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The images above are of the Tailors' Hall Great hall and Lower hall and gateway

A Very Merry e-Christmas to You

Forgotten those last few Christmas cards? Why not send an electronic card? You can save money, paper and fuel.

We have designed a beautiful Christmas e-card just for you. To get yours just click on this link www.paintbox.ie/antaisce.

You are free to copy and send this charming electronic Christmas card to friends, family and colleagues. It celebrates the Georgian splendour that is Tailors' Hall, which has just been added to the

'Georgian Dublin' proposed World Heritage site. It also acts as a reminder that Tailors' hall is available as a conference venue for meetings and other events in the heart of Dublin. Rental income will raise much needed funds for An Taisce and will help to pay for renovations and retrofitting to reduce the hall's carbon footprint further. The lovely image of the Tailors' Hall in the snow was taken in February this year by Kevin Duff from the Dublin City Local Association.

For a tour of the Hall or to find out what facilities are on offer, please contact John Ducie at properties@antaisce.org

John is also planning to open the beautiful Tailors' Hall to the public in 2010 and is looking for volunteers who are willing to be trained in guiding groups around and helping to interpret the fascinating history of this site. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Abby at volunteers@antaisce.org

And for those last minute presents...

A gift of an Taisce membership lasts a whole year, and tells the recipient that not only do you care for them, but you cherish the heritage of Ireland, both built and natural. As

well as our informative newsletters, your gift will entitle the holder to discounted entry into many of Ireland's best houses and gardens.

And it couldn't be simpler to organize: just ring Carol on 01451786

or log on to: www.antaisce.org



International National Trusts at Copenhagen

An Taisce, through its membership of the International National Trusts Organisation, is being represented at the Copenhagen Climate Conference which started this month. As you may remember the theme of the international conference held in Dublin in December was "conservation in a changing climate" and the Dublin Declaration on Climate



Change has now been published in many languages

including Spanish and French as well as Chinese and is being distributed to participants at the conference and has found an eager audience in Copenhagen. Please follow the link below to access the INTO representatives blog at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference. <http://www.internationaltrusts.org/?p=1816>



“ We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us”

Winston Churchill

“Ireland fails to ensure that plans and projects likely to have significant effect, either by themselves or in combination, undergo appropriate assessment”

ECJ ruling Dec 2007

Natura 2000 sites make up 20% of the area of the EU



Stop Press...Limerick...This Place Matters...Stop Press

Following on from This Place Matters meetings held in North Tipperary, Wicklow and County South Dublin, the next county to carry out a review of its county development plan is County Limerick. We do not yet have a location fixed for our meeting, but if anyone in Limerick has the inside line on a

suitable venue (cheapish and easy to get to) please let me know. The meeting will take place probably in the second week of January (again still waiting for confirmation). Please watch out for an email inviting you to this meeting and if you know of anyone, or any organisation in the county who may like to contribute to An Taisce's

submission on the county development plan or who may wish to make a well constructed submission of their own please pass on their details and I will contact them.

membership@antaisce.org

You can help decide the directions that Limerick will take over the next decade.

Does Nature Protection Legislation Work in Ireland?

Until recently, “no-one knows” was the answer to this question. But it seemed to An Taisce's Anja Murray and Sandrine that this was a sorry state of affairs and so they began (funded by the Heritage Council) to scale a HUGE mountain of paperwork and analyse exactly what was going on in term of planning regulation in Natura 2000 sites (Natura 2000 sites are SAC's - special areas of conservation, and SPA's - special protection areas and out our most precious nature conservation sites). These are just some of the amazing **facts and figures** that they found.

- **100%** the percentage of planning applications in Natura 2000 sites that are **meant** to be referred to National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) or to undergo appropriate ecological assessment under Article 6 of the habitats Directive
 - **74%** the percentage of planning applications in Natura 2000 sites that **are** referred to NPWS.
 - **22%** the reply rate of NPWS to referrals for planning applications in Natura 2000 sites in one sample county council in 2007 (Co Kerry). i.e most of the referrals which are made (this figure is less than it should be anyway) are ignored or at least not responded to.
 - **8%** the percentage of planning decisions in Natura 2000 sites that are appealed to An Bord Pleanála.
- **50%** the percentage of appeals overturning planning permission in Natura 2000 sites.

- **100%** the percentage of planning applications in Natura 2000 sites that **should** be accompanied by an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive .
- **9%** the average percentage of planning applications in Natura 2000 sites that **are** accompanied by an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- **8.5%** the percentage of planning applications in Natura 2000 sites that are for retention permission which excludes any possibility of appropriate assessment.
- **7%** the percentage of designated habitats which are found to be in “good” status according to NPWS Article 17 report, clearly demonstrating the weakness of protection structures in Ireland.
- **12** the number of ECJ rulings 1999-2009 against Ireland for failing to comply with Environmental Directives relating to planning.

So what do you think? Is Ireland caring for its Natura 2000 sites?

Many thanks to Sandrine Cadic for all her hard work on this project. Last week Birdwatch Ireland held a seminar on this very issue, with the involvement of Anja Murray. At this the Department of the Environment, Heritage , and Local Government launched much needed Guidance for Planning Authorities on 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland' . Papers from the conference can be downloaded from www.birdwatchireland.ie/Ourwork/PolicyAdvocacy/tabid/250/Default.aspx

Integrated Transport Policy

James Nix and James Leahy led an engaging and informative policy workshop on Integrated Transport in Tailors' Hall on December 2. The first topic centred on mass transit within the capital, and with French and Irish experiences with quality bus corridors, light rail (Metro, LUAS) and heavy rail. In general, quality bus systems have a better track record of getting people out of cars, serve a broader cross-section of the community, are more efficient with lower capital costs, and are capable of delivering the required capacity. The primary issue with bus is one of public perception and quality of service; issues which can be solved with upgrades such as level platform boarding, real-time electronic routing displays at stops and integrated ticketing. Our discussions

led to the following position: expanding quality, integrated bus service should be the highest priority, and the Dart Interconnector should be fast-tracked ahead of the Metro. The interconnector running underground and linking Heuston, Stephens Green, Pearce and the Docklands is projected to carry 3x as many passengers

We also discussed the regional flight subsidy, which amounts to up to €70 per trip. (Subsidy comparisons include heavy rail at some €7 per journey and bus at roughly 30cent/trip.) The subsidy expires in 2011; we propose setting the stage for migrating those funds at that time to support greater use of quality bus systems.

Cycling was next on the agenda, with discussions around cyclists-as-traffic vs. segreg

ation, and the need to modify public perception to see cycling as a "normal" use of the roads. On a more tactical level, current demand management focuses entirely on car traffic and works poorly for cyclists. Contra-flow lanes and other mitigating strategies should be encouraged.

A discussion of transport wouldn't be complete without motorways, which continue to have huge government support both at the national and local levels. Coupled with PPPs, sufficient funding exists to complete a vast array of proposed additions to the system. However, as many of the secondary and tertiary routes won't handle sufficient traffic for tolling to be viable, the PPP arrangements in these cases amount to little more than off-balance-sheet funding mechanisms, heaping debt upon future generations.

An Taisce Collaborates to Give You a Great (and Clean) Beach Holiday

New web resources have been developed in Ireland to allow bathers to access the latest water quality at over 130 designated bathing sites in the country. The websites are a result of collaboration between An Taisce, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and IBM. An Taisce are the Irish national operator of the Blue Flag Programme. The Blue Flag works towards sustainable development at beaches/marinas through strict criteria dealing with water quality, environmental education and information, environmental management, and safety. An Taisce therefore holds up-to-date information on many of the

beaches of Ireland. Utilising this information and bathing water quality data from the newly established Environmental Data Exchange Network (EDEN) provided by the EPA., the organisations have established the bathingwater.ie and BeachAwards.ie websites to provide information on bathing water quality and beach awards to the public. Bathingwater.ie is hosted by the EPA who has a statutory obligation to provide detailed information on the environment to the public. BeachAwards.ie is hosted by An Taisce and allows beach users to gain access to information on all award beaches in Ireland. IBM, who is currently involved in the Smart Bay monitoring project based in Galway Bay, assisted both

organisations in developing the functionality of the websites and funding was received from the DoEHLG for the development of the pages. Irish Water Safety also provided safety information on the beaches.

The development of these resources brought together various agencies and has improved the public's access to environmental information and beaches.



News from the Education Unit—Green Homes Pilot Programme

The Green Home pilot programme which is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency extends the Green Schools message beyond the school gates and out into the wider community. The aim of the Green Home programme is: 'To raise environmental awareness and support positive and sustainable environmental actions amongst householders and commu-

nity groups'. In 2009 several thousand households participated in the Green Home programme.



To find out more and join the programme log on to www.greenhomes.ie

Mr GreenHome at Ikea during the recent European Waste Reduction Week

Flooding and Proper Planning

“Poor planning has contributed to the recent flood tragedies by making a bad situation much worse” states An Taisce. And we will continue our campaign to protect communities from future disaster by challenging proposals for short-sighted and selfish development on land liable to flooding. In recent years we have made submissions on flooding to government which have gone unheeded. We also appeal developments to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) about developments that are directly at risk of flooding or that would cause flooding of other properties by reducing the ability of flood plains to store flood water. Other of the charity’s submissions refer to unsuitable septic tanks where the water table is high. Rainfall has raised the water table in certain areas so that many septic tanks no longer work properly leading to seepage of sewage into the drinking water and a public health risk. Sewage in the flood water has been identified as an additional problem in Co Galway recently.

Over the last two years ABP has accepted 95% of these submissions and more than 30 of these damaging developments have been refused permission in addition to the many which were immediately rejected at local level on these grounds. An Taisce, in carrying out this controversial work has been of great service to the country.

“The underlying causes of flooding: heavy rain and high sea levels, are uncontrollable, and are changing unpredictably because of global climate change” says Ian Lumley, An Taisce’s heritage officer,

“however we can and must control the proliferation of built development in floodplains. This is the main factor affecting the extent and severity of the flooding in Ireland” he continued.

“An Taisce uses historic records to predict flood prone areas, but these are not reliable guides to future flood events because of ill-advised building on floodplains and because of more extreme rainstorms.

“Building in a flood-prone area leads to damage to property, stress and hardship to the population, to difficulty getting insurance and demands to build flood protection.

These works may be considered a suitable response but not only will they overstretch the public purse, but they may not work anyway, or may just shift the problem elsewhere: basically the water has to go somewhere, flooding out either up or downstream of the flood protection.

Another concern is the conversion of large areas of farm land to impermeable tarmac or concrete. Open land can absorb rain, like a sponge, releasing it slowly into rivers.

Cover up soil with tarmac and rain runs off the land much faster. In this way large developments, including those away from rivers, can increase flows and the risk of flooding to land and property downstream.

Smaller developments built up over a period of time can have the same effect.

According to AT’s president, Professor John

Sweeney of NUI Maynooth, current predictions of climate change in Ireland indicate that not only will winters become wetter and rainfall ‘stormier’ but that sea level will also rise. This would mean that areas not currently prone to flooding will probably be at risk from flooding in the future.

“The cumulative impacts of development through the whole of a river catchment rather than on a piecemeal basis are essential to reduce the potential for flood damage and all the social and economic costs that entails” concluded Ian Lumley.

Complete predictive flood mapping based on historic records and assessment of more recent developments, together with robust Development Plans which are not altered for commercial convenience are the key to this approach. An Taisce also welcomes the new Planning Act being enacted soon that will make it mandatory to have flood plains taken into account when looking at development permissions and which finally legally defines flood risk and ensures it is examined in a Strategic Environmental Assessment on every development.



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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 -- the National Trust for Ireland jeff@rokeby.ie

and Abby McSherry, Local Associations Officer
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