

Circular 03/2016

18th February 2016

To: GLAS Advisors

Re: **GLAS actions on Natura lands**

Dear Advisor,

The various GLAS actions have been very carefully designed in consultation with the relevant authorities and experts to deliver a positive environmental return. However, exceptional cases may exist where conflicting environmental demands arise on a given site, which can only be identified on the ground, and this circular (and related attachment) outlines some additional mitigating actions to be carried out in such cases.

The primary risk is to Natura land and one of the main protections to be employed here is the ARC system introduced by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. An ARC is an 'Activity Requiring Consent' and a full list is included in the GLAS Specification. **It is important to note that the application of the various GLAS actions does NOT dispense with the requirement to seek consent for any of the activities included in the list of ARCs.**

Where the proposed activity is necessary to implement an action under GLAS, or is proposed as an option under a Commonage Management Plan (e.g. controlled burning), then consent should be sought in the first instance from this Department (GLAS Unit, Johnstown Castle) who will screen and consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service as required. However, ARCs that have nothing to do with a GLAS action specifically, or with a GLAS plan generally, are not a matter for this Department and should be referred as normal to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In relation to the individual GLAS actions, we have prepared the attached assessment of potential risks to inform both Department staff and approved GLAS advisors. The key risk areas to emerge from this assessment were:

- Commonages
- Farmland Habitats (Privately Owned Natura)
- Breeding Waders
- Geese and Swans

The risk in the first two cases derives primarily from the inherent complexity of the management of these landscapes and habitats, e.g. commonages may be important for key national priority species such as Red Listed birds (particularly breeding waders) even where they are not designated for these, and the primary control lies in the delivery of well-developed Commonage Management and Sustainable Management Plans which adhere to the guidelines laid down by the Department. It should be borne in mind that Commonage Management Plans will inevitably cover both designated and non-designated lands but in all events are expected to respond to whatever the relevant environmental priorities are.

The risk in the last two cases (Breeding Waders and Geese/Swans) is that in applying the actions prescribed for the conservation of the birds in question, other important habitats present onsite

could be inadvertently altered/changed. These include traditional hay meadows which are valuable habitats in their own right, and which may be particularly at risk in Breeding Wader parcels. In this regard, it should be noted that any change in use from traditional hay meadow in a Natura area is an ARC and, as indicated already, any such proposed change – even where necessary to implement a GLAS action – must be notified in advance to this Department.

Advisors and farmers are requested to examine the attached assessment of potential risks for each GLAS action, paying particular attention to the 4 above-mentioned actions, and to consider appropriate mitigation when planning and implementing each action. Any further issues arising and not addressed in the attached should be brought to the attention of DAFM or NPWS for further instruction.

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