



HEN HARRIER PROJECT Ltd

Hen Harrier Project



- European Innovation Partnership, budget €25,000,000 over 6 years
- Payments to farmers are based on
 - Habitat Quality
 - Hen Harrier breeding metrics
 - Shared investments in farm infrastructure or habitat enhancements
- Co-operation with other stakeholders
- Monitoring and nest protection
- Investment in communities and innovation
- > 1,500 participants farming over 37,000 ha
 - 65% of the total agricultural area in the Special Protection Areas for breeding Hen Harrier
- Flexible - Rules are not fixed, capable of adaptive management
- Design of a mainstream scheme for next round of CAP is a key output

European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)



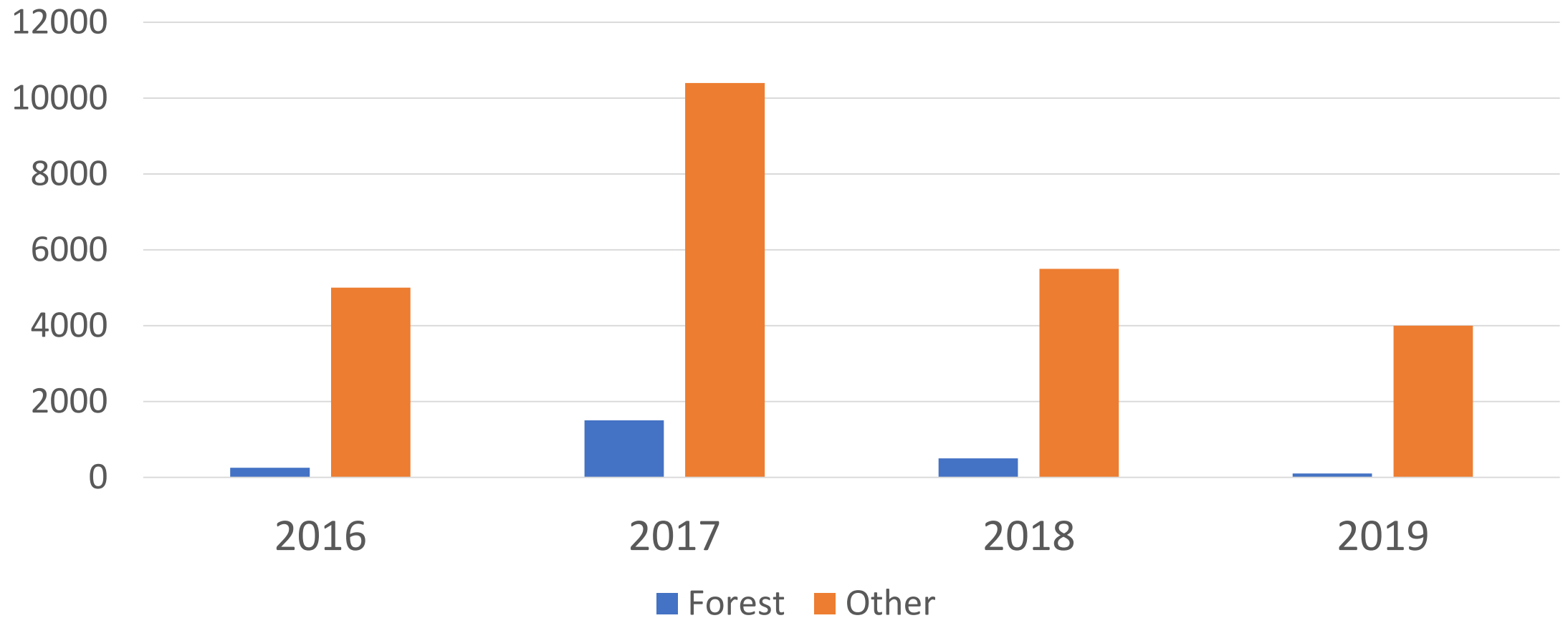
- Current RDP includes 23 EIPs
 - Hen Harrier Project was the first starting in May 2017
- Locally Led
 - Dept. of Agriculture has devolved design and implementation to Operational Groups
 - Two large Projects
 - Hen Harrier Project – Budget €25,000,000
 - Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project - Budget €10,000,000
 - 21 smaller projects- 5 of these are in upland areas – Combined budget €6,813,984
- Ireland is almost unique in utilising this model for the delivery of ecosystem services
- Wildfires are a direct threat to the objectives of many of these projects

Cloosh Valley Fire 2017

- 834 ha of forest destroyed
- 328 ha of other land burned
- 169 MW Wind Farm threatened
- Air Quality in Galway city 20km away breached legal limits
- Health Service Advised the elderly and those with respiratory conditions in Galway to stay indoors
- Fires appear to have been set deliberately



Area affected by Wildfires



Key fuel species on open bog/ heath

- Heather
- Purple Moor Grass
- Gorse



Agricultural Drivers increasing Wild Fire Risk



- Direct Payments: change from production based to area based
- Concerns about eligibility for Direct Payments
 - Scrub and rank grassland ineligible for payment
- Compulsory destocking of sheep in commonage areas
- Age profile of farmers
 - Succession Issues
- Changes in livestock types
 - Reduction in cattle grazing in upland areas
- Changes in seasonal utilisation of uplands
- Dependence on off farm employment

Responses by Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



- Burning of vegetation is illegal under the Wildlife Act 1976 between March 1st and August 31st
 - Minister can extend the legal period for burning until March 31st
- Burned land is ineligible for direct payments
 - Areas burnt between March 1st and August 31st are detected by remote sensing.
- Reduction in the number of incidents and area burned but;
 - Does not addressing the underlying risks
 - Does not distinguish between controlled and uncontrolled fires
 - Increased incidence of grass fires (Purple Moor Grass) in February, reductions in April/ May- consistent with changes in agriculture related burning
 - Increase in June/ July fires, Gorse and Heather fires
- Hen Harrier Project,
 - Experimental co-operation

Hen Harrier Habitats

Breeding Season

- Nesting
 - Tall Heather – best habitat for successful breeding
 - Scrub
 - Young Forestry plantations
- Foraging Habitat
 - Open Bog/ Heath
 - Wet Grassland with scrub and hedgerows
 - Young Forestry plantations



Slieve Blooms Fire 2018

Impact on Hen Harrier Population

- Most productive Hen Harrier population in Ireland – c. 10 pairs
- No nests lost directly to the fire
- 80% of nests failed
- 16 chicks fledged in 2017
- 5 chicks fledged in 2018
- Losses due to
 - Disturbance
 - Disruption of food supply
 - Loss of hunting grounds



Reconciling competing Interests

- Address policy drivers contributing to fire risk
- Recognise and incentivise the delivery of ecosystem services, habitat and fire resilience as a land management output
- Identify critical control sites
- Site appropriate interventions acceptable to stakeholders
 - Need to balance competing interests at a landscape level
- Co-ordinate action across the stakeholder community at a landscape level
 - Fire Services
 - Farmers
 - Forestry Interests
 - Coillte, privately owned forestry, the Forest Service
 - NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service)



Slieve Blooms Wildfire Group



- Objectives
 - Reduce the vulnerability to serious wildfire events
 - Enable faster and more effective responses to wildfire incidents
- Laois and Offaly Fire Services
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- IFA (Irish Farmers Association)
- Hen Harrier Project
- Coillte (State Forestry Company)
- The Forest Service (an arm of the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)

Managing Wildfire Risk Options

- Targeted Interventions to break the continuity of fuel.
 - Reduce fire risk at critical control sites
 - Methods must be compatible with land owners objectives
- Manage the habitat
 - Encourage less flammable species,
 - Discourage flammable species, e.g. replace Gorse with Alder
 - Raise water tables
 - Targeted grazing- right species, right time, adequate supports, e.g. fencing, nutrition
- Alter the physical structure of vegetation.
 - Reduce vegetation height- Grazing/ Flail mowing
 - Remove vegetation - controlled burning/ targeted application of herbicides,



Fuel vs Habitat

Fire Resilience Planning

- Fire Resilience Planning needs to minimise risks to agriculture, conservation and forestry assets
- Balance the high risk of disturbance from interventions against possible catastrophic loss
- Planning needs to;
 - Have spatial and temporal awareness - avoid disturbance at key sites during breeding season, avoid possibly harmful edge effects
 - Consider a range of possible interventions
 - Adaptable – Nest sites can move from year to year, risk changes as burned sites recover, changes in forest estate etc
 - Economically viable and legally sound
 - Practical
 - Acceptable to stakeholders

