



IRISH RED GROUSE ASSOCIATION CONSERVATION TRUST



3rd September 2020

Dear DAFM,

We hope this finds you all well in these challenging times. The IRGACT is writing to you in relation to an important matter regarding the current public consultation process on proposed interventions for the CAP Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.


The IRGACT is fully committed to the conservation of Irish red grouse and wholeheartedly dedicated to the sustainable management of the unique, globally important habitats that this native bird resides in. Traditional hill farmers and their livestock are an integral part of this way of life and is undoubtedly an intangible part of our cultural heritage on this island. It is one we must all protect for both vital social, economic and environmental reasons. Furthermore, there needs to be more full-time employment roles for projects such as the hen harrier, corncrake and curlew. This will support farmers as they alone cannot save our wildlife populations without help. Thick hedgerows with bird seed mixes planted along the field margins are effective but when you have approximately 3 million hooded crows and approximately 4 million foxes across the state, sensitive nesting birds are under severe predation pressure and it is difficult for them to rear any young with these high populations of generalist predators. Currently there are part time roles for the curlew/hen harrier schemes but these are not sufficient with these birds continuing to decline. Without full time, professional nest protection officers we will see a slow but deliberate decline to all our native ground nesting birds.

The environmental management of this country needs to be adequately funded and have an independent panel of stakeholders committed to strategic, professional management of our natural resources and most importantly to be honest about what can be accomplished by working together. The whole process will need to be reviewed continuously to ensure progress does not stagnate as some initiatives do. The era of spending more money on studies, research, reports and scientific monitoring work has limited value to the survival of all our ground nesting birds. We need more action on the ground and direct flexible payments to farmers/local nest protection officers that will encourage them to do more for the environment . The red grouse and curlew is a good example of a bird that may be going extinct in Ireland and not enough is being done about saving these iconic birds. We need more action now to halt the climate and biodiversity crisis we find ourselves in before it's too late. We are very close to losing our ground nesting birds, principally our red grouse but also our curlew, golden plover, hen harrier, merlin, meadow pipit and skylark and we must do everything we can so as not to allow us get to that stage. The future generations that rely upon us, have a fundamental right to hear the unique call of the grouse across our mountains, the haunting call of the curlew on our native bogs and the wonderful sound of the skylark in our precious countryside.

We can make ourselves available at any time to assist DAFM to make presentations to any CAP subcommittee if required.

We strongly believe that the combination of farmers and full-time nest protection officers are one of the solutions to delivering biodiversity targets on the ground. We would very much value more partnership working with DAFM or any other government department or agency for that matter to save these wonderful ground nesting birds. Only together can we rise to the challenge of the climate emergency we all now face worldwide and take the necessary action to address this steady decline of our red grouse and other threatened wildlife.

Yours sincerely

A redacted signature block consisting of two black rectangular boxes. The top box is small and horizontal. The bottom box is larger and rectangular, with a handwritten signature in blue ink written over it.

IRGACT Hon Secretary
on behalf of the Irish Red Grouse Association Conservation Trust