer damage and impact measurement
- A grass measurement protocol for landowners has been agreed.
- Grass cages purchased
- Cages on sites across county with emphasis on first measurement @ 1st silage cut
- Agreement of each DMU to have grass measurements on two landholdings
- Dept of Agriculture DVO agreement on providing TB testing of deer carcasses FOC for 3 DMU's.
- **Grass measurement in place, sample in appendix**
- **Dept of Agriculture to roll out deer carcasses sampling across the county on the basis of DMP designed template**

Action 5.4

PSG and landowners meetings with Teagasc, Coillte , DVO on issues and management solutions.

Field session on landowners holding January in West Wicklow. 65 landowners and hunters attended a meeting where

- Scientist from BackWeston gave a demonstration on deer health recognition
- Butcher gave a meeting handling cutting Demonstration
- PSG coordinator, DMU chair, Dept of Agriculture, Minister A Doyle and WUC chair spoke of the need and benefits of engagement for all.

Firearms course held in City West.

A Field session which was planned for East and South Wicklow in 2020 was cancelled for the moment (Covid 19) plans to present in Tinahely / Aughrim area in time for the 2021 open season(TB is not a Sct 42 reason).

Action 6.1:

Regular reviews of the existing DMUs in Co. Wicklow are carried out by the coordinator no major amendments at the moment, but the sharing of data re individual deer managers (culls) is being looked at. Currently deer mgrs have requested that individual cull numbers be confidential and only shared as part of the whole DMU. This will come down to the landowner understanding that poor deer mgrs do not serve their best interest.

Action 7.1:

- As in 6.1: Data is GDPR protected.
- Currently the deer mgrs (hunters) WhatsApp /Text their cull numbers etc to the coordinator on a secure phone or e-mail specifically for this project.
- Signed agreement that this information is not shared. or divulged as an individual number only as a collective for each DMU.
- The coordinator can share and discuss each deer mgrs returns with the applicable landowner.

There still is a reluctance on landowners to share with other DMU members activities on individual holdings.

Action 7.2:

Standardisation of out of season counts

All DMU's use section 42 so cull numbers for out of season will be available.

Project co-ordinator is engaged with UCD SMARTDEER Initiative in the development of a standardised method of deer data collection.

Covid 19 interrupted

Project Steering Group had a zoom session with Siomone Cuti on the Smartdeer App which will be a huge step in the capture of deer numbers and trending of deer populations enabling all parties to simplify culling / management requirements. The PSG were extremely impressed with the App and engaged fully along with making additional suggestions which will be of benefit. The discussion was broad and covered the issues of who will have control of the App once developed. Central to the discussion was the ability of the App to capture separately Deer Mgt Units data and suspected deer health issues. The funding of these App additions would not be huge but would be necessary and it is hoped by the PSG that NPWS would be a natural home for the App which could streamline Sct 42 issues etc.

Action 8.1a:

- At all times it has been made clear to all interested parties be they landowners, hunters, the general public or media enquiries that this project is about deer management as opposed to sporting or recreational hunting.
- All landowners in each individual DMU have agreed to seek Sct 42 for out of season control.
- Wicklow is the only county where Sct 42's are dealt with in the county.
- NPWS in Wicklow who hold a seat on the PSG have been to the forefront in understanding the correct use and need for speedy turnaround of applications.
- We are seeking information on the possibility of NPWS sharing the Sct 42 returns for each DMU landowner with landowner agreement.
- Landowners in a DMU where their holding or part of stretch into Dublin have difficulty in getting sct 42 in a speedy and efficient manner.

As the project progressed and awareness spread it came to our attention that hunters with no association to the project were presenting to farmers that they were part of the project and seeking permission to hunt on that basis.

Not only were they misrepresenting themselves some were more than 80km from their residence at a time when 5km restrictions were in place.

Gardai were informed and a PR campaign helped get across the message that the project was about managing deer and selective culls.

Irish Farmers Journal ran a short piece and are planning full article.

Ear to the Ground in process of filming the project at present.

Primetime aired the 2020 Wicklow Deer Mgt project in June 2021...while it was shortened the feed back has been mostly very positive. Some hunters were unhappy that the project does not use "recreational hunters", it has been explained to them that the culling of any animal let alone deer which are part of Irish heritage for recreation is not PR positive. The project recommends that any culling done to manage deer is carried out in a "Professional manner" and that the difference between recreational and professional is in the training and the intent. This seems to be starting to be accepted.

Following the Primetime airing RTE came back to discuss the issue on the basis that the feedback to the station had been positive re the need to manage deer and that culling was seen as a necessary part of any management process. This represents a huge change in the viewpoints. Conor McMorrow (RTE) felt that the explanation of the fact that deer have no natural predator and that no culling for fun (recreational) occurred resonated with even the most ardent deer lover.

The fact that the feedback was so positive would indicate that a full programme may be dedicated to the issue and that finally the broad consensus was that any cull to manage and improve the species is now far from being unacceptable and is now deemed as necessary.

Action 8.1b

MKDMG have a leaflet which is being used a promotional aid.

Action 8.2

Application to Leader for funding for Hunter Competence Assessment Programme and grass measurement training, awaiting Dept (Pobal agreement on suitability).

Tenders drawn up and approved technically, fiscally (public procurement) and relevantly.

Application refused on the basis of deer focused.

Action 8.3

- Coordinator deals with media (Radio and Print) requests.
- Presents to and is available to farm organisations etc for advice and information.
- Care is also required to walk the line of avoiding emotive language like “ Cull” etc.

Workshop in January provided not only an educational presentation but a partnership tool where all parties realised that they were all together and needed each other. It was the first time that hunters realised that their role was not just recognised but crucial to the success and any culling was not only about managing deer numbers but also about breeding a better deer.

Project coordinator has had Primetime with Conor McMorrow spend a day in Wicklow interviewing a Farmer a Hunter and NPWS Regional Mgr on the benefits and needs for integrated and planned deer management.

The programme has aired see previous point

Huge interest from media and positive feedback from the wildlife experts on the programme where culling is starting to be seen as necessary for the management and improvement of the deer population.

Action 8.4

Wicklow Uplands Council then contracted authority have apart time PR officer to help in the promotion and dissemination of the work.

Action 9.1:

All DMU landowners and deer mgrs have accepted that they must ensure deer welfare is taken fully into account at individual animal and population level through effective planning and delivery of deer management activities. DMUs should carry out an assessment of the state of deer health and promote positive welfare. Members will monitor and report any significant levels of winter mortality or significant health issues encountered.

Field session in west completed very successfully. Further roll outs on hold until after Covid 19.

Action 9.2:

Following meetings (ongoing) with the Dept of Agriculture Veterinary Sct, 2 DMU's have reached an agreement (Buttermountain and Cloughlea) to supply a freezer at a central location for the collection of deer plucks and heads from hunters, packing, logging, freezing and delivery facilities for TB testing will be in place in very early 2020. It is hoped to have this also in the new south Wicklow proposed DMU.

Protocol agreed and was ongoing until social distancing and lockdown occurred.

A template was agreed for the DMU's and to be offered to all area's on successful completion.

Draft template agreed with DVO for countywide use.

Veterinary surgeon now part of the management team (voluntary) to check deer health etc.

The pilot project agreed for TB is now in use across the county where TB black spots arise. It is hoped more technical training on this will be provided. In order to facilitate farmer engagement where TB is a serious issue, the Dept is offering to test plucks of deer culled in problem areas. The requirement is for a reasonable number of deer to be culled on these farms and all tested in a timely manner. Where a local hunter is unable to provide this in a short time frame we have a number of very proficient deer managers who can cull for the landowner on a one off basis so not

to interfere with the landowner / hunter relationship. This is an option for the landowner to decide and hopefully will take a lot of the emotion out of the issue.

Action 10.1:

Meetings with Teagasc and PSG on research is ongoing. Following a meeting in Johnstown Research Centre with Teagasc regional manager, Zoologist and local Instructor a simplified grass measurement protocol has been deemed acceptable.

18 grass cages for grassland measurement purchased and in place.

In use for silage season 2020 and spring 2021 early grass programme

HUNTER ID

Manor Kilbride MH study
Laboratory Sample Submission Form

Tag Number
 (Colour_number eg R12)

Version 2

Details (for all deer shot & examined by hunter)	
Date Shot	
Shot Location	
Shot Location GPS	
Species	
Age	
Sex	

Hunter Findings: (Circle)	Lab Findings			
<u>Not</u> suspect TB	SUBMIT only Tag/ear (in universal)	Gross	Histo	m.bovis
Suspect TB	SUBMIT			

Hunter Submission	SAMPLE	Submission (Tick)	Lab use only: Received
<u>Not</u> Suspect TB <i>Submit to Pat Mellon for freezing</i>	Tagged Skin (in plastic tube)		
Suspect TB (double bagged) <i>Submit to Pat Mellon for dispatch</i>	Tagged Head & Pluck		
Suspect TB (double bagged) <i>Submit to Pat Mellon for dispatch</i>	Tagged Head <i>only</i>		
Suspect TB (double bagged) <i>Submit to Pat Mellon for dispatch</i>	Tagged Pluck <i>only</i>		



Manor Kilbride Deer Management Project

Advice on improving biosecurity on TB risk farms

The Manor Kilbride Deer Management Project suggests that farmers take the following precautions to minimise risk of TB infections on their farms arising from badgers, deer or other wildlife:

1. Put electric/barbed wire fencing around any known badger sets/latrines on your land

Reason: These are sources of infection and disease could be ingested from grazing or nasal discharges on infected areas

2. Ensure shed doors are closed if you're ground feeding fodder or meals

Reason: (i) While healthy badgers are unlikely to enter sheds diseased ones may do so.

(ii) Deer may enter sheds at night to consume fodder and pose a disease risk

3. Request all hunters to disinfect their boots before going onto your land to avoid contamination from other farms that they may have visited before
4. Minimise nose to nose contact at all costs, particularly around ring feeders

Reason: This is the highest risk for disease transmission from animal to animal – deer to cattle, cattle to deer

5. Raise drinking troughs above badger drinking/bathing height (only possible on non-sheep farms)

Reason: (i) believed to be a serious cause of TB transmission

(ii) to avoid risk of diseased nasal discharges from badgers

6. Clean drinking troughs on a regular basis

Reason: Many pests and diseases can survive for a long time in water until they find another host. TB organism survives in water

Code of Practice for Hunter

- a. Respect that landowners own the land and therefore need to give permission to hunt
- b. Annually show Firearms Certificate and provide copy of insurance to landowner
- c. Provide evidence of training and competence in best-practice management and culling of wild deer through HCAP or equivalent
- d. Abide by good hunting practices including gralloching, disease examination, reporting findings and gralloch disposal
- e. Communicate with landowners to avoid wasted journeys when other hunters also permitted
- f. Commit to hunt regularly and to provide evidence of pre-agreed numbers shot
- g. Inform farmer by text before entering and at departure
- h. Inform landowner after each visit on numbers shot and abnormalities found
- i. Have clear respect for landowners situation and concern on TB risk by responsible offal and blood disposal
- j. Use regular texting/calling for communicating
- k. Give feedback to landowners on deer impact, damage
- l. Advise landowner early to enable earlier application for post season Section 42's.
- m. Demonstrate numbers of deer culled with evidence eg. Pair of ears, lower jaw etc.

Code of Practice for Landowner

- a. Acknowledge that a good hunter is a worthwhile partner
- b. Have zero tolerance for unlicensed hunters or bad practices
- c. Avoid permission for multiple hunters as this is counterproductive
- d. Allow fewer but better hunters on the land, including hunters trained and certified to HCAP standard or equivalent
- e. Reduce number of casual hunters
- f. Agree hunting plan, target numbers and regular reporting procedure with hunter and help the hunter with information on deer activity, damage and sightings
- g. Demand feedback from hunters and agree numbers to be removed in advance
- h. Refuse renewal permit to hunters not meeting performance targets
- i. Focus on removing hinds preferably in a ratio of 4-5 hinds to 1 stag**
- j. Support co-ordination and grouping of neighbouring lands into hunting units