

## **Deer management - IDMSG**

The Irish Deer Management Strategy Group (IDMSG) is an ongoing collaboration between DAFM, NPWS & Coillte and is independently chaired by Mr Teddy Chashman. The IDMSG is the group tasked by Government to develop and implement the recommendations from the report attached in the link here [Launch of Deer Management Strategy Group Report](#). This report details in short to medium term the objectives of the IDMSG in delivering sustainable deer management objectives to ensure balanced deer populations in line with land use and wider biodiversity objectives.

One of the key recommendations concerns programme management. DAFM awarded a contract to FRS Co-Op to deliver 15 Deer Management Units (DMUs) nationwide. A key factor is that Coillte and NPWS have provided commitments that they will partake in any of these DMUs if located close to or adjoining their lands. This will ensure landscape wide deer management with collaboration from private and public landowners. This project is ongoing and will run for just over 3 years.

Over the coming months, key stakeholders will be invited to partake in update/information sessions to update on other important work that has been ongoing within the IDMSG. This may be an opportune time for the IAC to engage and receive a more comprehensive update. Please advise if they wish to receive more information about this.

It should be noted also that the current Programme for Government commits to ensuring this action plan, which is currently underway, is sufficiently resourced.

### **NPWS data**

There are currently no deer management plans (DMPs) understood to be in place in our national parks. Wicklow Mountains NP (WMNP) have confirmed that a DMP for that site is at draft stage. However, deer management remains a key conservation requirement in both National Parks & Nature Reserves (NRRs) where woodland habitats in particular are being impacted by deer and other grazers.

Data are provided in the attached spreadsheet outlining the number of deer shot under Sections 42 and 29 of the Wildlife Act (1976) in the National Parks network. All NPWS ranger staff are by default Sec 29 licence holders and many deer are shot under the provisions of this section of the Act, i.e. in accordance with the Open Seasons Order and in the period 1 hour before sunrise and 1 hour after sunset. Section 42 refers to night shooting, use of lamps, thermals spotters and deer outside their Open season period and separate data are provided for this provision.

Using WMNP as an example, a single Section 42 licence covers both WMNP and the other conservations sites in the county, as staff from inside/outside the NP often assist across the other sites. The Wicklow licence covers the "deer season" so straddles two years i.e. Sept to May the following year - other NP licences typically expire on 31 Dec in any given year. This discrepancy compounds data gathering problems.

The senior operational staff involved in the gathering of this data were keen to stress the need for a cohesive national deer management strategy to be put in place to support nature restoration.

It should be noted also that the current Programme for Government commits to ensuring that Irish Deer Management Strategy Group action plan is sufficiently resourced.