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For Oral Answer on : 14/11/2017  
Question Number(s): 75 Question Reference(s): 47892/17  
Department: Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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### QUESTION

To ask the Minister for Culture; Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the recent ESB actions on the walkways and hedgerows of the Gearagh special area of conservation; the follow up actions she plans to ensure similar actions do not reoccur, in this or other special areas of conservation; the plans that are in place to reinstate the walkways; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

### REPLY

As referred to in my answer to the Deputy's Questions Numbers 135 and 136 of 9 November 2017, the Gearagh special area of conservation is a nature reserve in the ownership of the ESB. The ESB has advised my Department that, due to concerns over public health and safety and access for emergency services, a number of damaged and fallen trees on a public walkway within the site had to be removed following the severe weather conditions of mid-October last.

The ESB has also advised that wet ground conditions, at the time that the works were carried out, have resulted in the surface of the walkway requiring reinstatement. I understand that this will be done by the ESB when weather conditions are favourable.

Officials from my Department will be meeting with the ESB shortly on this matter and will then decide if any further action by my Department is required. Most land in protected sites is in private ownership. It is the policy of my Department, subject to the availability of resources, when it becomes aware of damage to a protected site to investigate the matter, in conjunction with other public authorities, if required.