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## Blue Flags and Green Coasts

Earlier in June, An Taisce announced the International Blue Flag Award and the National Green Coast Award recipients for 2010. The awards were presented by the Minister John Gormley, T.D at an awards ceremony held on the Velvet Strand, Portmarnock.

### Blue Flag

The Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognised eco-labels. The 74 Irish beaches and 2 marinas that achieved this accolade met a specific set of criteria related to water quality, environmental education and beach management. As a pre-requisite, the bathing water at Blue Flag beaches must meet the highest standards of bathing water quality. The overall Blue Flags in Ireland this year is down only one on 2009. While five beaches regained their Blue Flags; Maherabeg, Co. Kerry; Claycastle and Redbarn, Co. Cork; Rosses Point, Co. Sligo and Portmarnock in Fingal, Co. Dublin. Six others did not comply with the stringent Blue

Flag criteria; Brittas Bay South, Co. Wicklow; Ross and Oldhead, Co. Mayo; Traught and Ceibh an Spidéal, Co. Galway and Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo.

### Green Coast Award

The National Green Coast Award has seen another year of growth with an additional six beaches receiving the award for 2010. Green Coast Awards go to beaches for their, clean environment, excellent water quality and natural beauty. They may not have the necessary built infrastructure required to meet the criteria set for Blue Flag status however they are exceptional places to visit and enjoy our rich coastal heritage and diversity.

Patricia Oliver, Director An Taisce Environmental Education Unit, speaking at the awards said, "I would like to pay tribute to all the hard work that goes into achieving and maintaining these awards by Local Authorities and local communities, and particularly in this economic climate, I would encourage people to participate in caring for the fantastic beaches we have around the Irish coast this summer. From the beautiful beaches of Donegal in the

north west to the welcoming beaches of Wexford in the sunny south east Ireland's award beaches have something to offer everyone, with; excellent water quality; lifeguarded swimming areas; bustling promenades; world class surf; secluded bays and long biodiversity rich sandy shores - there really is something for everyone."

An Taisce would like to commend all coastal Local Authorities for their commitment in achieving the high environmental and quality standards required of Blue Flag and Green Coast Award beaches.

A map showing all the award winning beaches with descriptions, directions, facilities and pictures can be found at [www.beachawards.ie](http://www.beachawards.ie). For information on water quality results please visit the EPA's website [www.bathingwater.ie](http://www.bathingwater.ie). For information on Blue Flag please visit [www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org). or email Annabel McLoone the project manager [amcloone@eeu.antaisce.org](mailto:amcloone@eeu.antaisce.org)

## Volunteer with An Taisce - Join the Board of Ireland's National Trust

An Taisce The National Trust for Ireland has 2 places available on its Board of Management:

### Board member with Human Resources expertise and Treasurer

The Board of Management meets in Tailors Hall, Dublin 8 one evening a month from 6-9pm.

You should expect to spend no more than a couple of hours a month on works specific to your department in your own time.

You will have full access to the Office Manager 5 days a week, by phone or email, for support/administration requirements. The Board of Management develop many ideas via email with a view to discussing these items further at the board meetings.

If you are qualified for either of these positions and would like to get involved in the running of the organisation, play a part in policy making and are interested in volunteering we would love to hear from you, or if you know of anyone who might be interested in volunteering with The National Trust for Ireland, please forward this advertisement to them!

To register your interest please contact Carol O'Connor by email only at [admin@antaisce.org](mailto:admin@antaisce.org).



Quality of life in cities depends on the existence of sufficient attractive urban green areas for people and wildlife to thrive. But equally important for urban life are the ecosystem services delivered by biodiversity in green areas outside city boundaries.

*“the management plans...fail to deal with long-standing and well recognized pressures on our water environment.”*



## 10 Messages for 2010



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

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

### Urban Ecosystems

In Europe, where the overwhelming majority of people live in urban areas, tackling the interlinked challenges between biodiversity and its network of towns and

cities is crucial to help halting biodiversity. Even though Ireland is mainly rural, increasing urban populations will put biodiversity under pressure and work must be done to balance this using the planning processes

To read more go to: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/10-messages-for-2010-urban-ecosystems>

The message was written by Birgit Geogi (EEA) with contributions from Marcus Zisenis (ECNC, ETC/BD), Dominique Richard, Mirko Gregor et al

## River Basin Management Plans

Our Natural Environment Unit, as a part of the Sustainable Water Network (SWAN), has been very busy these last few months on the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plans. These have enormous potential to deliver good water quality by 2015 (the main objective of the directive) including healthy populations of animals and plants. But the final River Basin Management plans, due to be signed off by the Minister this month, fail to deal with many long-standing and well recognized pressures on our aquatic environment. The plans as they stand, rely on “Putting off till tomorrow what should be done today” in terms of extended timelines for WFD targets. The plans are totally lacking specific additional actions for reducing water pollution from a range of sectors and activities. Instead they list measures that are already required or being carried out under existing programmes which are not sufficient to improve water quality as required by this directive.

An Taisce as part of SWAN have been proposing a range of very specific and well founded measures that will address many of the problems facing water quality, including revised guidelines for forestry and water quality, improved regulation of quarries, restructuring of water management authorities, and many more actions that are needed if Ireland is to successfully deliver the objectives of the directive, good water quality by 2015.

Ireland’s coastal waters are particularly poorly addressed in the Plans. Not only is there a complete failure to monitor these habitats, but threats to the coastal zone, such as inshore fisheries and aquaculture, dredging, dumping and recreational pressures have been left out.

There is a real opportunity for government to integrate the statutory planning system

with the requirements of the WFD while the new planning act is going through the Oireachtas, but this opportunity is being missed and under the plans damaging activities such as arterial drainage and agricultural infill are still exempt from needing planning permission.

Another of An Taisce’s bug bears, the importance of sustainable flood management has also been ignored. Flood plain protection and restoration would go a long way to adapting to climate change associated flooding and yet this has been completely disregarded at an incalculable cost to the Irish people. In fact no economic analysis of water use has been carried out and as no baseline figures for a valuation of the Irish aquatic resource exist, it is impossible to value the costs or benefits of any actions or inactions.

Great opportunities to tighten up legislation surrounding intensive agriculture and forestry have been missed. The permitted level of Phosphorous fertilizer application remains too high for many circumstances and there are no mechanisms proposed to reduce the multiple negative impacts on water quality from industrial forestry in sensitive landscapes.

Some positive steps have been taken and we particularly welcome regulations to control onsite waste water systems and the fact that rigorous independent appraisal will be required for all proposed septic tanks.

Overall An Taisce together with other SWAN groups consider that the plans as they are will not deliver good water quality for 2015, landing us with higher future costs for cleanup and lost ecosystem services, as well as disappointing continuation of the chronic Irish failure to implement European Environmental Laws. We will continue to campaign vigorously over the next month to see that the necessary improvements are made.

## Green Home Flags Awarded to Communities Across Ireland

Earlier in June, An Taisce in partnership with the EPA, awarded 37 Green Home flags to communities who completed the Green Home programme. The awards ceremony took place in Croke Park and celebrated the participants success and acknowledged the efforts of house-holders to take environmental actions within the home. The aim of Green Homes is to raise environmental awareness and support positive and sustainable environmental action amongst house-holders and community groups.

“Great strides have been made by An Taisce” said Laura Burke of the EPA (pictured left giving an award to St Clare’s National School from Harold’s Cross) “the Green Home programme provides every citizen with the informa-

tion that they need to play their part in living in a more sustainable way. This will in turn provide a sound foundation for the development of a greener, smarter economy and destination for Ireland”

The programme focuses on waste reduction, energy efficiency, water conservation and promotion of sustainable travel. House-holders receive information and advice through the programme to help them make informed decisions and take actions that will help the environment whilst also saving money.



Green Homes, builds on the Green Schools programme and started in 2006 and to date almost 10,000 families in 65 different communities have participated. Dorothy Stewart of the Education Unit who manages Green Homes said:

“groups taking part in the programme found that it helped to unite the community in working together towards a common purpose of being more environmentally responsible.”

More details of Green Homes will appear in future editions of the ezine, but if you can’t wait and want to find out more email

[dstewart@eeu.antaisce.org](mailto:dstewart@eeu.antaisce.org), call 01 4002218 or visit [www.greenhome.ie](http://www.greenhome.ie)

## Nature’s Way—New An Taisce Booklet Available

To celebrate 2010 being ‘International Year for Biological Diversity’ An Taisce has just published a 16 page booklet about biodiversity and ecosystem services in Ireland called ‘Nature’s Way’. The booklet is bursting with fun illustrations and cartoons by Cartoon Saloon, who earlier this year were nominated for an Oscar for their animated film ‘The Book of Kells’. The book asks, and explains in simple terms, how bogs protect us from flooding and how we need to protect our bogs (from us) to make sure that they keep on doing this. It looks at how good water quality is needed to have lots of fish in our rivers again. Find out about Ireland’s longest living animal and what action needs to be taken to prevent its’ extinction. The booklet explains how hedges support bats which keep midges at bay. ‘Sea Life’ explains the services of marine ecosystems and Ireland’s coral reefs, and looks at what we need to do to make sure there are plenty of fish in the sea

in future. The importance of biodiversity in mitigating against and adapting to climate change are also explored. More beautiful illustrations suggest ways for us to become active citizens for biodiversity and some ways in which we can reduce our impacts on the natural world. With contacts, references, and suggestions for further reading, we encourage you to use this fun and colourful booklet as a first step to find out more about ecosystems services in Ireland and spread the message widely: circulate it as much as you can! Download the booklet from our website: <http://www.antaisce.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=sZLfvHpjYD8%3d&tabid=293&language=en-US> or if you would like hard copies to spread the word contact Anja on [anja.murray@antaisce.org](mailto:anja.murray@antaisce.org). An Taisce would like to thank the DoEHLG’s Notice Nature campaign for funding and printing this booklet.

## Fundraising Updates

At the end of April, Mide and Peter Gerrard opened their home to An Taisce and to a host of guests for an evening of heritage, biodiversity and the promotion of An Taisce. The Gerrards hosted a lovely soirée in Tipperary and the evening was a great success, with funds raised and seven new memberships achieved. Anja Murray gave a very interesting

speech about her work with An Taisce, wine was provided by The Wine Buff in Nenagh and Joe Keane very kindly donated really lovely finger food. We look forward to hosting a number of other such parties all over the country in the coming months and we send a big hearted Thank You to Mide and Peter for opening their home to us.

This month saw a generous €5000 donation come in from Indaver. An Taisce’s history with Indaver has been colourful in the past and though we are sure that there will be more colour in our collective future, we see that this donation is a purely altruistic gesture and we thank Indaver for their support. The money will be put to good use!

## Property Focus: Howth Courthouse

In 1982 An Taisce took a renewable lease from Dublin City Council on the Old Court House in Howth which is along the harbour front and was abandoned for court use in 1970. This slightly predates the lease from Dublin City Council on the Tailors Hall in 1984. In the intervening years before An Taisce's involvement, the building had been badly damaged by damp and vandalised. The first task was to restore the building including reroofing it and to provide a management system for the building. With that achieved the building opened as a community centre and houses the regional offices of FÁS. It is today in constant use for a whole variety of community events and classes.

Perhaps the most notorious legal case in the area's long history is the Coroner's Inquiry and subsequent murder trial into the "Ireland's Eye Murder" in 1853 which is a most bizarre and tragic tale of the murder of a wife by her artist husband on the island, including tales of cross dressing, nudity and extramarital tragic love. Although the earliest written reference to the existing court building is in 1862 it is still possible it could have played a part in this potboiler as the building was very much in



existence before 1862. Today Ireland's Eye can still be seen by walkers along the harbour front nearby.

The interior of the building consists of a main courtroom with a gallery above, now fronted by a wonderful brass balcony taken from a church, and a dais at the other end for the presiding magistrate with chambers for his use beyond. The courthouse would not have housed jury trials at any time. Other uses for the building included serving as a place for the payment of rents to Lord Howth of Howth Castle in whose grounds the courthouse is built and as a prayer hall for visiting non conformist fisher

men and sailors.

### Opening Hours and Directions

The court house is on the harbour front a short walk from the Dart Station and the bus stops for buses from Dublin. The courthouse is in constant use for various events so it is necessary to check to see if you can see inside. For further information contact [properties@antaisce.org](mailto:properties@antaisce.org).

### In the Area

"Howth" means "headland" in old Norse and the area is almost an island connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus at Sutton which is another Norse name. The area is a favourite one for walkers and cyclists with walks over the Ben of Howth and along the cliff paths. The Ben of Howth was leased to An Taisce for 21 years in the 1970's and 80's and is now managed by Fingal County Council. Howth Castle has the longest record of any castle in Ireland or Britain, of being occupied by the same family, with descendants of the original Viking family still in ownership. Until the death of the last Lord Howth in the 1980's this was the oldest surviving title in two countries as well. Other places to visit while in Howth include the Hurdy Gurdy Radio Museum in the Martello Tower and the National Transport Museum in Howth Castle. For further information visit [www.howthismagic.com](http://www.howthismagic.com) or [www.dublintontourist.com/towns/howth/](http://www.dublintontourist.com/towns/howth/)

## Causeway Coast special offer

The unspoiled Causeway Coast of Antrim is one of Ireland's best kept secrets and much of it is owned and managed by our sister organisation The National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The amazing geology of this wonderful coast is best explored by foot and our readers have been offered a valuable discount on purchases made of the new Guide to the Causeway Coast to be published in the next couple of weeks. This guide includes routemaps, information on geology, wildlife, legends as well as practical tips about accommodation and transport and it features 75 glorious colour photos. Go to <http://www.rucsacs.com/books/Causeway-Coast-Way/> and simply type in **AnTaisce** to make use of this discount.

## Percy French Summer School

One of our lifetime members, Castlecoote House, a beautiful Georgian country house in Co Roscommon set in wonderful landscaped gardens, has asked that we pass on some information about the second international Percy French Summer School being held there from the 14<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> July. This event promises to be exciting and stimulating. The Summer School festival which retraces the steps of the remarkable life of Percy French, consists of a programme of lectures, concerts, lunchtime recitals, short films and poetry readings is supported by the Arts Council and Fáilte Ireland. Go to [www.castlecootehouse.com](http://www.castlecootehouse.com) for further information.



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

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

**Sincerely,**

**Jeff Young, Hon Secretary, An Taisce  
and Abby McSherry, Local Associations Officer**  
[membership@antaisce.org](mailto:membership@antaisce.org)

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to pass this news-  
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who may enjoy it*