

# AN TAISCE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 3  
MARCH 2011

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An Taisce  
*The National Trust for Ireland*



## Bees for Biodiversity

As I sit here in the spring sun, bringing together the diverse articles for this March ezine, a fat dozy bumblebee wanders past and the early blossom on my flowering cherry is humming with busy workers from the hives up the mountain - a completely idyllic scene and one which could be under threat. It just so happens that news of two initiatives have been brought to my attention by readers with requests for me to share them with you, so the first article in this ezine will focus on Bees for Biodiversity.

Pollination services provided by insects, mainly bees, are worth €153 billion a year, and are vital for the production of more than three-quarters of world crops. Bees are the most important pollinator of crops and native plant species in Ireland, and according to a recent study by the DoE, are worth an estimated €85 million per annum to the Irish economy.

People are often surprised to learn that in addition to the honeybee, Ireland also has 20 species of bumblebee and 80 species of solitary bees, all of whom contribute to maintaining an effective Irish pollination service.

Unfortunately more than half of Ireland's 101 native bee species have undergone substantial declines in their numbers since 1980, and one third are now threatened with extinction. "Habitat loss and the intensification of agriculture have resulted in a crisis in Irish bees" said Dr Úna FitzPatrick, an ecologist at the Biodiversity Data Centre. "The Irish Pollinator Initiative is about pooling our expertise to tackle this problem and come up with positive actions" she added.

There is no denying Irish bees are declining, but one solution lies in simply providing them with adequate habitat and forage sources within the landscape.

Whether it is making our farms, parks, or gardens more pollinator friendly, or by getting involved in citizen science initiatives like the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme there are steps we can all take to protect this valuable economic resource, and charismatic component of our wildlife into the future. Visit the Irish Pollinator Initiative for more info.

There is a great buzz about the decline of the bee at the moment and although the exact cause has not been isolated (and indeed there may be a number of interconnected causes) one prime suspect is a certain class of pesticides. Have a look at these articles from the London Independent Poisoned spring and This isn't just about bees to find out more about the impact of the loss of the bee to our lives. Quietly, globally, billions of bees are dying and a ban of one group of pesticides could save bees from extinction.

Four European countries have begun banning these poisons, and some bee populations are recovering. But chemical companies are lobbying hard to keep all killer pesticides on the market. A global outcry now for a ban in the US and EU, where debate is raging, could provoke a total ban and a ripple effect around the world.

Let's build a giant global buzz calling for these dangerous chemicals to be outlawed in the US and EU until and unless they are proved to be safe. We would ask you to sign the petition at this link: [https://secure.avaaz.org/en/save\\_the\\_bees](https://secure.avaaz.org/en/save_the_bees) to save bees and our crops and quite possibly our lives.

Abby McSherry, Membership Officer, An Taisce

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

## PAST ARCHIVES

JUL 2010  
AUG 2010  
SEP 2010  
OCT 2010  
NOV 2010  
DEC 2010  
JAN 2011  
FEB 2011  
MAR 2011

[An Taisce Shop here](#)

### A Message from the Chair

I 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 in 2011 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. 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.

Charles Stanley-Smith, Chair An Taisce The National Trust for Ireland

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In accordance with section 11b of our Constitution we are taking this opportunity to announce that the **An Taisce A.G.M** will take place in The Tailors Hall, Dublin on **Saturday, June 11th 2011 at 11.30a.m.**

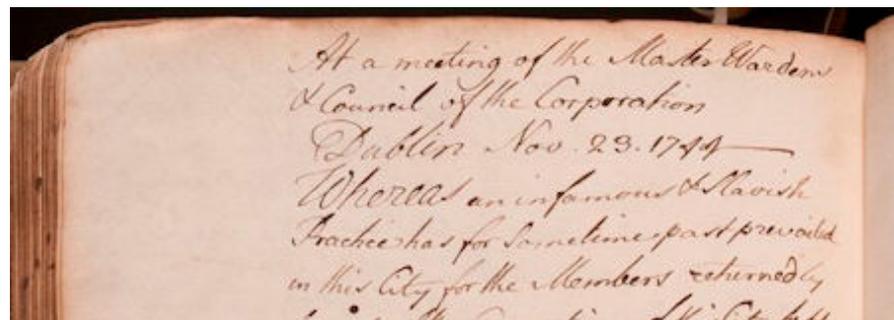
Notice of any motion proposed to be made at a General Meeting shall be delivered to the Honorary Secretary of the Company thirty clear days before the meeting at which the motion is to be proposed and shall be circulated with the notice convening the meeting. Such notice shall be signed by the Proposer and one Secunder, being Members of the Company, and no motion shall be entertained by a general meeting unless notice thereof has been given as aforesaid.

Further announcements will be circulated to members in due course.

## President Obama invited to Visit Tailors' Hall

On the announcement of President Obama's visit to Ireland, we have re-issued our invitation to President Obama and his family to visit the 305 year old Tailors' Hall, where in 1744, Michael J Kearney, Barak Obama's great X6 uncle mounted a campaign against corruption in the city government, specifically the sale of votes. He was at the time a Past Master of the Barber Surgeons and Periwig Makers Guild, meeting in Tailors' Hall.

The campaign was successful and in 1745 the Irish Parliament outlawed the practice. This Act is still on the Irish Statue Book. The guild minute books bearing his signature and recording the meetings are still in existence and we would like to present the President with copies of pages with his ancestor's signature.

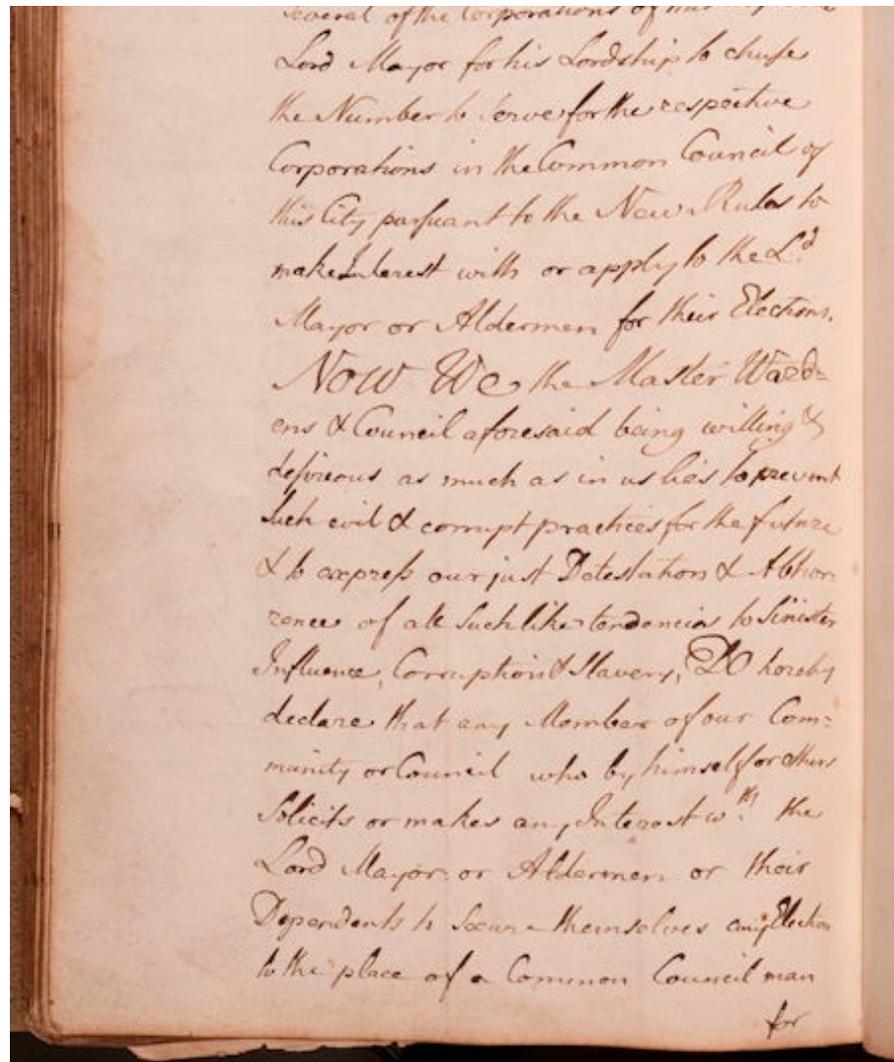


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## Important

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.

An Taisce Shop here



## Music room Reflections concert

'Engage with the acoustics and architecture of some of Ireland's finest Country Houses' Cast your mind back to the 18th century, to the era of Handel, Mozart, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austin. Imagine the family's evening entertainments, daughters displaying their musical accomplishments on the piano and harpsichord. Singing and acting, followed by some lively country-dances. The Music Room Reflections concerts emulate such musical soirees. 'You will interact with the architecture of the spaces as well as engaging with the performance.' Visit [www.musicroomreflections.com](http://www.musicroomreflections.com)

To book tickets for the concert please go to [http://shop.antaisce.ie/Department/Lookup.taf?\\_function=details&\\_ID=9&DepartmentID=9](http://shop.antaisce.ie/Department/Lookup.taf?_function=details&_ID=9&DepartmentID=9)



## Tailors Hall finally gets full Licences

Final work is being completed on the roof of Tailors' Hall along with a green retrofit, which in line with its heritage status will make the hall a living and liveable, energy efficient building.

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



## THE TAILORS' HALL

*At the heart of Dublin for over 300 years*



An Taisce

The National Trust  
for Ireland



The Great Hall



The Courtyard



15th century fireplace in  
Lower Hall

The Tailors' Hall  
Back Lane  
Dublin 8

Phone: +353.1.7077076  
Fax: 5+353.1.4533255  
E-mail: [properties@antaisce.org](mailto:properties@antaisce.org)

475324 VAT no. IE9748006M  
Tailors Hall Events Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of An  
Taisce The National Trust for Ireland reg. no 12469 Charity  
No: 4741

The Tailors' Hall is available to those who like stylish and elegant surroundings for their weddings or other functions like; film and photo shoots, music recitals, private parties, launches etc.

Hire of the Hall for your event includes the front courtyard, an ideal place for assembly, photographs etc., The building is equipped with a fitted kitchen, disabled access and bathroom.

The Great Hall has the elegance you expect from an early 18th century building. The Lower Hall, with its beamed ceiling and original stone walls, is ideal for entertainment of your choice.

We can advise you on how to put it all together and who supplies what to make your day complete.

For a reception with a difference, The Tailors' Hall in Dublin is both beautiful and historic.

WEDDINGS – RECEPTIONS – DINNER DANCES – CONFERENCES – EXHIBITIONS –  
PRODUCT LAUNCHES CIVIL MARRIAGES- FILM & PHOTO SHOOTS.

## Ireland revokes stance on GM Animal Feed in Europe





New proposals in the European Commission to ease regulation of GM crops have been triggering a lot of discussion about this issue over the past month. In March 2010 the Commission, for the first time in 12 years, authorized the cultivation of a new GM crop, the Amflora potato. However several member states were against this decision based on reports of EMEA and WHO which stressed the adverse health effect of the antibiotic resistance markers in this crop. The response by the commission to the growing opposition to cultivation of GMOs in Europe has been to propose "freedom for member states to decide whether or not they wish to cultivate GM crops on their territory" combined with an EU wide authorisation system. However Greenpeace has called the new proposals 'a trap' as bans by member states would only be permitted on an ethical or socio-economic basis rather than on health and safety grounds.

Ireland took a U-turn after the Greens pulled out of government, with the former Minister for Agriculture Brendan Smith reversing the neutral voting stance that had been taken by Ireland in voting on GM issues and issuing support for the new proposals instead. However the vote in the European Council has been postponed. The moves are a sinister indication of the weight of industrial lobbyists on Irish policy decisions, with public good, health, and environmental safety considerations overridden to follow the lead of industry lobbyists. Ireland also indicated that it will vote in favour of raising the threshold of 'tolerance' for non-approved GMOs contained in GM foodstuffs, including animal feed. This is a worrying weakening of what was a key element of European GMO policy - the so-called zero tolerance for non-approved GMOs.

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) of which An Taisce is an active member, is calling for the Council of Ministers to ensure a de facto new moratorium on the cultivation of GMOs by suspending new authorisations until the current authorisation system is significantly strengthened and rules in line with the 2008 Council conclusions, guaranteeing member states the right to decide whether or not to cultivate GM crops in their territory are in place; and to ensure that a rigorous, comprehensive, coherent and mandatory regime for the risk assessment of GMOs will be put in place.

An Taisce is calling for Ireland to vote against the new proposals. There are huge risks associated with the release of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) into the Environment, one of which is the fact that those organisms can never be recalled. Once released nothing can control their expansion, their mutations, their invasion of "unimproved" plants, or the cross fertilisation with regular crops. The potential consequences for biodiversity, and food sovereignty, are far reaching. There is also huge merit in Ireland taking on a strong GM Free stance for economic reasons, which include feeding the growing demands of European consumers for GM free foods.

Research on impacts of GM herbicide tolerant spring crops on farmland Biodiversity, carried out on more than 200 plots in the UK, has demonstrated worrying trends. Bees and butterflies were found to be fewer in the GM fields, as low as 68% less abundant in GM fields than in fields of conventionally grown crops. Other complex ecological relationships were found to be much impacted by the GM crops, such as a reduction in a range of pollinators and other beneficial invertebrates. Most of the Biotech industry focus in genetic engineering is based on herbicide resistance. The engineered crop is developed with a resistance to a particular herbicide, often produced by the same company that has developed the crop, so that the fields with the engineered crop can be heavily sprayed with the herbicide to kill off all other plants. This obviously has major knock on impacts in the environment, for example in herbicide residues in soil and water, and to wild flora and fauna in the landscape. The clearance of huge fields and tracts of land with powerful herbicides produces farmland devoid of wildlife, spelling disaster for

already declining bird and other wildlife populations.

Genetically Engineered crops strengthen the control of multinationals over our agricultural sector and thus weaken food security by increasing farmer's dependence on international seed and chemical supply, and decreasing the genetic diversity of and hence crop resistance to unforeseen factors such as drought and disease. It is these same profit driven motives of the agricultural biotech companies that have driven the new proposals and their support from Council Ministers.

## A Diary of the Corrib Gas Pipeline 2011 - An Taisce and Shell E&P

In late 2010, the Government introduced changes in the Planning Acts that means that in cases taken in reference to the EIA directive, the SEA directive or parts of the IPPC directive, costs are to be borne by each side.

**1st January** A high pressure pipeline existed between the Corrib Field and the landfall at Glengad and the Gas Terminal existed at Ballinaboy. At the end of 2010 an oral hearing of An Bord Pleanála had taken place for a route to connect these two points. This route involves a 4.2 metre wide tunnel being bored under Sruwaddacon estuary to the landfall at Glengad and a overland section to the terminal.

**19th January** An Bord Pleanála approve Shell E&P Ireland's route for the final section of the Corrib gas pipeline with 58 conditions.

**20th January** An Taisce announces they will review the grant and its conditions.

**27th January** An Taisce announces that they are working towards taking a Judicial Review of the granting of permission by An Bord Pleanála. Stating "*An Taisce was very disappointed with An Bord Pleanála's decision. We consider that the implications of it go far beyond the Corrib gas pipeline. This has major repercussions for the status of implementation of European Directives in Ireland. In this instance An Taisce has concerns both to Irish and European Law*".

A Judicial Review can only be on a point of law or that the process taken to come to a decision is flawed, not because you don't like the decision. In this case An Taisce believed that the processes were flawed and that as the pipeline went through and close to Natura 2000 sites, the decision "had major implications for the status of implementing European directives in Ireland".

Due to the changes introduced in the Planning Act, if An Taisce took a Judicial Review, it could not be landed with the costs of the other side, unless our case was recklessly frivolous. However, it also meant that if we won the case, we would not be awarded costs. That means that in taking a Judicial Review, we would be relying on our legal team taking the case 'pro bono'. However there are a considerable number of other expenses, such as the photocopying of reams of paper, because the case is based on affidavits and exhibits and everything potentially needs to be copied for everyone. We started on putting together our legal team and fundraising to defer those expenses.

We are indebted to Risteard Ó Domhnaill for allowing us to use his film 'The Pipe' [www.thepipethefilm.com](http://www.thepipethefilm.com) for fundraising and there have been a number of showings of the film around the country, in Bellmullet, Cork, Galway and Dublin and we must thank all those that came to those and so generously donated to the cause.

**Monday 28th February** Pat Carey Minister of Energy, on the day that he had lost his seat in the election, signed off key consents for the last section of Corrib gas pipeline under the Gas Act.

**Monday 14th March** An Taisce started an 'ex parte' application seeking leave to take a Judicial Review, this is necessary to show that you have standing to take the case and sufficient grounds to make a reasonable case. Judge Michael Peart said he would read the documents overnight and make a decision in the morning.

**Tuesday 15th March** Mr Justice Michael Peart said the applications for leave to seek judicial review should be made on notice to the defendants and notice party and set the date of Tuesday March 29th for mention. The decision means the Board, State parties and Shell will be heard by the court before its ruling on whether to grant leave for judicial review.

**Friday 25th March** Minister for the Environment Phil Hogan grants a foreshore licence to Shell E&P Ireland.

**Tuesday 25th March** The President of the High Court, Mr Justice Kearns gave leave to An Taisce to apply to the Commercial Court on Monday 4th. April

For further information and to donate to our appeal please visit <http://corribir.antaisce.ie>

# What is PlanBetter? - An Taisce's Voice On Transport Planning

PlanBetter is a joint initiative by An Taisce, Friends of the Earth, Feasta and Friends of the Irish Environment. It's co-ordinated by James Nix and the two An Taisce representatives on the steering group of PlanBetter are Ian Lumley and James Leahy.

Essentially, it is a coalition of environmental organisations to advocate for a more sustainable approach in transport and planning matters (where planning is linked to transport). Cutting emissions, halting degradation and reducing the use of resources are chief objectives. Feedback on PlanBetter's work is greatly welcomed, by post or email: James Nix, , c/o Irish Environmental Network, MACRO Community Resource Centre, 1 Green Street, Dublin 7.

A recent initiative was a joint policy briefing on transport to the incoming government. Key points are detailed in the paragraphs below.

Billions of euro could be saved by cancelling plans for up to 800km of new motorways and other major roads, according to the briefing submitted to Minister for Transport Leo Varadkar in mid March.

We also called for "full independent cost/benefit analysis" of major public transport projects such as Metro North and Dart Underground. Based on a similar experience in the UK in June 2010, when the incoming Lib Dem / Tory government stopped spending to give itself time to scrutinise projects, the submission argues for a similar approach here.

The brief also highlights how far more lives will be saved by removing accident black-spots on two-lane roads right across Ireland, as is clearly indicated by cost-benefit studies, and from Ireland's own Low Cost Safety Improvement Programme, as compared to motorway construction.

PlanBetter also calls for all tolls on Irish roads to be replaced with multi-point electronic tolling where motorists are charged 10 to 40 cents a number of times along main routes rather than one large charge. For long journeys, such as Cork to Dublin, the total charge would be €16.

Multi-point tolling would dramatically reduce toll evasion across the network, something which is particularly acute at Drogheda, Fermoy, Limerick, Urlingford, Waterford, as well as along the M7 and M50, compromising the very purpose new roads were built.

PlanBetter submits that Metro North, Metro West and additional Luas lines should be replaced by advanced quality bus corridors with buses running every three to five minutes during peak periods, priority at junctions and off-board ticketing to reduce journey times.

The submission – which is available on [www.planbetter.ie](http://www.planbetter.ie) - notes that advanced quality bus corridors (known as bus rapid transit) would cost €7.5 million per kilometre to develop - just one quarter the cost of Luas and around 50 times less than Metro North.

Turning to mainline rail, PlanBetter points out that journey times on Irish railways are in some instances worse than they were in the 1960s - even after recent upgrades in track and rolling stock. But, unlike roads, there's no national rail investment programme to improve speeds.

To remedy this we've proposed that Iarnród Éireann be asked how it would invest under three different scenarios, namely enhancement options involving €100m, €125m and €150m, with the published plans under each scenario subjected to appraisal.

Instead of cutting rural bus services, we've asked for the use of smaller buses, which would consume less fuel and thereby cut operational costs. And, more widely, the Government needs to look at empowering local volunteers to deliver rural transport, we've submitted.

PlanBetter points out that investment in cycling and walking would deliver 19 times as many benefits compared to costs, contrasting very favourably to motorways and indeed large-scale public transport schemes.

The submission also outlines proposals to extend Dublin's bike-sharing scheme to all major population centres and calls for the replacement of subsidies for the purchase of electric cars with a car-share scheme using electric vehicles, along the lines of DublinBikes.

Comment and feedback on the submission is greatly appreciated.

## Stunning Wicklow Coastal Landmark

## Stunning Wicklow Coastal Landmark Preserved

An appeal to An Bord Pleanála recently taken by An Taisce, the National Trust for Ireland, has successfully prevented the destruction of the landmark Arklow Rock by quarrying. This 125m high headland, which is visible from a wide area of both land and sea across south east county Wicklow and the north east of County Wexford, was threatened by an extension of a long established quarry.

Although permission was given for extension to the quarry; due to requests made by the charity, the summit and surrounding area of Arklow Rock have been protected. The conditions given with the permission mean that extraction shall only be carried out vertically, by deepening the quarry rather than by extending horizontally and biting into the coastal feature.

The Board stated in its reasons for this condition was that it was “in the interest of visual amenity and recreational amenity in this designated area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to protect the proposed National Heritage Area...”

An Taisce has welcomed this decision in securing the protection of an important landscape feature of the east coast.

## News in Brief

**Cork Local Association Relaunch.** An Taisce Corcaigh has been active in the planning field for some time, making significant submissions and having a major impact, but they would now like to organise some social events during the year, trips to various historic and architectural sites with associated lectures. They would like to develop a mailing list for anyone interested. Please email [antaiscecorcaigh@gmail.com](mailto:antaiscecorcaigh@gmail.com) or write to An T Corcaigh PO box 26 Toghher Cork.

**Boosterstown clean up.** If you have a couple of hours spare to help save wildlife, meet at the Dart carpark at 12pm on Saturday 16th April, bring gloves if possible. Phone R.Jeffers 087 9537959.

**Topsoil wanted for Castleknock Green School.** This fabulous green school compete with chickens and polytunnel is looking for some (free) topsoil or compost to complete their raised beds in time for their week of action, if you can help please contact Sandra 01 400 222666.

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

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