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Images above show photos of Castletown and Donaghcumper

Social Media Helps Save Ancient Demesne

At a recent "This Place Matters" project meeting held in Kildare the fabulous work of community groups working to protect a historic demesne near Celbridge was showcased. Ian Lumley, our heritage officer had also done an enormous amount of work on the case, and this support together with the networks formed at This Place Matters, including appealing to the friends of An Taisce on Facebook and skilful and positive use of social media such as YouTube and Boards.ie led to an unprecedented number of submissions in this case.

So we were really pleased earlier this month to learn that the appeals had been successful and An Bord Pleanála had scuppered plans for the development of this historic landscape which would have seen developers Devondale Ltd build 108 detached houses at the Donaghcumper demesne which An Bord said "would seriously injure the amenities

of the area and of property in the vicinity" and would compromise the setting of the OPW-maintained Castletown House. Once again a council had given planning permission that directly contravened their own development plans which form a legal environmental contract with the people. In this case the objective of the plan was to prohibit development in gardens or landscapes associated with protected structures such as Donaghcumper House and Castletown.

An Bord also considered the development would excessively encroach on the River Liffey valley lands

which are "significant in terms of landscape character and of high amenity value." It also thought that the ecology of Donaghcumper (particularly the protected species

of bats and otters) would be adversely impacted. This decision is to be welcomed as it sets a clear precedent for protection of the wider setting of the historic landscapes. Permission was refused on the best possible grounds – the principle of prohibiting development in landscapes deemed to be an important part of the setting of a protected structure.

But although the battle may be won the war is not yet finished with Devondale still applying

for an urban expansion of Celbridge including 648 residential units and Kildare County Council itself planning a new road network to facilitate these projects.

To see some of

the details of the case visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYIFyRvIqM8>

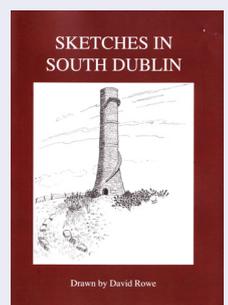


Sketches in South Dublin

A wonderful new book has been published by David Rowe of the South Dublin Local Association. The beautifully illustrated "Sketches in South Dublin" brings together almost a lifetime's work of detailed and charming sketches. David's journey takes the reader to some of South Dublin's most beautiful heritage buildings and

natural areas, showing changes and developments, modern and ancient architecture, all pictured over the years and gives a real feel for the area. The book is available from most newsagents in the area or can be ordered by emailing David on dnr@iol.ie. All profits will go to the South Dublin Local Association to help fund their valuable work. This book

would make a lovely gift for anyone with roots in the area or for anyone who is interested in the changing face of Dublin over the decades.



10 Messages for 2010



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

Agency



Maintaining and restoring biodiversity provides the basis for all agro ecosystem -related services

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 July’s message is below; follow the link to see the full message.

Agricultural Ecosystems

Within the framework of the CAP, the last 50 years have seen increasing attention to biodiversity, but without clear benefits so far. With agriculture covering

about half of EU land area, Europe's biodiversity is linked inextricably to agricultural practices, creating valuable agro-ecosystems across the whole of Europe.

To read more go to: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/>

[publications/10-messages-for-2010-agricultural-ecosystems](#)

The message was written by Katarzyna Biala and Karina Makarewicz at EEA,

To find out about wonderful research on high nature value farming in Ireland go to <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/news-press/>

And download the report

“Community –led planning represents an unparalleled opportunity for people to take responsibility for making things happen locally rather than waiting on others to do it for them.”



This Place Matters...Sligo, Donegal and Mayo

The **This Place Matters** team are going to have a busy couple of months. The predraft stage of the county development plans for both **Sligo and Donegal** are open for public consultation until September. The new Local Association covering Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon will be involved in bring a **This Place Matters** meeting to Sligo town on either the 17-18th August (date tbc) and the Donegal Local Association has asked that as well as a **This Place Matters** meeting we hold an afternoon’s training on area planning and submissions. This will take place in early September. In addition we have had requested through our Facebook page that we hold community planning training in **Co Mayo** which we will bring together at the end of September/beginning of October. We are also hoping to undertake some joint projects with the community planning

department at Tipperary Institute and will be meeting with the fabulous team there shortly to see how we can make the programme more effective. Emails will be sent to all members to confirm dates and we will issue press releases, so if you live in Sligo, Donegal or Mayo keep an eye out.



Biofuels and Biodiversity

For a few years now Anja Murray, who heads our natural environment unit, has been raising alarm bells about the impact of the growing of biofuels on biodiversity, especially where tropical forests are cleared in order to grow crops for biofuels. Another major concern is where the demand for biofuels competes with food production. Now thanks to a group of activist lawyers called ClientEarth and the Reuters news agency, a rift that exists in EU biofuel policy has been exposed.

When citizens are filling up their cars with biofuels, they have the right to know whether they are encouraging deforestation on the other side of the planet. The basic assumption with biofuels is that plants absorb as much CO₂ while growing as they release when burned in an engine and that when you use them as a fuel, their net impact on the climate is close to zero. But this doesn’t take into account a relatively new concept called “indirect land-use change”. Put simply, if you take a field planted with foodstuffs and switch that crop to something that can be used to make a biofuel, then someone will go hungry unless the food crop is grown elsewhere or farming yield are massively improved. And this growing will probably involve poorer land or forests which are our most biodiverse lands. To see the full article about this latest “inconvenient truth” go to <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUUSTRE6641FD20100705>

Robert Lloyd Praeger Grave Renovated

A recent renovation of the grave of Robert Lloyd Praeger, carried out by the Dun Laoghaire Local Association has born fruit (or at least flowers). The grave, at Deansgrange cemetery had fallen into disrepair and needed a considerable amount of work to bring it back to a fitting memorial to the founder of An Taisce. The grave is now looking wonderful with the grass seed heads set and the heathers showing deep and pale pink flowers. We asked Matthew Jebb of the National Botanic Gardens to explain the planting choices that he made for the grave, so if you do pay a visit to this fascinating site you will be able to understand a little more about what you see. *Carex buxbaumii*, a sedge, lines the edge. This plant was discovered on the shores of Lough Neagh, this was taken to the National Botanic Gardens and it was here that Praeger spied in a bed and took some back to his Ranelagh home. In due course, after being passed to Arthur Stelfox and then Donal Synott, the plant was returned to Glasnevin from where it had been lost. Praeger can therefore be credited with saving this plant from extinction in Ireland.

Along the centre of the grave are planted four heathers: at the foot is *Erica erigena*. This plant is a cutting from plants growing on Clare Island, where Praeger discovered the species in 1909. Next is *Erica ciliaris* – this is another Lusitanian species (it grows in the Iberian peninsula and on the west coast of Ireland). Shortly after its discovery as a single specimen in the middle of Roundstone Bog its location was lost and was not rediscovered until the 1960's after Praeger's death. It is a species he would never have seen and it seemed appropriate to bring the plant to him. Next are a pair of *Erica mackayana* plants. This species only covers a few square kilometers of Roundstone Bog and a scattering of other sites. Praeger spent some time studying this species, as like the *E.ciliaris*, they represented an enigma in Irish Biogeography, which remains unanswered to this day. These plants are a selection with pale pink flowers named 'Maura' after Maura Scannell, a botanist who like Praeger has donated a lifetime to the study of Ireland's plants. Lastly nearest the headstone is a plant of *Erica x praegeri*, a natural

hybrid that occurs between *E.mackayana* and our more widespread *E. tetralix*. Unfortunately this plant has been renamed *E x stuartii*, but this should not detract from the thoroughness of Praeger's investigation in spotting the hybrid in Ireland.

We would like to thank the Dun Laoghaire association very much for their hard work in repairing and renovating this grave and would encourage you to visit to pay your respects to a great man and enjoy the planting.



Matthew Jebb at Praeger's grave

Planning Review and Media Coverage

There has recently been a huge amount of media coverage regarding our role in requesting a review of the planning record of some councils to be carried out by DoE. Some of this, such as that covered in the Connacht Tribune have been inaccurate and bordering on a slur campaign with no input or responses allowed by us. We feel strongly that in the case of the Galway papers this coverage is very much as a result of vested issues led by developers in the area who are also involved in the media companies concerned. There has also been some concern over the recent piece in the Irish times entitled "An Taisce accused of slur against council staff". You may not have seen all the coverage leading up to and relating to this, so Kevin Duff, a very active volunteer in the Dublin Local Association, has offered to summarise some of the issues. Our response to Dublin city council's statement including the various cases which have been of concern to us can be seen at

The calling for an investigation into Dublin City Council's planning record by An Taisce was initially reported by John Kilraine on RTE news on 13 August 2009, in the wake of the An Bord Pleanala request for extensive changes to the City Council's grant of permission for the Carlton Site planning application, Upper O'Connell Street (Ian Lumley was briefly interviewed) - <http://www.rte.ie/news/>

On 5 July '10, Frank McDonald reported in the Irish Times the undertaking of such a review by the DOE on foot of complaints by An Taisce and others - <http://>

www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2010/

Then this was the Olivia Kelly piece from the 17 July Irish Times which it seems has caused concern - http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2010

The official who made the response on behalf of City Manager John Tierney, is known to us and it is likely he was anxious to have his say, following An Taisce's highlighting of their reckless decision making throughout the boom and the level of their decisions overturned/significantly changed on appeal, and in particular after Ian's very effective commentary in the 13 August RTE piece.

Needless to say, their response is outrageous and can only be attributed to the bluster of one who is fought into a corner; the City Council's efforts to remove decades-old height restrictions in the city have proven extremely unpopular (over 350 submissions on the height issue to the current Draft City Development Plan). The information in our submission to the DOE is accurate and, as stated in the 20 July Irish Times piece, is backed up by links to planning decisions. It will be found to be 100% accurate by the DOE.

The breaching by the City Council of its own development plan is fairly widely known going back over the last half-decade (An Taisce's concerns about this are reported here back in 2007 - <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/property/>)

An Taisce's actions in Dublin in this area have been and will be seen to have been vindicated.

(Also worth viewing is this RTE news piece from 12 October last which details and illustrates a number of the major schemes where City Council decisions were changed on

In 1973 An Taisce celebrated its Silver Anniversary with a special AGM and gathering in Galway at which Erskine Childers, President of Ireland was guest of honour and Sir Jamie Stormonth Darling, Director of The National Trust for Scotland was the guest speaker. J. C. Stormonth Darling presented two gifts to An Taisce to mark the lasting friendship and high regard between the Scottish and Irish National Trusts; a painting by James Barry (1741-1806) of St Patrick baptising the High King of Cashel now in the National Gallery and a solid silver Quiach or toasting cup by the Edinburgh firm of Hamilton and Inches inscribed with the arms of both the NTS and An Taisce Celtic T, with the date of the founding of NTS



1931 and 1948, the date of the founding of An Taisce and an inscription recording its presentation in Galway in 1973.

J.C. Stormonth Darling (1918-2000) was in many ways the man who made the Scottish Trust what it is today presiding as Secretary and later Director over the greatest expansion of the trust and the enshrinement of "the holistic approach" at its heart, a phrase coined by Sir Frank Fraser Darling the eminent human ecologist and originator of the

ecological survey "the analysis of the interdependent relationship between man, his native landscape and the wildlife of his locality". Frank Fraser Darling was the guest speaker at the inaugural meeting in Dublin's Mansion House in 1946 on behalf of The National Trust for Scotland at which Robert Lloyd Praeger was elected president and the constitution of An Taisce was based on that of the NTS. The cup has lain in a deposit box in the bank of Ireland since 1973 and was recently retrieved for cleaning and photographing.

Submission on the EPA

The Environmental Pillar was included in Social Partnership in 2009, and is made up of 27 eNGOs including An Taisce. This year a major piece of work that we have contributed to was a review of the EPA. In approaching this very important consultative process, the Pillar began its analysis by focusing on the job description implicit in the title of the Agency – i.e. 'Environmental Protection Agency'. There is a basic expectation set for the Agency's focus and responsibility consequent on that job title, namely to be a protector of the environment – and it is on that job requirement that the focus of the submission was directed. This central focus is essential and it would be the Pillar's view that the Agency should view the environment as its customer. The lack of such a perspective within the current EPA is one of the first signals of disconnect evident in living up to the demands of the agency's title. The breadth of terms of reference of the review panel were welcomed by the Pillar and are essential to any meaningful assessment and reform necessary to the fundamental matter at stake which is as already stated: 'the protection of the environment' and how that has been served and how it needs to be served in the future.

An Taisce along with other members made various comments and these were bought together in the final submission which can be found at <http://www.environmentalpillar.ie/wp/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/environmental-pillar-epa-submission-final.pdf>.

Waterford Eco-tourism

We have been contacted by Waterford member Ollie Breslaw who is looking for input into promoting ecotourism in the area. A committee is being set up to look at new initiatives. Some examples include expanding and publicising the local cycle paths, walkways nature trails and offering specific wildlife experiences. There are many opportunities in the locale from river nature tours to whale watching of Dunmore and from Bilberry goats to world class gardens like Mount Congreve. If you have any ideas for projects that need promotion etc please contact Ollie at ollie.breslaw@gmail.com or by post to 99 Barrack Street Waterford.

Heritage Week in Wexford and elsewhere

Heritage Week 2010 is fast approaching, with events at a vast selection of places on a huge variety of themes. To see what is going on near you go to www.heritageweek.ie. As always, many of our Local Associations will be running events, one example is Will Warham of the Wexford Group who will be opening his farm for a guided walk along the newly constructed boardwalk to a new bird hide. This walk is on Saturday 28th August at 2.30pm—4.00pm. Ring 087 2052266 for more details. Tailors' Hall will also be opening for guided tours from 2.30pm on Thursday 26th August.



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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

*Please remember
to pass this news-
letter on to others
who may enjoy it*