

AN TAIOSCE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2
FEBRUARY 2012

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A Message from An Taisce

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing support.

We could not do what we do without the practical commitment of those who support An Taisce financially and through voluntary effort. Unfortunately we face a major funding crisis which severely threatens our operations.

We thought it might be appropriate to provide a tangible but symbolic gift in return for your donation which you can give to someone who values our heritage as you do. Though initially intended as a Christmas gift catalog of symbolic gifts, our 'Treasury of Gifts' is still available to you throughout the year. The recipient of your gift will receive a certificate outlining the significance of your donation choice.

We hope that some of these ideas in An Taisce's 'Treasury' of gifts appeal to you as a novel way to support An Taisce and maintain our ongoing contribution to Ireland's built and Natural heritage.

Your support is genuinely appreciated in these trying times because it our joint strength that makes it possible for us to continue to protect the environment of Ireland for the people of Ireland.

[An Taisce Shop here](#)

Important

Please note these gifts are intended as symbolic reflections of how your donation supports the work of An Taisce. Where subscriptions do not match required expenditures or critical needs are identified - actual contributions will be allocated where most effective to sustain our operations.

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[John Harnett the new Chair of An Taisce](#)

[Click here to view in your browser \(It's much prettier\).](#)



An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

Protecting and preserving Ireland's heritage since 1948

In this issue:

John Harnett the new Chair of An Taisce: At the last meeting of An Taisce's Council on the 11th February we elected a new Chairman for the year – John Harnett from Westmeath. Here John introduces himself and talks a little of his key concerns. [read more here...](#)

HQ Telephones, staff and interns: [read more here...](#)

Flooding and Wetland Attenuation report: An Taisce Tailors Hall on March 21st. [read more here...](#)

A month in the properties office: It must be hard for members to conceive of what goes on in Tailors' Hall, An Taisce's HQ so here in the first in a series of profiles, we asked John Ducie to talk about a month in his life as our Properties Officer. [read more here...](#)

Consultation on Septic Tanks: Septic Tanks have created quite a stir in recent months. An Taisce have collected some scary statistics and facts about the potential dangers to our drinking water but many of our rural members are naturally very anxious about the potential costs of remedying malfunctioning systems that should possibly never have been permitted in the first place.

The Minister has now published draft regulations for the operation and maintenance of domestic waste water treatment systems, to ensure Ireland meets our European obligations to comply with the water directives. Would these regulations satisfy the European Commission? It has already been noted that the guidelines do not actually include any duty to protect groundwater and do not include a National Inspection Plan.

An Taisce hope to arrange for a workshop exploring some of the issues - more information on this will be sent out later and information on how to make your own submission are included in the text. [read more here...](#)

Biodiversity, wholesome food, and whatever you're having yourself: An Taisce has to date no agreed policy on GMO however these are big issues and likely to be of interest to many of our members. Here Stella Coffey outlines the latest developments in Ireland and invites people to add to the gm-moratorium petition.

Do you care about good and wholesome food being available in the future on this island? If yes, then you must engage with the GM issue in Ireland immediately. Last Tuesday Teagasc announced that it has an application with the EPA for a licence to grow GM potatoes at Oakpark: you have until 27/3 (yes, that's 27th of this month and before 5pm) to lodge a 'representation' aka as an objection (See here for a form). Remember, if Teagasc gets its way on this, the genie will be out of the bottle because there's no way of recalling these spuds when problems become evident down the line. It took 20 years for the subtle effects of DDT to become obvious – that's one way Nature bites back. [read more here...](#)

Nature's Way - New booklets available from An Taisce: An Taisce have produced a series of Nature's Way illustrated booklets. These booklets have been part funded by the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) biodiversity fund and the Natural Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). [read more here...](#)

Natural Environment Committee - News: [read more here...](#)

News from Cork Local Association: [read more here...](#)

Disabled access in heritage buildings: The provision of access for disabled people is a legal requirement under the Disability Act 2005 for all public bodies, and frequently presents major challenges in older buildings, places of architectural heritage significance and national monuments. The Department of Arts (DAHG) in conjunction with the National Disability Authority produced a guide in 2011 on how to approach the issues (see www.nda.ie). [read more here...](#)

More good news from the Wexford Local Association: [read more here...](#)

HQ Telephones, staff and interns.

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The Burning Question – notes from the Kerry Association

Draft Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland - An Taisce's view

The decision on the Children's Hospital by An Bord Pleanála will protect Dublin's Future

Boglands

Dublin's draft Public Realm Plan

"Septic tank hype veils public subsidy to rural dwellers" by FRANK McDONALD in The Irish Times

Tony Lowes on Rural Development

GetThere.ie - A Path to Sustainable Transport

The Burning Question – notes from the Kerry Association: Since time immemorial, man has used fire to remove scrub and to increase the fertility of land, but is this practice appropriate for today? [read more here...](#)

Draft Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland - An Taisce's view: Placing short-term economic and national trade and consumption interests over the maintenance of a living planet is untenable.

Legislative provision is required for sustainable development as an overarching objective, parallel to national climate change legislation with mandatory greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. Revision of remit of Government departments state and Statutory boards and Government share-hold controlled companies, including Bord Na Mona and Coillte requires sustainable development to be defined as overriding objective.

The following article by Ian Lumley, An Taisces Heritage Officer discusses the Draft Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland which will define Irelands' international commitment to sustainability in advance of the RIO anniversary summit in June this year. [read more here...](#)

The decision on the Children's Hospital by An Bord Pleanála will protect Dublin's Future: An Bord Pleanála has made one of the most significant planning decisions in its history in refusing the application by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board for the 16 storey National Children's Hospital adjoining the Mater Hospital in Eccles St.

An Bord Pleanála refused the application on the grounds of height, scale as well as mass, and that it would contravene the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan.

Were permission to be granted, it would "result in a dominant visually incongruous structure and would have a profound negative impact on the appearance and visual amenity of the city skyline", including O'Connell St, according to the Board. [read more here...](#)

Boglands: The 20th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit is marked by a new global sustainability summit in June where Ireland could face major international embarrassment because of its failure to comply with the UN Convention of Biological Diversity in protecting peatlands

Irish peatlands are a globally important wildlife habitat for unique and rare species, a major carbon sink, and provide multiple eco-system services in flood mitigation, water purification and maintaining wilderness.

Yet, Ireland in its 4th compliance report on the UN Convention in 2010 stated: "It is estimated that there has been a 99% loss of the original area of actively growing raised bog, and one-third of the remaining 1% has been lost in the last 10 years. Although the best examples of raised bogs are now designated as Natura 2000 sites, deterioration of the hydrological conditions caused by peat cutting, drainage, afforestation and burning severely threatens the viability of the habitat at most locations."

Action is only now being taken on the mechanised cutting the degrading these 55 sites because of threat of EU legal action. Ian Lumley, An Taisce's Heritage Officer goes over some of the issues in this fascinating article that follows. [read more here...](#)

Dublin's draft Public Realm Plan: Earlier this month, Dublin City Council released a draft plan for the future of the city, called Your City Your Space. It called for a radical change to city planning, with pedestrians and public transport taking priority over cars.

As the deadline for submissions closes secretary of An Taisce James Nix argues that grand plans are all very well – but we've been here before.

Dublin City Council's Draft Public Realm Strategy is full of winning photographs, maps and flow charts all nicely laid out. The trouble is that we've been here before. In fact, we've been here many times before, and it would make far more sense for Dublin City Council to implement the plans it has published in recent years, rather than printing more and more plans. The public is entitled to ask: without follow-through on previously published plans, what's the point in engaging with the latest initiative? [read more here...](#)

Septic tank hype veils public subsidy to rural dwellers" by FRANK McDONALD in The Irish Times :

In this article, "Septic tank hype veils public subsidy to rural dwellers" by FRANK McDONALD in The Irish Times - Saturday, February 25, 2012 there are some interesting facts and figures which need to be brought into the on going national debate

At least 450,000 tanks discharging 250 million litres of effluent daily is simply not sustainable

NOTHING HAS stirred passions more in rural Ireland, it would seem, than the proposed registration and inspection regime for septic tanks. And given that there are at least 450,000 of them – serving farmhouses, bungalows and boom-time mansions – the political pressure being exerted is substantial and widely dispersed. [read more here...](#)

Tony Lowes on Rural Development: The reconvened Built Environment Committee has begun the process of updating our rural housing policy. Meanwhile, Tony Lowes, a chairman of this committee in the 1990's contributed the following blog to the Village Magazine. Michael Smith, past Chairman of An Taisce and now editor of the Village Magazine has kindly permitted us to reprint this slightly edited version of this blog here for the interest of members. This is Lowes' personal opinion and does not necessarily represent An Taisce's position. [read more here...](#)

Sligo Sustainable Futures 2012
Tuesday 6th March. Hume Hall,
IT Sligo

Events

Book Tailors' Hall for your
event

Recent Press Releases

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[GetThere.ie - A Path to Sustainable Transport: read more here...](#)

Sligo Sustainable Futures 2012 Tuesday 6th March. Hume Hall, IT Sligo: Contact leonard.liam@itsligo.ie for more information [read more here...](#)

Events:

- National Tree Week 4th-10th March
- World Water Day 24th March
- Flooding and Wetland Attenuation Report
- Earth Hour 31st March @ 8:30
- Annual Clean up of Booterstown Marsh 15th April @ 2pm
- Guided Walk of Boyne Canal April 29th & May 13th

[read more here...](#)

Book The Tailors' Hall for your event: Please spread the word to your friends, family and colleagues that Tailors' Hall is the ideal place for their special event or meeting. [read more here...](#)

John Harnett the new Chair of An Taisce

At the last meeting of An Taisce's Council on the 11th February we elected a new Chairman for the year – John Harnett from Westmeath. Here John introduces himself and talks a little of his key concerns.

Hi everyone.

Let me give you some background by way of introduction. I have run a group of Crèche and Montessori schools in Dublin for the last 14 years, one of which is targeted at low income families in the Dublin 1 area. Interestingly two of my Crèche's have just won a Green Schools flag. Although the Green Schools program that An Taisce runs is mainly for primary and secondary schools we adopted it so that it works for 3 to 5 year olds.

I am a founding member of the Westmeath branch of An Taisce which was set up in 2003 and became the Westmeath delegate to Council in Tailor's Hall 3 years ago.

As the new Chairperson its gives me a great opportunity to review the operation of An Taisce and work with Council to improve how we do our business.

The existing Council has been strengthened in the recent past with new recruits. I believe that these individuals along with existing Council members have significant skills and energy to create a very dynamic organisation.

Of course this does require your continued support and interest as members, you are our life blood.

One of my tasks will be to look at how we fund ourselves as an organisation. We need to ensure that our head office staff, Camilla Keane, (Natural Environment and Research Officer), Ian Lumley (Heritage Officer), and John Ducie, (Properties Officer) – are securely funded into the future.

The work of these officers is crucial to what we do in our advocacy, research, conservation, education and our prescribed role in consultation on planning.. Much of their work is evident in the information that you receive through the e-zine.

As members I am concerned that you have access to information on the issues that arise for Ireland's natural and built environment on an on- going basis. I want to ensure that we have policy notes available on our website on these issues for you.

Let me thank you again for your interest in and concern for the natural and built environment of Ireland and your support for An Taisce and the work we do on your behalf.

John Harnett

Chairperson An Taisce The National Trust for Ireland



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WE ARE NOW TAKING ADVERTISEMENTS FOR OUR EZINE TO HELP AN TAISCE'S GENERAL FUNDS.

We would encourage members to support these advertisers and to contact ezine@antaisce.org if you know of any suitable organisation that might advertise with us.

HQ Telephones, staff and interns.

As you can imagine there has been a flurry of activity since we had to let staff go before Christmas. They will not be easy gaps to fill but An Taisce's secretary James Nix has been busy seeking out a number of volunteers and interns who are doing great work under the supervision of various Board of Management members.

Even manning the main phone has been a challenge but we can now more or less say that your calls on the main line 01 454 1786 can be taken from 10am til 4 pm Monday to Friday and messages will be picked up every day.

The phone may be answered by one of our interns or by one of a number of volunteers.

You may also be speak to staff directly on their own lines or leave a message:

Planning Office Ian Lumley 01 707 7064 antaisce@gmail.com
Planning Assistants James Madden and Jane 01 707 7062 adminheritage@gmail.com
Natural Environment Officer Camilla Keane 01 707 7063 naturalenvironmnet@antaisce.org

Remember Green Schools and other sections of the Education Unit, etc. are in a different building. Their phone number is 01 400 2202

You may be interested to read more about our volunteers and interns and to learn a little of the work that is being done.



James Madden graduated from NUI Maynooth in 2008 with an arts degree in Geography and Greek and Roman Civilisation. James recently completed his MSc Town Planning at Newcastle University. His dissertation focused on planning for street children and the intervention and support systems that currently exist in Delhi, recommending how they can be reformed. Since volunteering for An Taisce, James has assisted with general office and administrative duties as well as working on the peatlands submission and other policy documents.

Stephen Hyland Stephen Hyland is volunteering for a second time with An Taisce's Natural Environment Office. He has a background in Ecology having studied for a Masters in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management in National University of Ireland, Galway. His masters took him around Europe gaining field experience in the Netherlands and Finland. His undergraduate degree in UCD was in Biology majoring in Botany. Having finished his studies in Ireland, he travelled to South East Asia and undertook a one month tropical ecology field course in the Danum Valley Field Centre, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia. The course consisted of two weeks of workshops followed by a two week research project. The objective of the course was to give new graduates field experience in a scientific field centre. Field work was carried out during the day, with analysis and lectures taking place in the evenings. He then continued his travels before volunteering with the Wildlife Conservation Society in Laos for four months. There he carried out a butterfly monitoring project in the Nam Kading National Protected Area. Currently he is researching the cumulative effects of different management regimes on Special Areas of Conservation for An Taisce, as well as assisting with public consultation submissions.

Barry Walsh

Barry graduated in 2006 from University College Cork with a B.Sc in Zoology. Between 2008 and 2009 he completed a Masters in Ecology having studied for a Masters in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management in the National University of Ireland, Galway. His Masters thesis concentrated on the recovery of upland bogs after wind farm construction. He has worked in environmental education since early 2010, working with students from ages 5 to university level. Barry is currently volunteering in the Natural Environment office assisting with public consultation submissions and researching issues as they arise to support the work of the Natural Environment Research and Casework Officer.

Padraig Morris

I am the properties assistant to John Ducie who is the properties manager together we look after a number of heritage properties around the country our main building is The Tailors hall which we rent out as a venue for events. Our main

markets are civil marriage ceremonies which have become popular in the last number of years. We get the building ready for the events to take place. Another part of my work is to complete analysis of each event to see how much profit the Tailors hall makes from each event. I also compile a list of invoices in one document to see how many events there were and how many clients were invoiced. Another part of my work is to compile a booking enquiries list. This is a list of every potential client that has contacted us about having an event in The Tailors hall. Another part of my job is to keep the building tidy and clean and preparing for events by putting up marquees and setting out the tables and chairs for events. Before I started working for An Taisce I completed a BA Honours degree in Heritage Studies at GMIT. I thoroughly enjoyed the course and threw my love of Heritage and History I came to work as a volunteer with An Taisce.

Ally Menari

Ally Menary, is currently employed by An Taisce working on the Green-Schools Travel Programme as a Cycling Development Officer and Education Officer. He has been working for An Taisce for the past 5 years and prior to taking up a role in Dublin, has worked in areas such as energy efficiency, waste minimisation, conservation and education. Ally is now hoping to assist An Taisce in a volunteer capacity, with archiving/cataloguing the vast amounts of literature and text that is stored in Tailors Hall, with a view to learning and discovering more about An Taisce and its rich history.

John Harte

Like other members of An Taisce I got word before Christmas that, due to cutbacks, the organisation was in greater need of voluntary assistance. The message appealed because it had occurred to me many times since retirement over six years ago that I could and probably should help out in some organization. My experience as a teacher, a golf club secretary, learner (and teacher for a while) of computer applications in education encouraged me to offer my assistance in office administration. So I contacted James Nix, the Hon. Sec., and after a visit to meet people I began to turn up after Christmas for approximately one working day per week. From the start I was made welcome and received every assistance in getting to grips with the new working environment. Inevitably there were teething problems and a cost/benefit analysis would show that I took up more of the existing staff/volunteers time than I returned in productivity. Hopefully I have just turned the corner in that regard now. The tasks are interesting and important e.g. organising information on contact details and roles of the members of Local Associations, information about their activities and AGMs and compiling a list of local delegates to the National Council. Then there is need for a list of those elected to Council in previous years. All this is vital in the preparation of the National AGM but there is also the matter of keeping an accurate historical record of the organisation. In summary there are many and varied tasks available to me or anybody who has an opportunity and a desire to give the time to aspects such as Planning, Green Schools, Spring Clean etc. If you're reading this you're probably already

interested in An Taisce's raison d'être, so there's only a small step required - pick up the phone and dial 01 454 1186. You'll be glad you called!

Flooding and Wetland Attenuation report - March 21st Tailors' Hall.

In 2010 An Taisce received funding from the Community Foundation for Ireland to commission a report on Flooding and Wetland Attenuation. The report has been researched and written by staff within University College Cork and they will be presenting the report in An Taisce Tailors' Hall on March 21st. The report will first be presented then it will be followed by a workshop for an hour and a half to discuss the findings of the report, and to come up with actions and measures that are needed. It will be free to attend this half day morning event but space is limited so if anyone is interested in attending please can they register by contacting Camilla at naturaleenvironment@antaisce.org

A month in the properties office.

It must be hard for members to conceive of what goes on in Tailors' Hall, An Taisce's HQ so here in the first in a series of profiles, we asked John Ducie to talk about a month in his life as our Properties Officer.

January and February are peak months for wedding enquires in The Tailors Hall and a great deal of time has been spent answering emails and showing prospective clients around. Sometimes I have been kept going with one interested visitor after another for a large part of the day. I have also been engaged in detailed arrangements for upcoming events such as those in February; this includes everything from organising the hire of additional furniture, to music and flowers and arranging for the quoting for the food and drinks by Brambles Catering our sole service provider. It is a quiet month from an events point of view and is a good time to carry out maintenance and refurbishment projects, so no sooner has the aftermath the Christmas parties and the decorations been tidied up we are in to painting and decorating – this time the

lower staircase and the repair of fixtures such as a broken toilet bowl in gents toilets.



All this inevitably means countless discussions about costs and colours as well as organising the purchase of some items but it is immensely satisfying to see the building looking better and better and easier to let as a consequence. A further concern is the taking down, cleaning and putting into storage the courtyard marquees and the planning of the annual pruning and cleaning of the planting before they are due to go up again. January is also the peak month for weddings coverage in the media and to that end we are being advertised in Gay Community News following our first Civil Partnership last November and sending out a press release announcing the reopening of Tailors Hall with new licences.

I also wrote to all the heritage sites which give concessions to An Taisce Members and to members of other National Trusts renewing arrangements for the 2012 – 13 season. This year we will be promoting this scheme in The Daily Telegraph along with The National Trust, England, Wales & Northern Ireland and The National Trust for Scotland for the very first time.

David Owen and I met with Failte Ireland regarding future co-operation and grant aid for An Taisce properties projects. This resulted in great encouragement from them regarding support being available. National Trusts and tourist authorities are natural fits in some aspects of their work in most countries as historically was the case in Ireland before the sustainable property bubble distorted everything. Currently as a community group we are eligible for 75% grant aid from them for projects at heritage sites. Under consideration is assistance with visitor auditing at our sites, the concession card scheme including help with our website, interpretative signage and apps for An Taisce sites, opening up the High Street entrance to the Tailors Hall and much more. We meanwhile are bringing to them the international experience of INTO and Europa Nostra in building environmentally sustainable tourism. In this way we hope to advance property management, membership recruitment and influence Failte Ireland to be environmentally sensitive in this work as well.

For INTO the annual survey of members activity was completed after much gathering of information from An Taisce Departments. I also booked my flight with donated air miles to Washington for the annual face to face board meeting next October and participated in the approval of two new full members of INTO; The National Trust of Guernsey and The Siam Society which is Thailand's National Trust, a further 5 countries were given associate status including Morocco who applied via the Tanger branch of the Association des Enseignants des Sciences de la Vie et de la Terre, (AESVT) but would have gotten full membership if the national organisation had applied. Around the world a huge variety of organisations are carrying out the full remit of the national trust movement as we do and a significant number attempt only part of the work. It is for the second group that associate status is designed which give limited recognition and no voting rights. I also filled in my nomination papers for Europa Nostra's Council election next June.

Around the An Taisces properties I have been dealing with an attempted break in to Howth Courthouse through the roof which caused a great deal of damage and organised an insurance claim for the repairs after they were carried out under Rosalie Andrews direction. I also negotiated the renewal of our 35 lease at the same nominal rent for the next 35 years there. In Gort we are still seeking ways of getting the roof repaired following damage last winter and in our new property in Kerry some slates need replacing following storm damage which I have arranged to get done with the assistance of the Kerry Association. On Rough Island things are getting ready for sowing the tree seeds by the Donegal North West Association which are due any day from Glenveagh National Park, In Booterstown things are getting interesting with NAMA owning the adjoining site and maybe acquiring the freehold of our lease on the marsh itself. On the new acquisitions front there are currently no less than six potential donations in various stages of assessment and I try to get something done with each of these each month to keep them moving along. This involves discussion with prospective donors, site visits, checking legal title, preparing a report for the BOM and Council on the potential acquisitions value to An Taisce and the feasibility of us to holding the property for conservation.

Getting all of this done in a part time job is only possible with my assistant Padraig Morris who is a graduate in Heritage Studies and a Job Bridge Intern, propertiesassistant@antaisce.org and the help of the members of the Properties Committee and Tailors Hall Events Ltd Board as well as by donating a huge amount of my free time to An Taisce.

Consultation on Septic Tanks

Septic Tanks have created quite a stir in recent months. An Taisce have collected some scary statistics and facts about the potential dangers to our drinking water but many of our rural members are naturally very anxious about the potential costs of remedying malfunctioning systems that should possibly never have been permitted in the first place.

The Minister has now published draft regulations for the operation and maintenance of domestic waste water treatment systems, to ensure Ireland meets our European obligations to comply with the water directives. Would these regulations satisfy the European Commission? It has already been noted that the guidelines do not actually include any duty to protect groundwater and do not include a National Inspection Plan.

An Taisce hope to arrange for a workshop exploring some of the issues - more information on this will be sent out later and information on how to make your own submission are included in the text. Proposed Content of Regulations for Operation and Maintenance of Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems – Consultation Document

The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Phil Hogan T.D., is issuing this consultation document which sets out in full the details of what he proposes to include in standards for the operation and maintenance of septic tanks and other domestic waste water treatment systems. This document has been drafted in consultation with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and local authorities. The Minister is inviting submissions on the document and the standards before he gives them legal effect. It is the Minister's intention, subject to the outcome of this consultation process, to include the requirements set out in paragraphs 1-4 below in regulations to be made under the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012.

Submissions can be made by email to watersp@environ.ie or in writing to the address below.
Domestic Waste Water Systems – Consultations
Water Services Policy Section
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Newtown Road
Wexford

The closing date for receipt of submissions is 4.00pm on Friday, 30 March 2012.

1. General responsibility

Owners of houses served by a septic tank or other domestic waste water treatment system should be aware of the location of their system and its component parts and should carry out an examination of their system at least once a year to ensure there is no visual evidence that it is causing pollution or that it is in need of maintenance. The percolation area should also be examined to ensure it is not damaged. Owners should take care that the percolation area is kept free from disturbance from vehicles, heavy animals, sports activities or other activities likely to break the sod on the surface.

By carrying out such examinations and ensuring the system is operated and maintained correctly, the householder will reduce the likelihood of the system causing any risk to human health or the environment.

This will enable the householder to take the first step to fulfilling his or her obligation under the Act to ensure that the treatment system is not a risk to public health or the environment.

The regulations will require that only the domestic waste waters from the premises should be allowed to enter the treatment system. Domestic waste water – which is defined in the Water Services Act 2007 – means waste water of a composition and concentration (biological and chemical) normally discharged by a household, and which originates from the human metabolism or from day to day domestic type human activities, including sanitation and washing (which includes grey water).

As part of the inspection system to be introduced, where a treatment system is found to be operating in a manner which contravenes the operation and maintenance regulations, practical and pragmatic solutions will be identified to bring the treatment system into compliance in the most efficient manner, having regard to the circumstances and to the level of the risk to human health and the environment.

It is also important to note that if a system is inspected and there is no evidence of a risk to human health or the environment, no remedial action will be required for the treatment system (including the percolation area), irrespective of the type or age of the system.

2. Discharges from the treatment system

The regulations will address discharges from the treatment system in three ways.

First, the regulations will provide that a domestic waste water treatment system should be operated and maintained by the owner so as to ensure that it is not discharging (e.g. seeping, leaking or otherwise escaping)

from a place or part of the system where it is not designed or intended to discharge.

Second, the regulations will require that the effluent discharge pipe from the treatment system should not discharge directly to the surface of the ground or result in domestic waste water or other effluent from the system rising to the surface of the ground (this is known as "ponding" and is clear evidence that a system requires maintenance or remediation).

Third, the regulations will provide that a treatment system should also not directly discharge domestic waste water from the system into surface waters, such as streams or ditches, except where this is licensed under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977.

3. Sludge Removal

The frequency of emptying of sewage sludge from a treatment system will vary depending on a variety of factors – these would include the number of persons occupying the house(s) discharging to the system, the capacity of the system and the treatment process within the system, etc. The carrying out of an examination of the system (at least once a year), including dipping the tank, is the most practical method of determining if sludge needs to be removed from the system. Attached for information purposes at Appendix 1 is a schedule prepared by Cavan County Council setting out recommended periods, based on occupancy levels and tank capacities, for sludge removal from treatment systems. This schedule is included for indicative purposes only; it will not be included in the Regulations.

The regulations will provide that the owner of the treatment system should have the system de-sludged as required to avoid causing a risk to public health or the environment and for the efficient operation of the treatment system. Because the minimum frequency for de-sludging will depend on a variety of different factors, the regulations will not specify a standard minimum period for de-sludging. However, owners should be aware that all treatment systems require periodic desludging for efficient operation. If sludge is left to accumulate in the system indefinitely, the performance of the system will deteriorate.

The collection and transport of sludge from domestic waste water treatment systems is controlled by local authorities under the Waste Water Management (Collection Permit) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. Only waste collectors permitted under the collection permit regulations are authorised to transport domestic waste water treatment plant sludges. A list of permitted collectors is available from individual local authorities. When having the system desludged, the owner should get a written receipt from the authorised person and should keep the receipt so it can be presented if the system is subsequently inspected.

All domestic waste water sludges should be disposed of in accordance with existing legislation. The existing arrangements for the disposal of sludge in agriculture will continue to apply.

4. General Operational Requirements

The regulations will provide that:

- a. the tank capacity and configuration should be sufficient to allow for settlement and retention of solids, in accordance with general occupancy levels;
- b. Roof water and surface water runoff is not allowed to enter the waste water treatment system;
- c. Inlets/outlets/pipework are clear of any adverse material or blockages;
- d. Man-hole covers, manholes, distribution box, T-pieces, pipes, tanks are of good working order are not damaged and are sealed where appropriate;
- e. Any distribution-box/pump chamber should be watertight and the distribution box should be level and allow for even distribution;
- f. Any mechanical or electrical equipment (e.g. pumps, aerators, alarms etc.) are fit for purpose and are operational;
- g. Aeration vent pipes should be dry and free from obstructions, and
- h. Such operation and maintenance is in compliance with manufacturer's Operation and Maintenance Manual, as appropriate.

Tank Size (Litres)	No. of People									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2,250	5.8	2.6	1.5	1	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1	
3,400	9.1	4.2	2.6	1.8	1.3	1	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3
4,500	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2	1.5	1.2	1	0.8	0.7
5,700	15.6	7.5	4.8	3.4	2.6	2	1.7	1.4	1.2	1
6,800	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.3
8,000	22.1	10.7	6.9	5	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.2	1.9	1.6

CAN WE ASK LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS TO FORWARD SUBMISSIONS AND DATES & NOTES OF EVENTS FOR FUTURE EZINES TO EZINE@ANTAISCE.ORG

Biodiversity, wholesome food, and whatever you're having yourself.

An Taisce has to date no agreed policy on GMO however these are big issues and likely to be of interest to many of our members. Here Stella Coffey outlines the latest developments in Ireland and invites people to add to the gm-moratorium petition.

Do you care about good and wholesome food being available in the future on this island? If yes, then you must engage with the GM issue in Ireland immediately. Last Tuesday Teagasc announced that it has an application with the EPA for a licence to grow GM potatoes at Oakpark: you have until 27/3 (yes, that's 27th of this month and before 5pm) to lodge a 'representation' aka as an objection (See here for a form). Remember, if Teagasc gets its way on this, the genie will be out of the bottle because there's no way of recalling these spuds when problems become evident down the line. It took 20 years for the subtle effects of DDT to become obvious – that's one way Nature bites back.

I've been dreading this for months now – in fact since the coalition came to power – to the extent that I started an online petition for a 5-year moratorium on growing GM crops in Ireland. We, the people, have been conned: the upshot of how GM crops were commercialized is that we don't know enough about their effects, particularly their long-term ones. But the GM industry spends millions 'telling us' GM crops are safe . . . Once we've accepted growing GM crops in Ireland there will be no going back.

This petition needs you. It is fueled by a zero cash budget (except what's squeezed out the household and farm one) and by voluntary effort – YOUR signature and your urging of family, neighbours and friends to sign, through word-of-mouth, email, facebook, tweets, posters in your local library, club and other places where people get together. Or other ways YOU can come up with to get the word around! There were 1400 signatures last count and many more are needed. So take a look at www.gm-moratorium.com and please consider signing: there is no time like the present!

Meanwhile back to the 27 March deadline: despite Teagasc's super-spin, it IS genetically engineered spuds they're planning to trial in Oakpark. Their use of the million+ deaths from starvation during the Irish potato famine as a rationale for growing GM spuds uncontained in a field is truly sick-making. As this news is Tuesday-fresh, I'm still researching the details of the Teagasc application and it will be a few more days before the specific issues are clear to me. For those of you who want to object (EPA charges €10 for each submission) I hope to have a menu of points to hopefully ease your task. It is important that objections don't undermine their value by overstating their point(s); also to make their case relevant to the actual application. So Monsanto and glyphosate are irrelevant and should not be mentioned (I know that's difficult but the cause is worth it!).

It was the thought of the effects of GM-madness (ok, irrationality) on my grandchildren that spurred me to do something. What with another one due next week, I can't give up now. Nor can you – please go to www.gm-moratorium.com and click on the petition.

Stella Coffey

Nature's Way - New booklets available from An Taisce



Click on images above to download - They are between 1.5MB and 2.5MB each

An Taisce have produced a series of Nature's Way illustrated booklets. These booklets have been part funded by the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) biodiversity fund and the Natural Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

The booklets aim to be fun and informative through brilliant illustrations and engaging, accessible text. The cartoons and illustrations are amusing in places and help readers to remember some of the issues and concepts, as well as inviting them to read the booklet. The messages are crafted so as to be readily understood, appealing, and memorable.

The first booklet was produced in 2010 is entitled "Natures Way – Biodiversity & Ecosystems in Ireland". This booklet is engaging and accessible, with lively illustrations and cartoons to illustrate ecosystems services and address some of the current challenges facing Ireland's biodiversity. The topics covered includes:

- Bogs, wetlands & flood control,
- Water quality & fisheries,
- Biodiversity on the farm,
- Sea life
- Biodiversity & climate change.

The second booklet produced at the end of 2011 is called "Nature's way - Pollinators in Ireland". This is a really lively and colorfully illustrated booklets, which depicts different pollinator species and addresses the following topics:

- What is pollination?

- Who are the pollinators?
- Why do we need them?
- Threats/reason for decline

The third booklet in the series was produced at the beginning of 2012 is "Nature's Way - The Wonder of Peatlands". This booklet is composed of slightly more abstract illustrations which nonetheless give a clear and engaging message to the reader. The following topics are covered:

- What are bogs?
- The origins and history of peat bogs.
- The plants, animals and birds found in boglands.
- Peat extraction and threats.
- Climate Change
- Protecting our bogs
- And what the public can do to help protect them.

If you would like to request copies of these booklets please contact: naturalenvironment@antaisce.org

Natural Environment Committee - News

One of the topics discussed at the recent Natural Environment committee meeting was the controversial proposal to extract water from the River Shannon for use by Dublin local authorities and the mid-east region in future years. Water

requirements are rising steadily and increased potential sources are needed not only to serve the rising population but also to guarantee adequate supplies to industry locating in the region - the electronics industry especially has massive requirements. The proposal to divert water from Lough Derg has aroused huge local concerns and opposition, notwithstanding reassurances that water will be extracted only when water levels are abundant and that there would be no ecological side effects. The water will be stored in a new 'water storage facility' to be built at Garryhinch, near Portarlinton, County Laois at the site of a former cut-away bog. It will cover 567 hectares and will also become a major water based 'eco park' leisure attraction. It is a complex issue with competing interests of environmental protection and water requirements for human health and economic development. Robust modeling of the environmental impacts, including precautions around extraction rates and timings have been done by NUI Maynooth and others.

Further information including the Strategic Environmental Assessment is available on the Bord na Mona and Dublin City Councils websites at:

<http://www.bordnamona.ie/our-company/our-businesses/water-project/>

<http://www.dublincity.ie/WaterWasteEnvironment/waterprojects/Pages/WaterSupplyProject-DublinRegion.aspx>

Two more booklets in the Nature's Way series - 'The Wonder of Peatlands' and 'Pollinators in Ireland' have been produced by the NE office, in conjunction with the NPWS. They are concise, colourful and ideal for use in schools. See above

The government has committed to producing a Climate Change Bill this year, but there are concerns that there are no proposals to include sectoral targets. Carbon emissions from agricultural livestock is a major contributor to the world's greenhouse gas burden, and the government's failure to include targets reflects increasing demand for meat internationally, especially in China and emerging economies. The government's 'Harvest 2020' programme will see intensification of milk and beef production. There are recommendations from some international environmentalists that consolidated intensive agriculture areas be developed, such as circumscribed areas for intensive animal production, though it is not apparent how this could reduce the carbon emissions problem.

Providence Resources plc applied for an exploration licence in the Irish Sea off Dalkey, and An Taisce (through Camilla Keane, our casework and research officer) made a comprehensive submission despite the tight deadline.

Nearby, two hectares of land adjoining Booterstown Marsh has been put up for sale by NAMA, and the possibility of An Taisce initiating a fund-raising to buy it was discussed. The land is of relatively low ecological value at present, and could be restored though at considerable cost financially and in time. However early bidding has pushed the price well beyond what An Taisce could possibly consider raising. The An Taisce bird sanctuary is part of a proposed natural heritage area (pNHA) and proposed Strategic Area of Conservation (pSAC) for south Dublin bay, is on a long lease from the Pembroke Estate since 1971, but the lease is due to end in less than a decade. At present two UCD masters students are conducting research studies on the biodiversity of the marsh. More information about the sanctuary is at: <http://www.antaisce.org/property/PropertiesAL/BooterstownMarsh.aspx>

The natural environment office has been reduced to one full time officer, Camilla Keane, following the departure of Anja Murray and the inability of An Taisce to fund a permanent replacement for financial reasons. Camilla has done magnificent work in managing to fulfill An Taisce's role, and is supported at present by two post-graduate student 'interns' on a voluntary work-experience programme, Gary and Stephen. All three have our thanks and admiration for their outstanding work under difficult conditions.

News from Cork Local Association

An Taisce Corcaigh has experienced a very low amount of planning referrals in 2012 to date so we have concentrated on more pro-active work including a letter of support to the Cork Branch of the Irish Wildlife Trust for their proposals to Beaumont Quarry in Cork city.

Beaumont Quarry is an old limestone quarry with a wide variety of woodland and grassland habitats which have a huge potential in terms of local amenity and wildlife preservation. It is currently owned by Cork City Council. The council applied for a Waste Permit in 2006 to fill in the Quarry with 250,000 tonnes of construction waste to make a new public park. Although this work did not begin (and probably will not given the state of the construction industry), the Quarry is currently poorly managed by Cork City Council. It suffers from illegal dumping, dog fouling, anti-social behavior and invasive species (Japanese Knotweed in particular). Despite all of this, the site supports the Red Data Book plant species Little Robin in addition to calcareous grassland, wet willow woodland and other broadleaf woodland. From a heritage viewpoint, it's history is interlinked with the city, having provided much of the stone for St Finbarr's Cathedral.

An Taisce Corcaigh's letter of support to the Cork Branch of the IWT fully endorses their proposals to promote the site as a wildlife oasis and urges the Council to take the detailed recommendations on board. Should the site be subject to any planning applications in future, we will support proposals to protect and enhance the site's natural heritage.

Conn Donovan - An Taisce Corcaigh

Disabled access in heritage buildings

The provision of access for disabled people is a legal requirement under the Disability Act 2005 for all public bodies, and frequently presents major challenges in older buildings, places of architectural heritage significance and national monuments. The Department of Arts (DAHG) in conjunction with the National Disability Authority produced a guide in 2011 on how to approach the issues (see www.nda.ie).

The guide states that 'it is necessary to address both conservation and accessibility needs in an integrated and balanced manner'. This does not always happen, and there are a number of examples where the balance was not achieved. Two cases in County Kilkenny may be helpful in responding to such applications in future.



Kilkenny city library at Johns Quay, built in 1910, is rated as of regional importance in the NIAH inventory (www.buildingsofireland.ie). It is an elegant riverside building, and as iconic to Kilkenny as the Tholsel clock tower that overlooks it from above the opposite side of the river Nore. A couple of years ago the borough council provided disabled access, but at huge cost to its integrity and appearance. With hindsight it can be seen that an alternative solution could have been to create a new main entrance, including access for disabled persons, at the side doors seen on the right of the recent photograph. The existing main entrance porch could have been left untouched, and the legal requirement of the Disability Act fully complied with. Unfortunately the appearance was further compromised by the metal poles and pedestrian crossing with flashing lights, an excessive intervention on what is a minor side road with little traffic.



More recently a planning application was submitted to install disability access at Duiske Abbey in Graiguenamanagh, which would have involved both visual and structural alterations at the main entrance to the abbey. The Kilkenny local association made an observation that disabled access could and should be provided in an alternative manner that would preserve its integrity. The application was resubmitted, but the planning authority insisted on an alternative solution. The end result, which used an alternative secondary entrance, was permitted and the needs of both conservation and universal access was met.

Declan Murphy. Kilkenny Local Association

More good news from the Wexford Local Association

The Wexford branch had problems with a developer who wanted to build a house on a field next to Bannow Bay a protected area. The only access to the site was along the foreshore and the proposal would have been in breach of the county development plan. On previous applications the junior members of the planning department had turned down the proposal but the senior planner then decided to determine any future applications. It came as no surprise that the next application in 2011 was passed and we therefore decided to refer the matter to An Bord Pleanála. In spite of a great deal of pressure to withdraw our appeal we stuck to our views and were vindicated when the Bord supported our arguments and refused the proposal, another success for the members of An Taisce.

The Burning Question – notes from the Kerry Association

Since time immemorial, man has used fire to remove scrub and to increase the fertility of land, but is this practice appropriate for today?

In 2010, a huge amount of burning took place on the lands bordering Killarney National Park, causing damage of up to € 0.5 million and putting property at risk. Local newspapers carried dramatic photographs of houses with fires on adjoining lands creating a horrifying backdrop. Whole hillsides were ravaged by fires that had got out of control and some forestry was destroyed.

The matter was brought up at the Kerry County Development Board by the Environment Rep., Jill Crosher, and it was agreed something needed to be done but, so far, very little action has taken place. The IFA and Muckross Community Association produced a document, 'Strategy for Wild Fires', which highlighted the effects of changes in farming practices and made some proposals for future action. It was noted that under-grazing by sheep allowed heather, furze etc. to spread, increasing the risk of fire spreading.

In the year 2000, the 'closed season' for burning was changed from April 15 - Aug. 31 to March 1 – Aug. 31. Farmers claim it is often impossible to burn earlier than March 1st and want the date changed back to April 15. This year little or no burning has taken place to date but we are expecting the usual start of the 'burning season' after 1st March. Some of the burning is, without doubt, unnecessary and there are inadequate controls to prevent fires spreading into adjoining lands. At least one individual has earned himself the nickname 'The Terminator' because of his overuse of petrol and matches but his neighbours are afraid to report him to the appropriate authorities.

Have other An Taisce Associations had similar experiences or know of counties where effective action is being taken to control this very damaging practice? We in the Kerry Association would welcome further information. Please contact our secretary, Bernard Goggin, at bgoggin39@hotmail.com

The Kerry Association meets on the first Thursday of every month at Maeve O'Donnell's house, Tralee, at 8.00 p.m. All members are welcome to attend.

Draft Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland - An Taisce's view:

Placing short-term economic and national trade and consumption interests over the maintenance of a living planet is untenable.

Legislative provision is required for sustainable development as an overarching objective, parallel to national climate change legislation with mandatory greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. Revision of remit of Government departments state and Statutory boards and Government share-hold controlled companies, including Bord Na Mona and Coillte requires sustainable development to be defined as overriding objective.

The following article by Ian Lumley, An Taisces Heritage Officer discusses the Draft Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland which will define Irelands' international commitment to sustainability in advance of the RIO anniversary summit in June this year.

The 20th anniversary of the UN Rio Earth summit approaches this year requiring Ireland to review its progress over 20 years.

The basic facts and figures of Ireland's record are dismal:

- The 2010 European Environment Agency (EEA) report on "Sustainable Resource Consumption" shows Ireland at three times the EU 27 Average
- The WWF and Global Footprint Network 2010 Living Planet Report which calculates Irelands per capita ecological footprint as the tenth highest in the world.
- Irish greenhouse gas emissions have levelled only because of reduction in industrial and transport demand of the crash, but remain twice the per capita level of Sweden.
- Ireland is failing to protect some of the worlds most bio diverse rich peatlands

The publication by the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government of a new Draft Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland in advance of the RIO anniversary summit in June this year, will define Irelands' international commitment to sustainability.

This should provide the opportunity to the lessons of the largely failed *Sustainable Development a Strategy for Ireland 1997* and the reality of the land over-zoning and debt burden of the deluded Irish boom years, and the States high per capita global footprint.

Instead the published draft document on the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government website is deficient in analysis and sets out measures that are a stream of vagueness and ineffectuality

THE DRAFT FRAMEWORK FAILS:

- To provide a coherent analysis of the global and national sustainability challenges facing Ireland namely the converging threats of climate change emissions and biodiversity loss, the global boundaries of nitrogen release, land use, freshwater use, ocean acidification and aerosol, toxics and ozone release.
- To address the conflict between the continued participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, and the achievement of sustainable resource consumption and emissions.
- To address the extent to which the current policy and remit of Government departments and State Bodies AND Local Authorities directly contravene the achievement of sustainability

- To provide under the "Measures" recommended any implementation strategy, timetable or targets for achieving sustainability.

The draft document reveals an inbuilt assumption on the sustainability of continuing economic growth on a finite planet, which is not tenable. It also fails to address the conflict between OECD policy on economic growth and global sustainability

The document cites the EU Europe 2020 Strategy and its flagship initiative "A Resource Efficient Europe" (Sept 2011) which aims to decouple the use of natural resources from economic growth, using "market based instruments, the phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies and the greening of tax systems" to provide "a framework for policies to support the shift towards a resource efficient and low carbon economy aimed at boosting economic performance"

A major difficulty arises in that this strategy does not have the force of EU law and is undermined by EU competition law and WTO trade agreements.

The document cites the October 2009 National Economic and Social Council (NESC) report identifying Ireland's crisis as five pointed namely banking, fiscal, economic, social and reputational. This reflects the failure of NESC to recognise Irelands overriding sustainability crisis in global resource consumption and emission impacts.

The draft document fails entirely to refer to refer to WTO agreements to which Ireland has bound itself, both as a sovereign State and as member of the EU.

Ireland is, through the EU and through the WTO and other trade and transport agreements, a trading nation that disregards the resource consumption and emission impact of traded goods, services and transport.

Much of the global footprint of Ireland is externalised on other countries, e.g. Water consumption for cotton from central Asia, greenhouse gas emission from fertilizer production in India, cosmetic oil, animal feed or forest products from tropical forests in Brazil or South East Asia. The New Economics Foundation has highlighted China as the environmental laundry for unsustainable western consumption, with goods produced from the energy of new coal burning stations, negating all of the emission gains from the Kyoto participating states.

The 2006 Stern report identifies Climate Change as the greatest ever market failure. The global free market economy externalises emission and environmental costs on the future in all areas of resource consumption and emissions

The 2012 Durban Climate summit, which should have lead to an effective post Kyoto agreement, was marked the failure of the US to engage in the process, the rejection by China of any limit on its emissions, and the refusal of Russia Japan and Canada to enter a new Climate agreement.

The current Fuel Quality Directive proposal by the EU Commission to label Canadian tar sand oil as highly polluting, is being strenuously resisted by Canada which has threatened to involve the World trade organisation "to defend its interests" (Guardian 21 Feb 2011)

Placing short term economic and national trade and consumption interests over the maintenance of a living planet is untenable.

The primary lesson to be learned from the failure of the limited policy objectives in "Sustainable Development a Strategy for Ireland" 1997 is not addressed or learned, most obviously the objective that "in general the must be a presumption against urban generated one off rural housing adjacent to towns" (Page 151)

The 1997 Strategy set out policies and objectives for a number of sectors namely agriculture, forestry, marine resources, energy , industry, transport and tourism and trade. There was an overall failure to address land use planning and implementation of sustainability of local authority level resulting in so much of the development of the boom years being car dependent in location. No action was taken to address the mission statements or legal remits of individual Government departments or agencies. Some of the consequences are farcical:

- The Government department and agencies decentralisation programme, contravening the National Spatial Strategy 2002
- The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment promoting the export of horticultural peat to South Africa as an "environmentally friendly" product, ignoring the carbon emission impact and the fact the material was coming from unauthorised extraction sites in breach of the Environmental Impact Assessment and IPPC Directives.
- The placing of TV advertisements by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government recommending reducing driving speeds to reduce climate emissions, while at the same time the Dept of Transport/ National Roads Authority increased motorway speeds from 100kph to 120kph, thereby increasing emissions.

Sustainable development which has been an EU legal objective since the passing of the Amsterdam Treaty, requires comprehensive transposition into Irish domestic law, and the remit of individual government departments and agencies

Legislative provision is required for sustainable development as an overarching objective, parallel to national climate change legislation with mandatory greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. Revision of remit of Government departments state and Statutory boards and Government share-hold controlled companies, including Bord Na Mona and Coillte requires sustainable development to be defined as overriding objective.

The decision on the Children's Hospital by An Bord Pleanála will protect Dublin's Future.





An Bord

Pleanála has made one of the most significant planning decisions in its history in refusing the application by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board for the 16 storey National Children's Hospital adjoining the Mater Hospital in Eccles St.

An Bord Pleanála refused the application on the grounds of height, scale as well as mass, and that it would contravene the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan.

Were permission to be granted, it would "result in a dominant visually incongruous structure and would have a profound negative impact on the appearance and visual amenity of the city skyline", including O'Connell St, according to the Board.

Ian Lumley, Heritage Officer of An Taisce, stated "The decision supports An Taisce's stance in protecting Dublin City and reflects a consistent pattern by An Bord Pleanála in refusing overscaled development in Dublin city centre over a long number of years. In effect, the Board is maintaining Dublin's predominant low-rise character and its tourism cache, upon which so much revenue depends."

An Taisce has always supported the requirement to provide appropriate children's hospital facilities and action is urgently required.

An Taisce is calling for greater attention on frontline staff. A great many medics are completely over-stretched as key positions are being left vacant. There must also be greater priority on securing and retaining frontline staff rather than locking ourselves into long term repayments for medical buildings which remain understaffed.

The Board's decision itself raises serious questions as to why a State-appointed board and its professional advisers wasted so much time and money in pursuing such an unsuitable development proposal.

From ordinary visitors to film directors, attention is constantly drawn to the coherence of Dublin's skyline and its economic importance to Ireland for which An Taisce has long fought. This decision by An Bord Pleanála reinforces that wealth base, and should help pave the way to make a proposal for World Heritage status for Dublin, providing a further boost to employment over time.



Boglands

The 20th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit is marked by a new global sustainability summit in June where Ireland could face major international embarrassment because of its failure to comply with the UN Convention of Biological Diversity in protecting peatlands

Irish peatlands are a globally important wildlife habitat for unique and rare species, a major carbon sink, and provide multiple eco-system services in flood mitigation, water purification and maintaining wilderness.

Yet, Ireland in its 4th compliance report on the UN Convention in 2010 stated: "It is estimated that there has been a 99% loss of the original area of actively growing raised bog, and one-third of the remaining 1% has been lost in the last 10 years. Although the best examples of raised bogs are now designated as Natura 2000 sites, deterioration of the hydrological conditions caused by peat cutting, drainage, afforestation and burning severely threatens the viability of the habitat at most locations."

Action is only now being taken on the mechanised cutting the degrading these 55 sites because of threat of EU legal action. Ian Lumley, An Taisce's Heritage Officer goes over some of the issues in this fascinating article that follows.

The pioneering writer and researcher on Irish bogs Professor John Feehan describes peatlands as "places of enchantment" , while our raised bogs are "a wild wonderland" where "the natural world of the bog is magical ... hidden in the extraordinary little lives of smaller animals and plants scarcely seen or noticed most of the time, each with its own special story to tell: beetles and moths, flies and dragonflies butterflies and mosses". The western seaboard blanket bogs "where the interplay of light, bog and ocean interact to create an ever-changing magic which tantalises and challenges the eye and the hand of the artist", invoking the famous dictum of Henry David Thoreau: "In Wilderness is the preservation of the world". (See, Feehan, A Long-Lived Wilderness: The future of the North Midlands Peatland Network, 2004.)

In a world of increasing disconnection with nature, and the erosion of the wonder that is a night sky unpolluted by light from structures, the human enjoyment of wilderness has never been more important.

Peatlands maintain a biological record of environmental change over millennia. Understanding past climate and environmental change is crucial in adapting and mitigating current human generated climate change.

Irish peatlands are particularly significant in providing an archive of human settlement in protecting large tracts of prehistoric landscapes over 5,000 years, with the waterlogged conditions preserving human remains and timber structures.

Irish peatlands are distinctive in character and landscape, creating a sense of place and national identity reflected in some of the best known works of Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney.

Enhanced access to peatland areas, provided it is compatible with conservation, can be a key part of national outdoor recreational and tourism policy. Much has already been done through Leader and other local development initiatives in conservation in creating walking routes and nature appreciation activity. The examples set in the community-led conservation of Abbeyleix Bog, Co Laois and Fennor, Co Waterford can be emulated nationally.

An Taisce has led voluntary organisation involvement in peatland conservation with the acquisition of Mongan Bog in Co Offaly. The Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC), which is managing the conservation of Lodge Bog and an educational centre in Co Kildare, is focused on assisting and advising communities in peatland conservation and education.

The benefit of major State investment in land purchase and conservation over the last decade through NPWS is now bearing fruit along with visitor and educational focal points at the Ballycroy National Park Co Mayo and Co Offaly Clara Bog projects, and Bord na Mona at Boora Co Offaly. In 2004 John Feehan and the National Wetlands Wilderness Park Committee put forward an inspiring proposal for a "Wilderness park centred on the Bord na Mona cutaway in the North midlands".

Yet Ireland's current – and dominant – relationship with peatlands is not one of appreciation but of exploitation, and this is emphasised by the complete failure to comply with EU legislation inside and outside of protected areas. In 2008 Ireland's Minister for Trade was so mis-informed as to describe peat compost as "a quality environmentally-friendly product". The negative impacts on biodiversity loss, climate change, water quality and flooding show this not to be the case.

Currently, three peat power stations operate in Ireland and are responsible for the cutting of 3 million tonnes of peat per year. And still, these power stations receive subsidies from taxpayers' funds of €30 million per year.

Peat extraction is currently occurring within Natura 2000 sites, which contain areas of active raised and blanket bogs listed as priority habitats under the Habitats Directive.

The Government appointed Peatlands Council was established in 2011 to advise on a national Peatlands Strategy. An Taisce is represented on the Council through Irish Environmental network and made a detailed submission on the public consultation call on the development of the proposed strategy.

Dublin's draft Public Realm Plan



Earlier this month, Dublin City Council released a draft plan for the future of the city, called Your City Your Space. It called for a radical change to city planning, with pedestrians and public transport taking priority over cars.

As the deadline for submissions closes secretary of An Taisce James Nix argues that grand plans are all very well – but we've been here before.

Dublin City Council's Draft Public Realm Strategy is full of winning photographs, maps and flow charts all nicely laid out. The trouble is that we've been here before. In fact, we've been here many times before, and it would make far more sense for Dublin City Council to implement the plans it has published in recent years, rather than printing more and more plans. The public is entitled to ask: without follow-through on previously published plans, what's the point in engaging with the latest initiative?

Examples of plans in limbo, or half-implemented are legion. On the northern side of Parnell Square, a link between the Garden of Remembrance and the Hugh Lane Gallery was planned. The new access to the northern side of the Garden of Remembrance was built, but then the raised ramp across to the Hugh Lane Gallery never was – and why the flush pedestrian link never materialised we don't know.

Of course, the plan was not simply to create greater interplay between the gallery and the garden; it would also slow traffic that otherwise careers up Parnell Square West and whips east across the top of the square. For some motorists it's a little racetrack there. It makes for lousy public realm and the consequences on surrounding streets are clear. North Frederick Street has two or three derelict buildings along its western side, and almost half of Parnell Square North is empty. An

environment less oppressive for pedestrians would help combat vacancy and dereliction – all of which goes back to following through on plans already published.

'No visible delivery – to date at least'

Opening up the haven that is Dublin Castle was the subject of another plan. The vision is – or at least was – to create a new entrance to the castle off George's Street, and this would enable a whole new axis stretching from Grafton St along Exchequer Street and into the grounds of the Castle. Excellent idea. No visible delivery – to date at least. And no mention of it in the Draft Strategy, not even a footnote to say further investigation showed it tricky to implement. Hanging in planning limbo, we don't know its current status. A more professional approach is needed to inform the public of the status of existing plans. Is the plan for Dublin Castle scrapped? If it is still in play, is it to be implemented before or after the designs and new charts set out in latest Draft?

Then there is, (or was), the plan for a Sutton to Sandycove cycleway (S2S). Now, don't get me wrong. Some sections of this can never be realised. At Booterstown, for example, the engineering cost is too high and the adverse consequences on the marsh too severe for a new path by the sea: there were always going to have to be some diversions back to existing roads. But the key point is the vision backed up by step-by-step delivery so that, over time, Dublin City Council would work to create recreational routes by the sea.

The walk along the South Bull Wall is an old favourite for long-term residents and visitors alike. But try getting there by bike. To avoid the smell of sewage undergoing treatment, the best route is via Sandymount, but here the gravel path has severe gradients and briars spitting out from the hedgerows. Then, on arrival at the beginning of the Bull Wall, there's no cycle parking, unless you count one signpost which is usually occupied by other bikes, and some uprights of nearby chicken-wire fencing – which are a right challenge to civilise with a bike lock. There are oodles of other plans on which there appears to be little or no follow through, and a further article below offers further examples.

'It's not helped by street clutter'

Walking in Dublin "the general level of comfort in the streets is pretty low" commented international urban design expert Patrick Malone after a visit in the mid noughties. It is not helped by street clutter – the proliferation of poles, poorly-tailored signs and fixtures blighting almost every footpath. College Green is perhaps the worse example but very few streets escape the problem.

Just like the Draft Public Realm Strategy, Dublin City Council's Development Plan, 2011 to 2017, is rich with vision and objectives seeking to provide first-rate public space – all worlds apart from the reality on the ground. A 2011 survey by An Taisce found 100 disused or unused poles in the city centre alone. An Taisce forwarded the study to the city council and some poles were removed, but there's a disheartening aspect too: in some situations the city council 'found' items to erect just to 'make use' of the poles. With his camera Kevin Duff of An Taisce documented the flurry of activity in what can only be described as a bizarre and sad episode.

Up to two-thirds of the number of poles currently on footpaths could be removed by removing unnecessary and redundant items, and by co-locating a number of signs on one pole, according to Kevin Duff. He welcomes Dublin City Council's new wayfinding signage, saying it shows what can be achieved by co-hosting signs, and adds that Dublin's cluttered streets will do nothing for a bid by the city for UNESCO world heritage status.

'Irish granite was thrown away in favour of cheap imported stone'

Also militating against that bid is what Duff describes as "the butchery of historic stone paving sets", such as those ripped out in 2009 for the introduction of the College Green bus gate. Instead of being reused, Irish granite from the 1700s and 1800s was thrown away in favour of cheap white imported stone. "The casual approach to the repair and replacement of the city's paths and kerbs will cost Dublin in terms of [historic] UNESCO status and lost visitor revenue", according to Duff, who points to properly-managed systems in place across other European cities.

Both Duff and his An Taisce colleague, heritage officer, Ian Lumley say that its vital Dublin has conservation advice in undertaking repair, alteration and reinstatement work – whether it is by its own traffic and water departments, or by utility companies acting on its behalf, or with its consent. "The evidence to date is that, apart from a small number of select projects, work on the city's historic public realm is driven and dominated by an engineering approach that sorely lacks conservation input", according to Lumley.

Lumley points to what he describes as the "clarity and simplicity" of new public realm works in cities such Avignon, Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Lyon, and Nantes and the newly-enhanced Trafalgar Square in London. For Dublin, which trades so heavily on its historic credentials, the current way streets are treated, and streetworks are undertaken, is unacceptable, he says.

Undoubtedly, an ongoing problem in Dublin is the lack of a directly elected mayor who is directly accountable when plans and policies are followed through – or not followed through – as the case may be.

And this undercurrent runs through the latest publication. City Council officials are to be commended for dedicating the time to focus on the importance of enhancing the public realm. But follow-through on existing plans and policies is what's needed first and foremost; glossy new publications can wait.

James Nix is Hon. Secretary of An Taisce. This article first appeared in thejournal.ie 26 January 2012

Septic tank hype veils public subsidy to rural dwellers” by FRANK McDONALD in The Irish Times s

At least 450,000 tanks discharging 250 million litres of effluent daily is simply not sustainable

NOTHING HAS stirred passions more in rural Ireland, it would seem, than the proposed registration and inspection regime for septic tanks. And given that there are at least 450,000 of them – serving farmhouses, bungalows and boom-time mansions – the political pressure being exerted is substantial and widely dispersed.

It has already resulted in Minister for the Environment Phil Hogan cutting the proposed €50 inspection fee to just €5 – “the price of a pint” – although this raises a serious question about whether there will be sufficient funds available to carry out inspections even in the most environmentally sensitive areas, with poor soil percolation.

One of the key points being made by the campaign is that it's unfair to impose costs on rural dwellers for the maintenance of their septic tanks when hundreds of millions of euro of taxpayers' money is invested in upgrading sewage treatment plants in cities and towns. Thus, urban dwellers are being subsidised by their rural counterparts.

But are they really? Development levies by local authorities reveal a different story. The average levy for a new house in the countryside amounts to €9,300, with no charge for sewerage, whereas the purchase price of a similar-sized house in an urban area would include a much higher levy of €28,650 – of which €5,350 is for sewerage.

On a wider front, rural dwellers are being heavily subsidised by their urban counterparts to cover the cost of installing electricity and telecoms lines, postal deliveries and school transport services, as shown in a study done by An Foras Forbartha (the National Institute for Physical Planning and Construction Research, abolished in 1988).

In a 1976 report – suppressed because its findings were politically unpalatable at the time – it compared the relative costs of servicing closely knit housing with dispersed one-off housing, and queried “the extent to which the public costs involved are borne by the community at large, thus providing a form of hidden subsidy” to rural dwellers.

For example, it found that postal deliveries to widely dispersed houses were 3½ times more expensive than to urban houses. Nearly 30 years later, planning consultant Diarmuid Ó Gráda estimated that it was four times more expensive. But proposals for more efficient US-style roadside boxes in rural areas were resisted.

On school transport, Ó Gráda estimated that 140,000 kids were being taken to school by State-funded bus every weekday – 96 per cent of them outside the Dublin area – at a cost of €111 million in 2004. Years earlier, An Foras Forbartha said “the financial outlay on the provision of school buses is costing as much as the schools capital programme”.

The cost of waste collection in rural areas is also significantly higher. According to the Foras study, five bins could be collected per minute in an urban area, compared to just 1.4 per minute in a rural area. Similarly, the capital cost of providing telecoms lines was found to be five times more expensive in a rural area with dispersed housing

providing telephone lines has led to 25 times more expenditure in a rural area than dispersed housing.

Or take electricity. Comparing house frontages of five metres (fairly standard for suburban estates) and 58 metres (the usual length for a house on a half-acre site), the capital costs of providing power lines to serve the latter were 2.4 times higher, according to the 1976 study. Like the other metrics, that's unlikely to have changed since then.

Ó Gráda found that the built-in subsidy for installing electricity connections was €390 in urban areas in 2003, compared to €865 in rural areas. On an ongoing basis, ESB staff were being paid 41 cent for each urban home and 96 cent for rural ones. And although rural costs were 134 per cent higher, less than half of this was actually charged.

He also noted that, of the €500 million allocated for non-national roads in 2004, only 12 per cent was going on urban roads; the rest (88 per cent) was to be invested rural areas. Yet the proliferation of one-off houses in the countryside – most of them “urban-generated” – represents a major traffic hazard in itself, because of their driveways.

As James Nix and myself noted in *Chaos at the Crossroads* (2005), the Foras Forbartha study did not examine the septic tank issue in great detail. It looked at what it would cost to link a rural area to a sewerage scheme and calculated it to be five times the cost of urban housing, again based on 58-metre and five-metre frontages.

Examining the issue in 2004, Ó Gráda noted that Ireland had the highest rate of microbial groundwater pollution in the EU, for which he believed farming and domestic sewage were equally to blame. What figures are available indicate that at least 250 million litres of effluent are discharged by the 450,000 homes with septic tanks every day.

And that's simply not sustainable.

Tony Lowes on Rural Development

The reconvened Built Environment Committee has begun the process of updating our rural housing policy. Meanwhile, Tony Lowes, a chairman of this committee in the 1990's contributed the following blog to the Village Magazine. Michael Smith, past Chairman of An Taisce and now editor of the Village Magazine has kindly permitted us to reprint this slightly edited version of this blog here for the interest of members. This is Lowes' personal opinion and does not necessarily represent An Taisce's position.



In an unexpected move that undercuts the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Minister for Agriculture Simon Coveney, has required that hill farmers in disadvantaged areas must have double the old minimum stocking rate for sheep or face exclusion from payments. The EU has called for a move away from paying per head of animal as this encouraged overgrazing. Grant payments represented over 70% of national farm income in 2011.

Coming late in 2011 and governing payment through 2013, The Minister's intention is to eliminate the 'unproductive' hill farmer. Horses have been excluded from stocking calculations as well. 'This is not about telling farmers that if they do not increase their stocking rate they will not receive a payment, because farmers would simply increase their stocking rates', he told the Dáil recently.

Will the latest conditions for receipt of agricultural subsidies further denude rural Ireland?

'Some people who simply maintain land to get a disadvantaged areas payment and do the bare minimum with regard to keeping stock for the minimum amount of time will lose their payments, and this is the right approach when we have a reduced amount of money to spend. We must prioritise active and real farmers.'

In November 2011 Teagasc, the Government's farm advisory service, announced that the number of 'unviable' farms has increased from less than a third to more than 40% from 2007 to 2010.

For 'active and real farmers', however, read agri-business – and insurance companies planting non-native trees that require high levels of fertilisation and receive both establishment grants and 15 or 20 years of 'premiums'. Until 2007, EU support covered 75% of the bill, but Ireland's stubborn refusal to change our forestry policy meant that we could not meet the minimum environmental standards. To make up the lost EU grant is costing us €42m a year in 'premia' payments – and growing.

By comparison, The Minister's de facto change will cut the annual funding required under the Disadvantaged Scheme from €220m to €190, saving €30m. And it will hit the poorest hardest. For some, this will be the straw that broke the camel's back. Rising fuel costs, property taxes, potential water and septic tank charges combined with this loss of income will push families into 'negative income' – if they are not already there.

Is the Minister following a strictly economic management line? His brother, Patrick, holds an Oxford Doctorate in Management Studies and is under attack as chief executive of Greencore Group plc, the giant Irish food group, for his 2011 pay packet of €1.4m. Applying the business model to agriculture excludes 'external' environmental and social costs. 'Biodiversity' was estimated by the Department of the Environment in 2008 to be worth a minimum of €2.6 billion per annum to the Irish economy. This is 'natural capital' and is the foundation upon which our agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism sector depend, sustaining clean water, productive soil and clean air.

The price of the loss of biodiversity through agricultural intensification is only part of what is missing from the 'business plans' that determine small farms are 'unviable' and should be abandoned rather than supported. There is also the human biodiversity – the social cost of emigration, putting pressure on rural structures like schools and village shops in what becomes a self-fulfilling cycle of abandonment.

The Minister has set high targets for all farming sectors in his 2020 Plan. He speaks of 'sustainable intensification'. It has even been suggested that a return to the higher density stocking rates of sheep in these areas would be an environmental

benefit, claiming 'many mountainous areas are being under-grazed, which is doing as much damage as over-grazing.' What does that mean?

It means that not only are hill farmers being cleared out but the hills as well. Wide spread protests over the last two years have been made about the 'scrub removal' in rural areas – the use of mechanical diggers to clear away areas that have gone 'wild' – as well as indiscriminate and uncontrolled wildfires as 'land management' to try and keep land 'available for grazing'.

The Department told farmers that complaints from Eastern Europe – where area aid payments were docked for not keeping land 'open' after aerial photography – were forcing their hand. A 2010 'health check' of the Single Payment Scheme resulted in a new insistence that farmers include only "utilisable areas" for payment.

This meant that hedgerows which grew more than a metre into a field, overgrown tracks and previously abandoned plots were subject to 'scrub removal'. While scrub removal can be argued as an appropriate management tool for maintaining lowland agriculturally productive land, it is environmentally devastating in the hills.

Many of these farmers were only part time during the boom, traditionally working off farm in construction. The ability of farming units to remain viable has already been seriously reduced by the economic downturn as farmers' options in terms of finding alternative work have drastically reduced. Now, ironically armed with massive redundant earth moving equipment and the skills to obliterate anything, the community is alive with men trying to maximising the areas qualifying for grants. And it is not just the wildlife that is going – our built heritage is going with it.

As the traditional connection between the land owner and the land is eroded through intensification and expansion, the loss of archaeological monuments has been shocking. In the decade between 1990 and 2000, the Heritage Council estimated 10% of our national monuments were lost. In certain areas, 'land clearance' has resulted in the loss of more than 80% of the ring forts, a trend that Teagasc, the farm advisory body, warned in 2006 'is due to increase in the coming decade'.

An eminently sensible proposal is that the areas which had been overgrown and were reverting to scrub should be funded under the forestry programme. This was entirely ignored by the recent Forest Service Review Group and The Land And Forest Fires Working Group – probably because of embedded civil service rivalries between forestry and agriculture – and agriculture's massive clout.

Scrub is a precursor of our native forestry and accounts for 15% of the national forestry inventory in certain counties. 20% of a forestry plantation can be scrub and still qualify for payment. Scrub can contain many native species, – hawthorn, blackthorn, gorse, juniper, bramble, roses, willows, small birches, stunted hazel, holly and oak. It provides unique feeding and shelter to bird and wildlife. Stone chats, wrens, thrushes, song thrushes and migrants such as whitethroats are specialists in this type of habitat. Its support offers the potential to allow for woodland regeneration on hillsides, river banks and bog margins. No fertilisation or drainage is required. Tourism, biodiversity, soils, water and carbon sequestration all benefit by reversion to scrub.

Simply moving the land that is reverting to its natural flora and fauna from Area Aid and funding it through forestry would remove the economic gain in 'cleaning up' these disadvantaged areas.

And there would be no reason to burn the mountains, a practice fuelled by inflexible administration. Wildfires destroyed 1,600 hectares of forestry last year – up from 1,200 hectares in 2010 – with an estimated value of €7.5m – not including the cost of fighting the blazes. Aside from the obvious biodiversity loss, these intense wildfires can lead to the sterilisation and erosion of the thin soils and have devastated many parts of rural Ireland over the last two years, putting lives at risk and tying up increasingly scarce emergency equipment and personnel.

The 2002 European Court of Justice Judgment against Ireland for overgrazing seems to have been forgotten. At the time, scientists said some areas would only recover 'in geological time'. Ten years later we now seem intent on leaving a biodiversity wasteland – and once again forcing the emigration of the last small farmers that keep the hills alive.

See www.villagemagazine.ie for unedited version. The magazine frequently covers planning issues and members may be interested to look out for future editions.

GetThere.ie - A Path to Sustainable Transport

It's probably no secret that Ireland lags behind the rest of Europe in integrated transport. We do, however, have a very competitive private coach network. With large-scale, expensive transport projects being put on hold, could connecting up our public and private transport networks solve our transport needs?

GetThere.ie is doing just that.

www.getthere.ie is a website which provides public and private bus and rail information for Ireland, including Northern Ireland. It shows timetable search results from the major state transport companies (Bus Eireann, Irish Rail & Translink) as well as private coach operators. So when you need to get from Athlone to Belfast, GetThere.ie will display all of your options on the same page.

GetThere.ie also has a social element, facilitating car pooling between members. Carshare offers and requests get listed directly alongside regular scheduled services.

"Our goal is to empower people with information, enabling them to choose more sustainable and efficient options in terms of time, cost and also carbon emissions." commented Eoghan Murray, founder and director of GetThere.ie

Online since 2008, the site now attracts over 50,000 visitors a month and added approx. 1,000 new carshare users in 2011.

How you can get the most out of GetThere.ie:

- Search and compare bus and train routes and schedules
- Submit a request for a carshare ahead of a longer journey
- Post your daily commute to find fellow travellers and save money on fuel
- Help people travel to your company or organisation by installing the GetThere.ie transport search tool on your website
- Get your local or community bus operator listed by sending on details to timetables@getthere.ie

Sligo Sustainable Futures 2012 Tuesday 6th March. Hume Hall, IT Sligo

Contact leonard.liam@itsligo.ie for more information

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

9.30-9.45: Introduction: L. Leonard/Launch

9.45-11.10: Session 1: Sustainable Development

Michael McGarrigle (Greenbox)

Dorothy Stewart & Niamh McDonald (An Taisce)

Vincent Salafia (QUB) TBC

Ollie Walsh: (Micromarketing)

Sarah Baxter (Emerald Group Publishing UK)

11.10-11.30: Teas/Coffees

11.30-12.30: Session 2: Crisis of the Peripheries:

Liam Leonard & Paula Kenny (IT Sligo)

Kieran Allen (UCD)

Constantin Gurdgiev (TCD)

12.30-1.30: Lunch with Launch of Crisis of the Peripheries

1.30-2.30: Session 3: Politics of Sustainability

Peter Doran (QUB)

Miriam Kennet (Green Economics Institute)

John Barry (QUB)

2.30-2.45: Sligo Sustainable Futures Literature Award (John Barry) & Politics of (Un) Sustainability Launch
(Teas/Coffees)

2.45-3.30: Chaos at the Crossroads Revisited

Frank McDonald (Irish Times) & James Nix (IEN)

3.30-3.45: Sligo Sustainable Futures Award 2012 (Duncan Stewart)

3.30-4.15: Sustainable Living

Duncan Stewart (RTE/Horizon Productions)

4.15-4.30 Conference Close

Events

- **National Tree Week 4th-10th March**

Celebrate National Tree Week with Dun Laoghaire An Taisce's annual tree planting. Join us at Larch Hill, Rathfarnham on Saturday March 10th at 10.45am for the planting of oak trees. Info rebjeff@utvinternet.com

- **21st March - Flooding and Wetland Attenuation report**

In 2010 An Taisce received funding from the Community Foundation for Ireland to commission a report on Flooding and Wetland Attenuation. The report has been researched and written by staff within University College Cork and they will be presenting the report in An Taisce Tailors' Hall on March 21st. The report will first be presented then it will be followed by a workshop for an hour and a half to discuss the findings of the report, and to come up with actions and measures that are needed. It will be free to attend this half day morning event but space is limited so if anyone is interested in attending please can they register by contacting Camilla at naturalenvironment@antaisce.org

- **World Water Day 24th March**

- Earth Hour 31st March @ 8:30

- Annual Clean up of Booterstown Marsh 15th April @ 2pm

We will join with the Dun Laoghaire association's annual clean up of the Booterstown Nature Reserve on April 15th 2pm meeting at the Booterstown DART Carpark. We will be joined by Karin Dubsy of Coastwatch Ireland who will walk and talk us through the litter and rubbish collected. She will discuss the source of the litter, its composition and its adverse impacts on the marsh habitat and its wildlife. All are welcome to join and should anyone have any queries regarding this events please contact either Camilla at naturaleenvironment@antaisce.org or Rebecca at rebjeff@utvinternet.com.

[Click here for Poster](#)

- Guided Walk of Boyne Canal April 29th & May 13th

in conjunction with the An Taisce Meath Association and Inland Waterways Association of Ireland. The walks will take place along two sections of the Boyne navigation and the purpose of the walks is to bring people on a guided walk providing information on both the cultural and archaeological heritage of the area, as well as explaining the importance of the surrounding environment. The significance of biodiversity and ecosystems will be explained, and an account of the rich history and archaeology of the area will also be given. The details for the locations and start times of the walks still have to be confirmed but the dates have been set. The walks will take place on Sundays April 29th and May 13th. All are welcome. More information will be provided in the next Ezine but should anyone have any queries regarding these walks please contact Camilla at naturaleenvironment@antaisce.org.

Book Tailors Hall for your event

Please spread the word to your friends, family and colleagues that Tailors' Hall is the ideal place for their special event or meeting.





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The Tailors Hall is rapidly becoming re-established as one of Dublin's premier places for public events and celebrations following the granting of licences, the installation of a full service bar and the fit out of the kitchens. In addition marquees for the courtyards have been purchased and the redecoration of the public rooms has commenced with the redecoration of the lobby and entrance area in tasteful Farrow and Ball colours. We are now seeking some mirrors and an appropriate settee to complete the furnishing of this area.

We recently hosted the prestigious Gold Medal award ceremony of The London City and Guilds and our first Civil Partnership Ceremony when two women got married in the Great Hall under the new legislation to permit same sex partnerships to be legally registered. This is in addition to the increasing number of civil marriages and other events already taking place there.

These events are followed by lavish receptions thanks to our exclusive in house caterers and bar operators. Feedback from customers has been very good with no negative reactions and many sending letters of thanks and recommendation.

Providing food is ordered when booking the hall all kinds of alcohol can be served attracting a VAT rate on food including hire of only 9% as opposed to hire without food which is now 23%, a significant saving for most events.

We can provide tailored packages inclusive of food, hire and other services for different budgets and have a dedicated events team to ensure that all the effort can be taken away from organising any kind of event.

We also have had numerous other events including; wedding receptions, a fancy dress Halloween party, the Irish Association of Health Food Stores Awards and numerous Christmas parties.

To get your copy of our new professionally shot events brochure or to make enquires about having your special event with us please contact John Ducie, Manager, Tailors Hall Events Ltd on properties.antisce.org Tel 01 7077076

Remember every cent made from events in The Tailors Hall goes to lifting the burden of running the hall from An Taisce and repaying the significant loan to refurbish the hall and get it open for business, as well providing a platform for the management of all An Taisce's other properties. Its one of the best ways of financially supporting all of our work as a charity!

[The Tailors' Hall Website Here](#)

Recent An Taisce Press Releases

Recent An Taisce Press Releases can be found [here](#)...

Contact Us

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.

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Preserving our built and natural heritage for future generations