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National Picnic Day

At a positive meeting with great brainstorming the idea of a National Picnic Day had its birth.

The idea is born, but now needs to be raised, weened, fed and watered and loved into adulthood.

The infant project was conceived from two different conversations. One parent was Dame Fiona Reynolds of the National Trust UK and the other our own honorary secretary, Jeff Young. In conversation with Dame Fiona at the INTO conference, the fact that most people join the NT UK because they have been to a heritage property as a child was very strongly stated. At the same time Jeff joined An Taisce because the Meath Local Association asked if they could visit his home and hold a simple picnic on the lawn. Now the fact is that the National Trust UK owns a huge number of magnificent stately homes and we do not, but Ireland is rich in heritage properties of all kinds owned, managed and lived in by all sorts of people like Jeff who would be more than happy to

host a simple picnic. So combining the two parents the idea of The National Picnic Day is born.

The overall goal of the National Picnic Day is not fundraising, although that may be a side show, it is simply positive exposure for An Taisce to future members.

Everyone remembers those idyllic picnics with their family in beautiful surroundings, this poem by Katrina Norman sums it up:

*Tall summer grass, swaying in the breeze
whispering leaves rustling in the trees
crystal blue skies overhead
not a single cloud to be found
an old soft blanket laying on the ground
a babbling stream just over there
lying back, without a care
a quiet chorus of singing birds
far off in the distance
creating a dream like memory
perfect for reminiscence
soaking up the tranquility
on this picnic, just you and me*

The day we have chosen for National Picnic Day is 26th September, as some of the best weather of the year is in that month, everyone is back from holidays and settled in school, looking for activities at the weekend and we would love to see picnics being held in every county. Already, Meath, Louth, Clare and

Dublin have got the picnic bug, but it would be lovely to see at least 10 more. We hope to enrol some VIP's or celebrities to join in some of the picnics to encourage more people to attend, but the event does not have to be huge. A simple family picnic held on that day with friends in a beautiful place could be just fine, but if you have bigger ideas an information pack will be available, containing pressrelease templates and posters for you to promote your event, along with ideas for fund raising or recruiting members.

Our vision is for the baby picnic day 2010 to grow and grow like any child will, to attain an independent life of its own and become part of the national psyche of Ireland and a positive reflection of the importance of An Taisce, but we need to start somewhere and this is where the readers of this newsletter come in. Help the National Picnic Day learn to toddle in 2010. Contact membership@antaisce.org

An Taisce comes HOME

On March 23rd, The Tailors' Hall became a cinema for the night! HOME is a film that is close to the heart of An Taisce. We love it! French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand is best known for his aerial photographs of the Earth. His latest project, HOME, was released on June 5, 2009 to coincide with World Environment Day.

As he has already proved, Arthus-Bertrand is a master at identifying the colours, angles and patterns

that show the Earth at its most beautiful. These could be the shadows cast by a train of camels walking through a desert, the myriad shades of blue and white in a glacier in the North Pole, or the symmetrical patterns formed by brightly dyed pieces of cloth laid out to dry in India.

These same skills are brought to bear in HOME, but this time the images are moving and have a clear message: the Earth, the place we call home, is in trouble, and we are largely responsible.

HOME played on March 23rd to a crowd of happy environmentalists! The great hall has come a long way since it was the home to apprentice tradesmen three hundred years ago. It's as useful a space for a film as it is for a guild and more of this kind of thing, we say!

Keep an eye out for other upcoming features.



May the Irish hills
caress you,
May her lakes and
rivers bless you
May the blessings of
Saint Patrick behold
you.

Trad Irish blessing

*"A hen harrier swoops
catching nothing
but wind
ghost songs
notes
only the swift
understands."*

*From the poem
the Merlot Mix
By David Crystal*



10 Messages for 2010



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

Every month the European Environment Agency EEA is issuing a "message for 2010", which will highlight one theme per month until the tenth meeting of the conference of the parties (COP) to the United Nations convention on Biological diversity (CBD). Each message provides a short assessment focusing on a specific ecosystem or issue related to biodiversity in Europe. A summary of March's message is below; follow the link to see the full message.

Freshwater ecosystems

Freshwater ecosystems in Europe are rich in biodiversity but at risk. They provide essential ecosystem services to humans, such as cleaning water, preventing floods,

producing food, providing energy and regulating freshwater resources...

To read more go to:

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/10-messages-for-2010/message-3-freshwater-ecosystems>

The message was written by Marcus Zisenis (ECNC, ETC/BD) and Peter Kristensen (EEA), with contributions from the ETC/BD by Dominique Richard/MNHN, Sophie Condé/MNHN, Otars Opermanis/MNHN, Doug Evans/SNH, Brian MacSharry/DEHLG. Valuable inputs were received from the Eionet National Reference Centres (NRCs) for Biodiversity and water; from Beate Werner and Rob Collins at EEA; and from Angelika Rubin and Anne Teller at DG Environment of the European Commission.

Hen Harriers to Fly Free in Galway

A fabulous decision has been made by An Bord Pleanála which will help ensure the enigmatic Hen Harrier's majestic flights over the hills in the Slieve Aughty mountain SPA will continue to be seen and wondered at.

Populations of this dramatic bird are in serious decline because of habitat loss in the uplands where they live and breed. Several upland areas where Hen Harriers thrive have been protected by their designation as Special Protection Areas for Birds, however the process has not been a smooth one and there has been much local opposition to the designations. And there are still many piecemeal threats to the integrity of these unique areas.

An Taisce has been working hard to protect these exceptional habitats from threats in the form of plantation forestry, development and extensive wind farm construction in protected areas. We have been voicing concern that Local authorities in these areas are failing to provide the critical and strategic evaluation required for wind energy, housing and other development in these proposed SPA's.

A single house may not seem like too much of a threat but together with 20 other single houses with separate planning permissions there is a significant impact on the birds' habitat.

It is in this context of the nibbling away of the SPA's that An Taisce appealed the decision of Galway County Council to grant permission for a house partially in hen harrier habitat in Drummin Co Galway. An Bord Pleanála overturned the approval for the development, stating that the house, in combination with other development in the area, constituted an "excessive density of suburban-type, non essential development in an unserved rural area" and would degrade the sensitive Hen Harrier habitat.



An Taisce is celebrating this wise decision and is circulating this decision to all of the local authorities within Hen Harrier

SPA designated areas requesting that they review planning policies and implement effective strategic action to curtail further sprawl development in areas which warrant protection for their heritage and nature conservation merit.

UCC Gains First Green Flag for Third Level Institution.

Congratulations to UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Cork (UCC) who this month became the first third-level educational institution in the world to be accredited with an international Green Flag award. An Taisce, on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), granted the international accreditation after a rigorous assessment by an expert panel.

The award, presented by Minister for the Environment John Gormley, on behalf of An Taisce, to UCC president Dr Michael Murphy is a result of the Green-Campus programme, a student-led initiative by UCC students and staff over the last three years.

The Green-Campus programme, operated in Ireland by An Taisce, has seen the university save €300,000 in waste-management costs, reduce waste to landfill by nearly 400 tonnes, and improve recycling from 21 per cent to 60 per cent. Furthermore, UCC has conserved almost enough water this year to fill the equivalent of the Lough of Cork.

The first step was for the students to establish a Green-Campus committee in conjunction with the buildings and es-

tates department and academic staff. An environmental review followed.

“There were absolutely no recycling facilities for students walking on the campus,” recalls Maria Kirrane, a student representative on the committee.

“In fact, our very first action was to put on overalls and literally dive into the skips to see exactly what types of waste were being disposed of.”

In addition to staff recycling systems that previously existed, new recycling facilities for students are now available in front of the lecture halls and in canteens.

Students in lecture theatres and laboratories are alerted to turn off lights and electrical equipment. College maintenance vehicles now run on bio-diesel. Enhanced park-and-ride and bicycle parking areas are designed to encourage more sustainable travel.

Each year the Students’ Union holds a Green Awareness Week on campus, where real actions are supplemented by academic talks on environmental sustainability.

“It is quite a leap, transforming the Green-Schools programme, geared for the typical school of a few hundred

students, to a complex campus of 130 acres, 16,000 students and almost 3,000 staff,” said Dr Michael John O’Mahony of An Taisce.

UCC president Dr Murphy said: “In population terms, UCC is bigger than your average Irish town, so bringing together all the necessary parties and practices to develop it into a sustainable Green-Campus was a real challenge.”

UCC is now looking to build on the award. “We’d like to make it easier for students to cycle to college, possibly through a bike purchase scheme,” says Ms Kirrane.

“Also, while UCC is a beautiful campus, many of the plants here are non-native. We’re looking to address biodiversity on campus.”



Earth Hour 2010

Turn out your light, show support

In 2009 hundreds of millions of people around the world



showed their support by turning off their lights for one hour.

Earth Hour 2010 will continue to be a global call to action to every individual, every business and every community. A call to stand up, to show leadership and be responsible for our future.

Pledge your support [here](#) and turn off your lights for one hour, Earth Hour, 8.30pm, Saturday 27th March 2010.

Happy World Water Day

Happy World Water Day! As active members of SWAN, An Taisce would like to showcase the campaign in response to the River Basin Management Plans. An Taisce have been very involved in this issue and hope that the campaign will see and improvement in the draft plans as a result. This wonderful witty image was used to bring home the message. The media event in front of Leinster house went very well and there was extensive media coverage.



To see more go to:

RTE at six o’clock news. <http://www.rte.ie/player/#v=1069090> fast forward to about 7 minutes in.

Celebration of Irish Heritage

In celebration of Seachtain na Gaeilge and as an ongoing policy, An Taisce has decided to start using Irish place names in submissions. We have set a target of 20% of submissions in 2010 and will increase this as we become more familiar with the project. The reasoning behind this is laid out below, as written for us by Rossa Ó Snodaigh, well known musician with Kila and Irish language activist. It is all made easy by the website www.logainm.ie.

- * An Taisce's objectives are 'to protect the environment and heritage of Éire'. The original Irish names for provinces, counties, mountains, rivers, glens, seas, townlands, parishes baronies, towns, villages, islands and lakes are an essential part of Éire's heritage, and An Taisce should be seen to be

preserving and protecting them. By simply using the original form, An Taisce will be doing just that.

- * An Taisce will be showing that we respect the area enough to use the original name.
- * The continued use of original Irish names over time will lead to a deeper understanding of our heritage and a deeper respect which will lead to more environmentally sensitive developments.
- * Place names *as Gaeilge* reveal much about the geology, history and natural history of an area. Once familiar with the various meanings you could close your eyes and still enjoy the surrounding landscape.
- * This new initiative will be facilitated by the use of the

government's place name translator www.logainm.ie. They also provide a google map locator, a mp3 played recording of the pronunciation and they also translate the meaning of the place-names.

- * An Taisce will no longer go on using place names like 'Kill Bride' when 'Cill Bríde', meaning the church/cemetery of Brigit – a slightly more positive feeling than an instruction to murder a wife to be!

We hope you'll all agree that this is a very positive step for us, and will require only a tiny little bit of extra effort!

An Taisce on Facebook

An Taisce now has a page on Facebook. So if you are on Facebook and would like to become a 'fan' of An Taisce, search for us using the search box at the top of your profile. There will also be a direct link to the page from our website or you can follow the link here. <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/An-Taisce-The-National-Trust-for-Ireland/68916935456?ref=ts> If you have any difficulty, email us and we can invite you from the profile.

We'll be using the profile to help increase public awareness of the work that we do. We will be posting pictures of our projects and volunteers at work (there are some up there already) and we are also hoping that it will become an open forum for discussion and questions which we will endeavour to answer as soon as possible. We'll also be using it to publicise events such as This Place Matters, the AGM and would like to publicise local association events too. If you have any ideas for items that you'd

like to see posted to the profile then let us know. Also - it would be great if you could spread the word and invite any of your friends come 'fans' of An Taisce.

If you are not a Facebook user - don't worry - we will still be using email, ezine, our magazine and the old fashioned written word to contact volunteers and members.



Tailors Hall,
Back Lane
Dublin 8

Phone: 01 4541786

E-mail concerning issues in this ezine:
jeff@rokeby.ie

general enquiries admin@antaisce.org

**Preserving our built and natural
heritage for future generations**

Your views are important to An Taisce. Please don't hesitate to send us any feedback on content, format, etc. of this newsletter, and if there are any topics in particular that you'd like to see covered, we'll do our best to get them in.

Sincerely,

Jeff Young

Hon Secretary, An Taisce -- the National Trust for Ireland jeff@rokeby.ie

and Abby McSherry, Local Associations Officer
membership@antaisce.org

Please remember to pass this newsletter on to others who may enjoy it