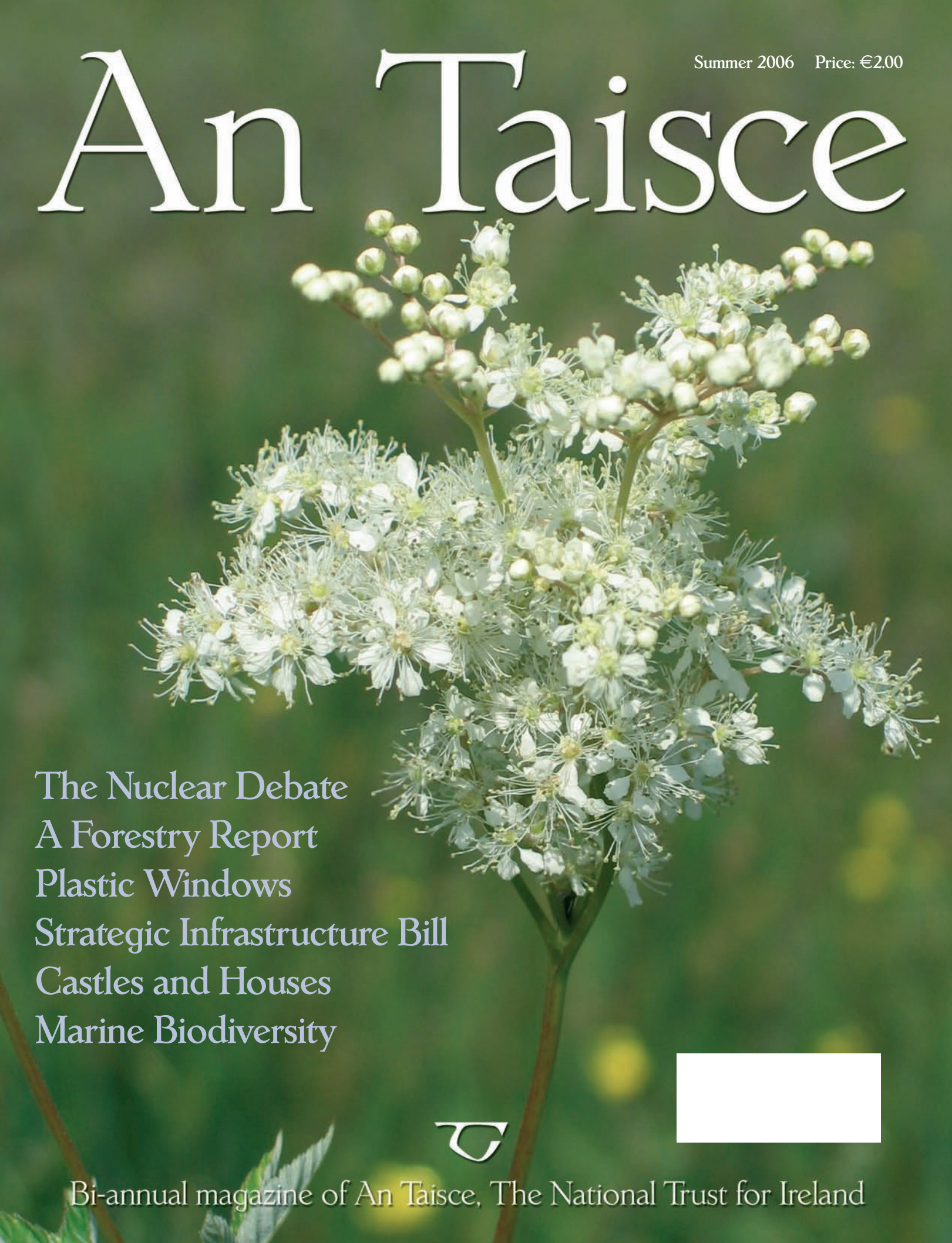
Summer 2006 Price: €2.00

An Taisce



The Nuclear Debate
A Forestry Report
Plastic Windows
Strategic Infrastructure Bill
Castles and Houses
Marine Biodiversity

Bi-annual magazine of An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland

NEED YOUR RUBBISH DUMPED?

REMEMBER YOUR RUBBISH IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!



DO THE RIGHT THING:

INSIST ON SEEING A WASTE COLLECTION PERMIT ISSUED BY YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY

This message is brought to you by the
Environmental Protection Agency
For further information please visit **www.epa.ie**

epa
Office of Environmental Enforcement

ENFO

ENVIRONMENTAL INFO

information on the environment / eolas ar an gcomhshaol

Looking for information on the Environment?

Contact ENFO

There are now 7 easy ways to get in touch

1. **Write to:**
   Enfo, 17, St. Andrew Street, Dublin 2
2. **Telephone:**
   01-888 3910 / 888 3913 or
   1890 200 191 (local)
3. **Fax:**
   01-888 3946
4. **E-mail:**
   info@enfo.ie
5. **Website:**
   www.enfo.ie
6. **Visit:**
   The drop-in centre at 17,
   St. Andrew Street, Dublin 2,
   (off Dame Street) and see the exhibition, visit the children's corner, see environmental videos and visit our library.
7. **Check out:**
   The Enfo information stands at your Local Authority office or County/City Library.

it's easy | to make a difference

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

MAIN OFFICE
The Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8
Main switch board 01 454 1786
Fax: 01 453 3255
Website: www.antaisce.org

ADMINISTRATION
Gavin Harte, Director
01 707 7076 director@antaisce.org
Ailish Greene Office Manager
01 707 7070 admin@antaisce.org
Lorraine Morley, Administrative Assistant
01 454 1786 (main switch board)
coord@antaisce.org

HERITAGE & PLANNING OFFICE
Ian Lumley, Heritage Officer
heritage@antaisce.org
Siobhan McManus, Planning Assistant
01 7077072
siobhan.mcmanus@antaisce.org
Sarah Gillespie, Planning Administrator
01 707 7075 adminplan@antaisce.org

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OFFICE
Anja Murray,
Natural Environment Officer
01 707 7063 anja.murray@antaisce.org

AN TAISCE EDUCATION UNIT
Unit 5a Swift's Alley, Dublin 8
Main switchboard 01 400 2202
Fax 01 400 2285
Patricia Oliver (Project Manager)
046 95 46089 trisholiver@iol.ie

Anti-litter League
Pat Oliver (Project Manager)
046 95 46089 trisholiver@iol.ie

Green Schools
Jane Helps (Project Manager)
Michael John O'Mahony
(Project Development)
Project Officers: Cathy Joyce, Liam Condon and David O'Leary
01 400 2222 greenschools@antaisce.org
projectadmin@antaisce.org
www.greenschoolsireland.org

National Spring Clean
Lisa Fitzgerald (Project Manager)
01 400 2220 nsc@antaisce.org
Clare Lyons (Project Officer)
01 400 2219 nsc1@antaisce.org
www.nationalspringclean.org

Blue Flag
Oonagh Duggan (Project Manager)
01 400 2210 blueflag@antaisce.org

Clean Coasts Programme
(Green Coast Award)
Aidan Gray (Development Officer)
046 948 1710 gcawards@eircom.net

LEAF (Learning about Forests)
Michael John O'Mahony (Project Manager)
01 400 2222 leaf@antaisce.org

Young Reporters for the Environment
01 400 2222 yre@antaisce.org

EDITORIAL

JUDY OSBORNE

As I put this magazine together I was constantly aware of the main premise in the book 'Collapse' that I had recently read. Studies of ancient societies that no longer flourish show a number of common characteristics – the depletion of natural resources including forests, environmental damage, climate change and, in particular, the ways in which people chose to respond. The author, Jared Diamond, seeks to show how some communities overcame their problems by long term planning and a willingness to reconsider core values. Diamond "looks for examples to inspire first world citizens to make the most fundamental reappraisal now facing us –how much of our traditional consumer values and first world living standards can we afford to retain?"

Writing this as I do, just after the death of John Galbraith the economist, I am also reminded of his thesis in Affluent Society published nearly 50 years ago wherein he comments on the difference between consumerism which was driven by demand for decent living standards, and the later consumerism driven by producers' interest in the supply of goods that we are then persuaded to need! This is surely relevant in the debate on nuclear energy and declining resources.

Diamond also writes of the valuable part played by bottom-up solutions in the survival of societies. Readers may recognise this as a reflection of our current calls for better public participation in Ireland and issues arising from the Structural Infrastructure Bill. All these matters reoccur time and time again. Hopefully this magazine will contribute to informing readers of the current incarnation of the debates.

I hardly need say that we have a new designer for this issue. Pablo Lloréns, a young Spanish artist, living here for a couple of years, has put this magazine together for us. Cóilín MacLochlainn, who resurrected the An Taisce magazine in 2002 and co-edited and designed for several years, is now busy with other projects although I am glad to say that he has still been contributing to this issue. You will also notice that there is less members' news in this issue. The extended annual report contains the detail of what An Taisce has been up to over the past year. You will have to join to receive a copy of this!

AN TAISCE MAGAZINE SUMMER 2006

CONTENTS

5 **NUCLEAR ENERGY?** Some for, Some against

10 **PLASTIC WINDOW BLIGHT** photos by Kevin Duff

12 **STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE BILL**
What's in it and what do our planners think?

15 **BROADLEAVES? NOT IN OUR LIFETIMES.** A review of Phillips' 'Economic Analysis of Broadleaf Afforestation', by Caroline Lewis

18 **CAHIR CASTLE AND DUNKETTLE HOUSE**
An Taisce raises important issues

20 **SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION**
Sustainable Energy Ireland projects and what we can do

22 **MARINE WILDLIFE** neglected as offshore drilling continues
by Shay Fennelly

COVER PHOTO by Peter Sweetman: **Meadowsweet – Filipendula ulmaria**
This most fragrant flower blooms in wet grassland, marshes and along roads where hedges have been left to develop a flowering verge. The fragrant flowers were once strewn on the floor of buildings to scent the air. Medicinally it was used for malaria and dysentery. It was also used to flavour mead and to scour out old milk churns. Flowers attract many insects, which in turn attract dragon flies.

The Organic Centre
Rossinver, Co. Leitrim



Open Days: Sun 18th June HERB DAY
Sun 23rd July Garden Day
Sun 24TH Sept The 6th Organic Fair
Sun 8th Oct Apple Day

Weekend Courses: on topics such as Dry Stone Wall Building, Reed bed Systems, Spinning for Beginners & Fruit Growing

TRAINING: Why not do some mid week training with your workplace, school, or community group. Topics include: Conversion to Organic Gardening, Herb Growing, Composting, Wildflower Walks & Cooking & Healing with Wholefoods

GARDENS AND SHOP NOW OPEN 11am to 4pm
For full details or to make a booking
Tel: 071 9854338 or e mail organiccentre@eircom.net
or visit our web site www.theorganiccentre.ie

AURO

The premier range of truly natural wallpaints in many vibrant colours, gloss with EN 927 durability approval, wooden floor systems and much more for your healthy indoor climate. Leading edge "Aqua" technology: naturally ready for the times when the oil runs dry!



The dormiente range of natural mattresses composed of truly natural latex, organic cotton, merino sheepwool, horse- and camelhair, coconut fibre and silk. Basics: Proper orthopaedic conditions, excellent climatic regulation, the purity of materials and electro-biological neutrality. Showrooms in Bray/Wicklow, Sligo and Macroom/Cork

biologa®

Effective protection against electrosmog: the first choice of Eco - Builders in Europe since 20 years

isofloc
Natural Cellulose Insulation

Breathing Insulation for loft, roof and timber frame with outstanding thermal performance, excellent air tightness, hygroscopic properties and fire safety. Service: 087-2584487

For more information on how to create a healthier indoor climate please give us a call or visit one of our seven AURO retailers

healthbuild™

20 John Street, Sligo
Tel. 071-9150095 healthbuild@iol.ie
www.healthbuild.com

An Taisce

Tailors' Hall

At the heart of Dublin for over 300 years

The Tailors' Hall is the perfect wedding venue that moves through the phases of the day into the evening and into the small hours of the morning.



- **Heritage Garden with exceptional planted backdrop and stunning doorcase for unique photos**
- **Reception Hall**
- **Sublime banqueting hall with a capacity of 100 people**
- **The Crypt with its intimate bar-like atmosphere**

For details, visit our website: www.tailorshall.org



AVAILABLE IN ALL GOOD NEWSAGENTS
NATIONWIDE
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL US ON 01- 210 8437



ARGUMENTS YOU MIGHT NOT SEE IN MAIN STREAM PRESS - FOR AND AGAINST

NUCLEAR ENERGY?

Ten pointers leading to support for a nuclear presence

REPORT BY **HEATHER GREER**

Dr Heather Greer is a private consultant in the field of energy policy and energy research. She is Vice Chair of the advisory group on EU Framework and Euratom energy research programmes – amounting to some 5 billion in public funding in the period 2007-2013. She is currently contracted to prepare a report for the European Commission on sustainable energy R&D strategy for the short, medium and long terms, to 2050. The views expressed here are her own.

» Point 1.

There is urgency to find alternative but don't expect oil shortages to increase the market share of renewables. At the first sign of trouble, the quick response will be for the world to turn to large-scale centralised generating plants capable of making a large contribution to systems already in trouble.

Urgency to reduce CO2 emissions is increasing by the day. This urgency will remain and will get increasing support. On top of that, we must expect high oil and natural gas prices and accompanying increasing frequency and severity of shortages in the short, medium and long terms.

The messages are clear. We must reduce or minimise our wasteful use of energy, and we must get out of oil and gas (and by the way, the siren voices you hear are those of oil from non-conventional sources such as sand tar. If the world should heed these calls, disaster may beckon!).

» Point 2. Don't put all your trust in energy efficiency and renewables, desirable though they be.

But where will our energy come from? Ireland is situated within a world system, so we should start with the global perspective. Worldwide, wind will play a sizeable but highly variable role in the electricity generation mix, along with the full range of other renewables. Unfortunately few objective analysts believe renewables will be enough to meet the growing demand. For Ireland itself, wind energy can and undoubtedly will play a significant role. Ocean energy would be nice, too, but so far no Ocean Energy technology has been fully proven for large-scale commercial deployment – though the day approaches. Other renewable sources for electricity production in Ireland are problematic.

» Point 3. Coal will contribute, but, like renewables, there will not be sufficient to meet all our needs

Zero-emission coal with very high conversion efficiency remains many years away from wide commercial application, even though there are current projects to develop and build pilot plant. Of course, such plants would have to operate alongside Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) – something that on a wide scale may turn out to be even scarier to citizens than deep geological nuclear waste disposal. Coal will be in widespread demand - not just for electricity generation, but also for production of syngas and liquid biofuels Coal may also be required as a source of hydrogen for stationary fuel cells or for transport fuels.

» Point 4. By extension, the world won't do without nuclear fission in the mix.

» Point 5. Nuclear fission is among the safest energy technology available, and getting even safer and cleaner. Nuclear power is clean. The emissions associated with plant construction and the fuel cycle are 1/20 of the comparable emissions from natural gas, and less than 1/50 of those from coal. This doesn't include the emissions from decommissioning and waste treatment - it would be difficult to assess this as different methods employed in this result in substantially different levels of emission. Nuclear power is safe. Remember that in the early days of the industrial revolution, steam boilers were rightly considered to be highly dangerou

"DEBATE IS NOT SERVED BY STICKING OUR HEADS IN THE SAND AND PRETENDING THAT THE WORLD IS NOT RE-EXAMINING NUCLEAR POWER AS A REAL OPTION." *David McWilliams*

» "Ireland should consider the possibility of developing nuclear energy as a more long-term solution," According to the Forfas report on Ireland's oil dependence "we're running out of energy and we've only got about a decade to do something about it."

Now this new leading state agency is advising the Government to consider building a nuclear power station to help us get over our over-reliance on oil and cope with a looming energy crisis.

Martin Cronin, Forfas chief executive said this would not be economically feasible in the short to medium term but could happen in the longer term.

See: A baseline assessment of Ireland's oil dependence. Forfas April 2006

Forfas is the national policy advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation. www.forfas.ie

» "Wind power is reliable and could soon prove to be cheaper than nuclear," says Jonathon Porritt. "The subsidies wind power receives are small by nuclear standards, but they have already resulted in dramatic cost reductions. Indeed, as fossil fuel prices increase and wind turbines become cheaper to build, wind power is likely to become one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation over the next 15 years."

See: Wind Power published the Sustainable Development Commission.

Jonathon Porritt is chairman enquiries@sd-commission.org.uk

» Greenpeace campaigner Chris Johnston claims that a new Finnish nuclear power station now under construction had only been made possible by loans granted at unusually low and "probably unrepeatable" interest rates.

» "Nuclear energy should play an increasingly central role in the global fight against climate change and remain a pillar of the European Union's energy and environmental policy planning,"

So says a declaration, signed by 25 members of the European Parliament. The declaration also calls for the EU to drop its opposition to eligibility of nuclear projects for funding under the Kyoto protocol's flexible mechanisms. European nuclear industry association Foratom facilitated the initiative.

www.intranet.foratom.org

» David McWilliams. Sunday Business Post 8th January 2006 You might conclude that securing your own energy resources has never been more critical with Iran threatening to "wipe Israel off the face of the earth", Venezuela on a collision course with Uncle Sam, and Russia now sabre-rattling on the Dnieper

Add to this the fact that the Chinese government, via its largest companies, has spent the past four years buying up

and frequently blew up with fatal consequences. They don't now. Indeed, safe steam boilers are now ubiquitous. In the same way, comparisons of current fission designs with the RBMK Chernobyl 4 reactor are naïve and sometimes perfidious. The nuclear industry has invested over €300 billion continuously over the past 60 years, and today's 'Generation III' reactors - evolutionary designs built on many years of operational experience - are reliable and safe, with a safety record second to none. Current Generation III reactors such as the Areva EPR (1600MWe) and the BNFL-Westinghouse AP600 (600MWe) embrace the principles of simplicity, which increases safety, extremely highly trained staff/inspectorate, and passive safety systems. Passive systems rely on natural phenomena for example gravity and the physics of fission reactions, to ensure safety independent of human action. Generation III+ designs, of which the South African (125MWe) PBMR reactor under build now is an example, will be even safer, with far fewer long-lived waste products. The real goal is Generation IV. The international Gen IV Forum (GIF) currently has six alternative designs under consideration. Other countries, such as India, have their own exciting Generation IV programmes. Many are high temperature (HT) reactors, operating to 1,000oC or more. Generation IV reactors will be inherently safe, may use different fuel cycles dramatically increasing fuel utilisation, and producing waste streams either with very short half-lives or to be consumed in Accelerator Driven Systems

» Point 6. The world will need advanced fission for many purposes, including perhaps transport (hydrogen).

High Temperature and fast reactors will be used not just for power production, but also to produce hydrogen, to destroy long-lived actinides and to recycle fuel. Accelerator Driven Systems (ADS) may also be used to generate electricity safely and to transmute dangerous actinides and maybe plutonium. High Temperature reactors may also be used for the extraction of oil from non-conventional sources such as tar sands – and from that we should all pray deliverance.

» Point 7. Europe (and that includes Ireland) needs to put far more funding into aspects of fission R&D, with the full support of our elected and appointed representatives.

Nuclear is a sustainable goal, and it is one we should do all we can to hasten. A great deal of research funding is needed. While much will come, as before, from the nuclear industry itself, there is a substantial role for public funding at European level. Yet – although virtually all other energy technologies can receive funding at European level through the Framework or Euratom programmes - fission research receives only about 10% of the Euratom budget, and nothing at all for reactor research.

» Point 8. Ireland cannot afford not to get experienced in nuclear fission technology.

» Point 9. Ireland has to begin to build its capabilities in nuclear engineering and science, and it has to start now.

As we have observed, In Ireland renewables will play a significant and growing role. But we need our base load without oil or gas, and in the outside world the energy market will be dominated by cheap, safe, abundant nuclear power There is a desperate shortage now of experienced nuclear engineers and scientists in Europe. That will change, but almost all countries will want them.

» Point 10. We will need a diverse range of energy sources, and nuclear fission will be an essential component in the mix.

A future Irish electricity system might see a mix of the following: wind (significant); modest but growing ocean energy; Combined Cycle Gas Turbine plants phasing out as gas markets tighten; an Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle plant replacing Moneyspoint Power Station and capturing gas from coal to power a turbine to produce electricity; as many as possible locally based small plants producing power and heat, often using bioenergy and in due course hydrogen; sizeable interconnection with the UK and Europe; and a growing number of advanced 250MWe to 1,300MWe nuclear fission reactors.



major positions in global commodities organisations and you will realise that there is a new arms race on the horizon - it is the race for control of resources...

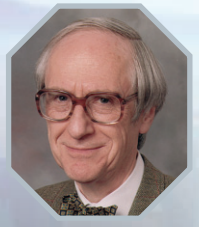
One angle worth exploring is the personal financial implications of this new nuclear age. In the financial markets, the price of spot uranium has risen from a low of $8 in 1999 to a high of $35. Uranium stocks are rising rapidly and they have, from the investor's perception at least, the advantage of being largely based in Canada, the US and Australia. (editors note: and Afghanistan)

» "Every euro invested in nuclear energy deprives renewable energy solutions by the same amount. "

Unfortunately, this is a zero sum game, at least on the investment side. The International Energy Agency estimates the world will have to invest around €1 trillion per year every year for the next 15 years or so just to keep up with demand. How this is allocated is crucial. Renewable energies are on steep learning curves, with deep cost reductions available as use is scaled up. Nuclear energy, on the other hand, is a so called "mature" technology---meaning that all cost reductions have already been achieved. Nuclear costs per kWh (like fossil fuels) are in fact, predicted to increase over the coming 50 years, while renewable costs are predicted to fall---in some cases by as much as 80%.

See Why nuclear power cannot be a major energy source, by David Fleming Published by Feasta (Dublin) and the New Economics Foundation (London) April 2006.

Why Nuclear Energy cannot provide a major power source



Edited summary of an article by **David Fleming,** jointly published by Feasta (Dublin) and the New Economics Foundation (London) April 2006.

"Few, even among climate scientists and ecologists, seem yet to realise fully the potential severity, or the imminence, of catastrophic global disaster; understanding is still in the conscious mind alone and not yet the visceral reaction of fear. We lack an intuitive sense, an instinct, that tells us when Gaia is in danger... We need emission-free energy sources immediately, and there is no serious contender to nuclear fission".

James Lovelock. The revenge of Gaia. 2005

NUCLEAR POWER PROMISES MUCH

It is concentrated in a relatively small number of very large plants, so that it fits easily onto the national grid and it is based on a process that does not produce carbon dioxide. There is even the theoretical prospect of it being able to breed its own fuel. So, what's the problem?

THE PROCESS

Nuclear power comes from nuclear fission, fuelled by Uranium-235. It is widely distributed in the earth's crust but only in minute quantities, with the exception of a few places where it has accumulated in concentrations rich enough to be used as an ore. Australia, Kazakhstan, Canada, South Africa, Namibia, Brazil, the Russian Federation, the USA, and Uzbekistan. The mines are usually open-cast pits though the deeper deposits require underground workings. Some uranium is mined by "in situ leaching", where hundreds of tonnes of sulphuric acid, nitric acid, ammonia and other chemicals are injected into the strata, depositing unquantifiable amounts of radioactive and toxic metals into the local environment and aquifers. Once these radioactive rocks have been disturbed and milled, they stay around and their radioactive products are free to be washed and blown away into the environment by rain and wind.

When it has been mined, the ore is milled to extract the uranium oxide that has to be enriched. The oxide is reacted with fluorine to form uranium hexafluoride (UF6), or "hex". As a gas it is fed into an enrichment plant. The enriched uranium is converted into ceramic pellets of uranium dioxide (UO2) and packed in zirconium alloy tubes which are finally bundled together to form fuel elements for reactors. The fuel can now be used to produce heat to raise the steam to generate electricity.

There will never be an ideal way to store all the waste that is produced in this process but it will be radioactive for millions of years and, whatever least-bad option is chosen, it will require a lot of energy. Indeed every stage in the process uses energy, and most of this energy is derived from fossils fuels. Nuclear power is therefore a massive user of energy and a substantial source of greenhouse gases. In fact, the delivery of electricity into the grid from nuclear power produces, on average, roughly one third as much carbon dioxide as the delivery of the same quantity of electricity from gas.

URANIUM DEPLETION

The advantage of nuclear power in producing lower carbon emissions holds true only as long as supplies of rich uranium last. There is doubtless some rich uranium ore still to be discovered but currently there is only enough usable uranium ore in the ground to sustain the present trivial rate of consumption and to deal with the new wastes that would be produced, for around 45 years. To make a real contribution to postponing or mitigating the coming energy winter by replacing the use of gas and coal, the best estimate is that the global demand for electricity could be supplied from nuclear power for about six years. If we expected it also to supply all the energy needed for the entire transport system, fuelled by hydrogen, it could keep this up for some three years. But it is worse than that. The task of clearing up the backlog of detritus of the nuclear industry will require a great deal of energy. Energy equivalent to about one third ▶



DEBATE

» Could it happen in Ireland?
The provisions of the Electricity Regulations Act 1999 ensure that nuclear power cannot be used for the production of electricity in Ireland. Nor are nuclear installations included in the list of structural infrastructure that may be considered of strategic or national interest. There have been various statements from Dick Roche and other Ministers dismissing the possibility but Sara White Deputy Sec Gen in Department of Communications Marine and Natural Resources implied at a conference on nuclear energy at the Davenport Hotel Dublin in April 2006, that the department have not ruled anything in or out in their considerations of future policies.

» Have we been here before?
25 years ago in 1979, at a time when there were proposals to build a reactor at Carnsore Point in County Wexford, An Taisce was funded by the Department of Industry to published a booklet.

'Energy in Question' discussed nuclear energy in the context of other energy sources. In particular it highlighted the waste of energy and the importance of effective conservation measures in the building, industry and transport sectors. The paper emphasized the need for more research into alternative forms of energy eg wind and wave power, solar energy and biomass and questioned whether the terms of reference of the ESB might be reviewed.

The review of nuclear options noted the possibility of storing energy to improve energy security but emphasized that it would be expensive.

An Taisce opposed the building of a nuclear power station on the following grounds

- The economic basis of nuclear made it untenable
- The long term disposal of radio-active waste and decommissioning of plant had not been demonstrated
- The long term biological effects of (low level) radiation dosage are not sufficiently understood
- There is no means of achieving absolute security against terrorism

At the end of the day no reactor was built.

» "The isolated nature and small size of the Irish electrical system is likely to make this option unattractive on economic grounds alone for some time to come"
A single nuclear plant of 1000MW, replacing the output from the Poolbeg and Dublin Bay power plants would seriously reduce the level of system security in Ireland. The scenario would also require additional generation capacity to back up a reactor and to take account of the increased demand for spinning reserve that such a large plant would require for unexpected events.

In Generation Adequacy in an Island electrical system, by John Fitzgerald. ESRI working Paper 161

of the total quantity of nuclear power produced – in the past and future – will be required to clear up past and future wastes. And the whole of this requirement will have to come from the usable uranium ore that remains.

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FUEL

James Lovelock agrees that " it is true that if the whole world chose to use uranium as its sole fuel, supplies of easily-mined uranium would soon be exhausted."

However he contends that " there is a superabundance of low-grade uranium ore: most granite, for example, contains enough uranium to make its fuel capacity five times that of an equal mass of coal. India is already preparing to use its abundant supplies of thorium, an alternative fuel, in place of uranium. " Lovelock also urges that we have a readily available stock of fuel in the plutonium that has been accumulated from the reactors that are shortly to be decommissioned. And he might have added that another candidate as a source of nuclear fuel is seawater. Lets look at these suggestions:

Granite. If granite were to be the source of the uranium used to fuel a standard 1 gigawatt nuclear reactor for one year, about 40 million tonnes of granite would be required. The energy used for the whole fuel cycle would be some 20 times greater than the energy it produced.

Fast breeder reactors. A smoothly running breeding process on a commercial scale has never yet been achieved. In theory, with persistence and luck, it could perhaps be achieved in 30 years. The breeding itself takes 40 years. At best, therefore, starting with about 80 breeder reactors in 2035, we could have 160 up and running by 2075. That wouldn't help us to fill the coming energy gap, and it is extremely unlikely to be feasible in any case.

Thorium, can be used as the starting-point from which to breed nuclear fuel, but the full thorium breeding cycle, working on a scale which is large-enough and reliable-enough to be commercial, is a long way away. The timescales are about the same as for fast breeders except that, in the case of thorium reactors, we would not be starting with 80 reactors; we would be starting with just one.

Seawater. Ways of extracting minute quantities of uranium present in seawater and concentrating them into uranium oxide have been worked out in some detail, but the operation is massive and would use more energy than it produced.

Nuclear power inevitably brings a sense of reassurance that, in the end, the technical fix will save us. There are certainly some technical fixes that can help, but we do need to choose them with care. Energy policy for the future – "Lean Energy" – will need to consist of four strands: (1) energy conservation; (2) profound structural change in out whole economy, notably in the ways in which we used land and transport; (3) renewable sources of energy; and (4) an electronic rationing system (Tradable Energy Quotas) to guide us down a phased descent in the demand for energy, while sustaining fair shares for all. The energy future, if it is to be successful, will have to be a collective, society-transforming effort. A dash for nuclear power would soak up the funds and other resources, and the concentrated focus, needed for a more sustainable approach. The priority for the nuclear industry now should be to use the electricity generated by nuclear energy to clean up its own pollution.

The original report is avalaible from the Feasta Office. 10a, Candem Street, Dublin (5€) or www.feasta.org



Oil depletion and scenarios of the future



by **Richard Douthwaite**

Shelvefuls of books about the effects of the imminent decline in world oil and gas production have come out of North America recently. Many bear alarmist titles like The Party's Over and The Long Emergency and are stuffed with dire warnings about the bleak future lying in wait for the world once deliveries from its two main fossil energy sources begins to contract.

I don't think that such a grim future is inevitable. Instead, I think we can build a better world than the one we have today if, and only if, energy is scarcer and more expensive. As a result, higher energy prices fill me with hope and joy.

The trouble with cheap fossil energy is that it has been under priced and has thus undermined energies of the human, animal and solar kind. The energy in two dessert spoons full of oil (40 grammes) is equal to all the energy a human can expend in a day. Put another way, a 40-litre fill-up at the petrol station is the equivalent to about four years of human manual work. Millions of people in the world have only their labour to sell but cheap oil has made that virtually worthless.



Airtricity's vision of Europe's energy future, with huge arrays of offshore wind turbines linked by undersea cables. This should provide a continuous electricity supply, but at a price.

REVITALISING THE RURAL ECONOMY

A return to higher energy prices will lead to a rebalancing between the urban and the rural, and rather than people leaving the countryside for the city, we can expect the flow to be the other way. Let me explain why in an Irish context.

The operators of the dozen fossil fuel-fired power stations which use the transmission grid to supply Irish cities will want to switch to other power sources as the prices of their fuel inputs rise. They will look to the wind and to nuclear energy. The problem with the wind is its variability but Eddie O'Connor of Airtricity thinks they have the solution – a massive cross-European network of offshore windfarms, all linked together by undersea cables, as shown in the illustration. Studies have shown that it would be only in highly exceptional circumstances that the wind was not blowing in one part of the system.

Electricity from such a system can be expensive because of the capital cost of the windfarms themselves and of the thick cables to link them up and to take the power to the national grids ashore.

The other main alternative, nuclear energy, would be very expensive too because it takes a lot of energy to build a nuclear power station and even more energy to mine and enrich the uranium fuel and then to dispose of the waste. It is estimated that the energy cost of making just the lead-steel-copper containers needed to package the spent fuel produced by a reactor is about the same as the energy needed to construct the reactor.

Ireland is unlikely to build a nuclear station itself because its size, at around 1,000MW, would be too large to be accommodated into the all-island grid. This is because it would need to be backed up with 1,000MW of conventional generating capacity to be brought into use whenever it had to be taken out of service. In a larger grid, this back-up capacity can be shared with other power stations, since they are unlikely to all fail at once. Ireland will therefore import nuclear electricity through the two planned interconnectors with Britain.

So the power supplied to the cities though the high voltage transmission grid will be costly, not least because the grid itself costs a lot to run - €255.54 million to run in 2005, including depreciation, equivalent to 0.94 cents for

DEBATE

» Expensive nuclear power will not save planet.

Nuclear power is not a cost effective power source and its expansion will do little to combat global climate change, a leading American sustainability expert has said. After 50 years we are no closer to making the economics of nuclear power stack up, said Amory Lovins, chief executive of US sustainable development think-tank the Rocky Mountain Institute; he added that it was commercially unrealistic to renew or enhance the world's aging nuclear power stations.

Instead he highlighted the rapid growth in small decentralised and renewable power generation technologies. He argued that these are more efficient but also give more climate change solution per pound.

New Civil Engineer. 16 March (Pg. 8)

» Nukes and climate change. Pat Finnegan, Co-ordinator, Grian 8th April 2006

One night in August 2003, the French government took a call from state-owned operator Electricité de France (EDF) telling them they would have to start shutting down nuclear capacity within 18 hours if temperature limits on discharge of reactor cooling water were to be respected. This was during the now notorious heat wave of that year when the cooling load on the French grid was approaching levels equivalent to the heating load on the coldest of winter days. The high temperatures had caused the rivers on which EDF usually relied for cooling to lose volume and to increase in temperature. An emergency, teleconferenced, Cabinet decision changed the law and raised the temperature limits overnight.

That kept the air conditioning on until the heat wave passed. It was not enough to prevent over 15,000 extra deaths due to heat-stress among the sick and elderly. It was not enough to prevent wheat yields falling by 20%. But it did buy a little time for reflection and the construction of a national emergency plan for the next time a heat wave was expected.

2004 passed quietly. 2005, however, was forecasted as hot (if not as unremittingly so) as 2003. In early 2005, therefore, the French government ordered EDF not to close any of its nuclear stations that year for scheduled maintenance in order to ensure capacity in a heat wave.

The power stayed on that year. But at what price if maintenance schedules and therefore---presumably---safety limits are to be prejudiced? The summer of 2003 was a "one-in-300-year" summer compared to long-term averages. Current projections for climate change in Europe say this could be a normal summer (one-in-2-year) by around 2050.

There is no evidence that the much-vaunted "new generation" European Pressure Reactors have been in any way engineered to respond to new stresses to be expected under future climate change. I have heard of no solutions proposed as to how to keep existing nuclear capacity online under even current climate change---other than to raise the temperature limits on discharge water yet again.

each kilowatt-hour passing through it . It also wastes about 14% of the electricity put into it because of 'line losses' .

In the country, on the other hand, power supplies could be cheaper as there are a lot more energy supply options. Biomass, biogas, the wind, water, the sun and the tides can all be used to generate electricity although the amount of power available from each source would be small. This not only makes their development unsuited to large centralised companies but also means that the electricity they produce should not be transformed up to a high voltage to be fed into the transmission side of the grid. Instead, it could, and should, be sold direct to consumers using the high-cost supplies from the distribution side of the grid largely for back-up.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF LOCAL RESOURCES

The organisations which develop these energy resources should ideally be community-owned Energy Supply Companies (ESCos). Their cheapest source of electricity would almost certainly be their own wind turbines but as the supply from those would be intermittent, it would make economic sense for them to have a variable tariff and to supply wind electricity at the lowest rate whenever it was available.

This would give their customers the option of using it for such things as water heating, storage heaters, refrigeration and the batteries of electric cars when it was available and of switching off these uses when other more costly sources had to be used and the price rose. In effect, selling wind power this way passes some of the burden of the cost of electricity storage on to the consumer. The 'smart-metering' technologies for such a system are well worked out.

Energy Supply Companies would get their continuous supplies of electricity from small-scale hydro, biomass and biogas plants. The last two produce heat as well so the companies would have to find a use for that, perhaps by providing district heating for private houses, as is done in over 500 villages in rural Austria, or by supplying the heat to processing plants.

So where will businesses with high energy demand locate in future? In a city, with its high priced power, or in a country area where a long-term deal can be done with an Energy Supply Company for both light and heat at an attractive rate?

At present, manufacturers locate their plants wherever suitable labour is cheapest and transport convenient, bringing fossil fuel to their factories there. They then use more fossil energy to ship their products to consumers around the world. My belief is that the oil peak means that we will see manufacturing activity locating wherever the renewable energy it requires is cheapest, thus spreading itself more evenly around the world.

That can only be good. But the top-down, centralised thinking that would have us use nuclear power it one of the obstacles that stands in its way.



1



by **Kevin Duff**

In the final two decades of the twentieth century, a rampage of inappropriate window replacement swept through the cities, towns and villages of Ireland. Whole streets of historic buildings were demeaned by cheap, swing-out plastic windows bearing no design or material resemblance to Ireland's traditional window; the timber sliding sash.

Not only was the character of buildings and streetscapes adversely affected, but vast quantities of hand-crafted historic window joinery and sparkling old glass was tragically destroyed in this replacement blitz.

The reason for this, of course, was due to a combination of inadequate legislative protection for historic buildings and aggressive marketing strategies on the part of window replacement companies.

Finally, after years of lobbying by conservationists, measures for the protection of the character of historic buildings in Ireland was brought into line with that of other countries with the Planning & Development Act 2000. Henceforth, further damaging alterations to buildings would be halted and the slow process of replacement of plastic windows and other inappropriately-replaced features with the original design could begin.



ACTION!

County Development Plans and Local Area Plans may include the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas. Submission to draft plans could refer to the Planning and Development Act Section 81 – 83 and the Department of the Environment Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines which can be view on the DoE website. The Guidelines are also a useful reference when preparing submissions regarding plastic window frames in applications for development that threaten the architectural integrity of a building or area.





2

1 The standard 3-part makeover to Irish town buildings: Replacement of timber sash windows with uPVC, replacement of natural slate roof with artificial slate and replacement of painted cast-iron rainwater goods with white uPVC. Co. Longford.

2 The removal of timber sash windows and replacement with uPVC kills the character of the building in one fell swoop. Co. Wexford.

3 Vernacular shop-house with original features in need of repair and restoration (left), and after unsympathetic modernisation (right). Co. Wexford.

4 Non-protected historic buildings in our towns and villages are still vulnerable to poor quality alterations resulting in loss of architectural character. Co. Wexford.

Plastic Window blight continues despite planning & development act 2000

However the problem has persisted with poor quality alterations to period building still occurring on a weekly basis (all of the window replacement seen here has occurred since 2000). The exercising of tighter development control by planning authorities over its historic building stock is needed.

What's PVC. PVC is an environmentally unfriendly product. Its production and disposal creates toxic chemicals. These chemicals end up in the environment and add to the level of toxins that builds up in the air, soil, water, food chain and human bodies. More chlorine is used to make PVC than any other product, making PVC more responsible for the global spread of toxic chemicals than any other material. The environmental questions raised by PVC should be the critical determinant in the choice between it and timber as a building material.





3





4

Strategic Infrastructure Bill 2006



THE VIEW FROM AN TAISCE'S PLANNERS WITH ADITIONAL RESEARCH FROM PETER SWEETMAN AND GREG CASEY

This Bill has been introduced to address repeated high level political claims that infrastructural development is being held up in Ireland by the planning system and environmental objections. The impression is being created that the current Irish planning system is cumbersome and obstructive in accommodating infrastructural development but is this correct?

» The case of the M50 is often cited as an example of planning delay. This was generally assumed to be because of objections from people wishing to protect the archaeological heritage at Carrickmines. In fact it was the long phasing of applications for Compulsory Purchase Order consents for individual sections of the route which defined its construction period and not any planning 'delays'.

» The ESRI mid term review of the National Development Plan cited contract management and cost over runs as its primary concern in infrastructural delivery. These issues have been significantly addressed in recently completed NRA road plans which are coming in ahead of time and under budget.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Since the Planning and Development Act 2000, all local authority projects large enough to require Environmental Impact Assessment are already referred directly to An Bord Pleanala. So motorways, waste water treatment plants, water reservoirs, (even the Greystones Marina which is a Public Private Partnership), bypass any investigation by the county council's planning departments. Since 2002 only three such projects have been refused by the Board, (the Donegal County Council Meelnaboll Landfill and the Athy Inner Relief Street and a new junction on the M1 near Dundalk.

Proposals for private developments are initially considered by the local authority but they can be reviewed by An Bord Pleanala. This procedure is in line with requirements of Aarhus and EU Directive 2000/35.

THE NEW PROPOSALS IN THE SIB

The main provision of the bill is to extend the range of developments that will be considered only by the Board. In the future all proposals for strategic infrastructure whether public or private would be treated in the same way as local authority projects. Local authorities will be invited to make comments but An Bord Pleanala will decide all proposals and there will be no opportunity for substantive review.

The developments to be covered include a range of environmental, transport and energy projects such as electricity transmission lines and power stations, large wind farms, airports and harbours, landfill and incinerators, water and waste water facilities.

SO WHAT IS THE KEY ISSUE?

One of the main problems with the planning system in Ireland is that it hasn't kept pace with evolving patterns of governance emerging from the European debate. Planning across Europe is now subject to the Aarhus Convention which was ratified in 2005. This is a little known policy but one which will have a major impact on how we make decisions on future development.

WHAT IS THE AARHUS CONVENTION AND EU DIRECTIVE 2000/35?

The Aarhus Convention, to which Ireland is a signatory, is an international legal document that binds those that have ratified it to implement its provisions. These are based on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration of 1992 that states.

"Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided".

This Convention was enacted in 2005 by an amendment to EU Directive 2003/35 that regulates how we assess the environmental impact of proposed developments.

Article 10a of this directive now states that

1.. members of the public shall have access to a review pro-



NRA fence marking out a new road. Photo by Peter Sweetman

cedure before a court or another impartial body.

2.. Environmental bodies (such as An Taisce) shall be deemed to have an interest in this decision making process

3.. The procedures shall be fair, equitable, timely and not prohibitively expensive.

DOES THE STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE BILL TAKE ACCOUNT OF THIS NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK?

Well yes, to some extent. The bill does give environmental organisations the right to appeal major projects (that is those requiring Environmental Impact Assessment.) to An Bord Pleanala, even if they didn't get involved in the earliest stages. Currently you have to prove that you made a submission at the earliest stage. It also gives environmental organisations the right to judicial review. Currently you much show a 'sufficient' interest, which is generally read, as 'financial'.

BUT THE BILL FALLS FAR SHORT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN DIRECTIVES

» Although it permits non-government organisations NGOs to go to the High Court to take judicial review of a decision, it requires an undertaking as to damages. This will be an insurmountable barrier to most organisations and contrary to the spirit of allowing participation at a reasonable cost.

» Judicial Review of a decision is limited to procedural issues.

The Taoiseach and Ministers have made it clear in recent statements that the court system will work quickly to deal with legal challenges and Mr Justice Quirke made a clear ruling in the case bought by Margaret Power against An Bord Pleanala regarding Waterford county council's consent for their dump at Garrynagree. " As I have already indicated the function of the court in judicial review proceedings such as these is limited to determining whether or not the impugned decision was legal, not whether or not the courts would have made the same decision " It is interesting to note that the Aarhus Task Force, meeting in Geneva last February to discuss Access to Justice, decided to establish training sessions for higher levels of the judiciary in Eastern Europe to raise their awareness of Aarhus so that they may promote its implementation in their judgments. It would appear that judges in Western Europe do not require training?

Currently at least some decisions on planning applications can be reviewed by an impartial body. Those private developments that are first submitted to the local authority can be appealed to An Bord Pleanala at the 'reasonable cost' of €210. Thus the Connemara Electricity Project was recently appealed to the Board and refused, as was the first planning application for the Corrib Gas Terminal. Current restrictions to this right of review will be challenged in the European Court of Justice but the new proposals will greatly extend the range of planning applications that are considered only by the Board.

When planning applications are only considered by An Bord Pleanala the only review procedure provided is judicial review to the Irish High Court. To do this is onerous. The new bill will make it easier for the public and environmental groups to establish sufficient interest to take a case but as stated above it still requires an undertaking as to damages.

» Thus the Strategic Infrastructure Bill fails to address the most significant requirement of the revised EIA Directive to allow substantive review of decisions and not just review of the procedural legality of decisions, dealing with matters such as site notices, time frames, etc

» This route of appeal does not meet the requirements of the Directive that appeals be fair, equitable, timely and not prohibitively expensive.

WHAT ARE THE OTHER ISSUES IN THE BILL AFFECTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

The Bill makes a number of significant alterations to the function of An Bord Pleanala.

» Issues raised and time submissions made at oral hearings may be limited by the Board.

» It provides for pre-application discussions between an applicant and the Board

» An applicant or any other person may have meetings with the Board during the consent process, independent of any Oral Hearing.

» It allows the Board to change the conditions of development without necessarily requiring a new EIS or involving the public in new consultations.

» The Bill does not clarify whether the public will still be able to make complaints and seek court injunctions to enforce conditions where there have been breaches.

These provisions significantly undermine equality of participation by the public and environmental Non-Government Organisations. The effect is to curtail public participation in the Environmental Assessment process at the time when the revised EIA Directive requires enhanced public and environmental NGO participation.

ACTION!

One medium term objective of An Taisce strategy is to strengthen membership in local associations, providing professional support for convivial study groups where experiences of best practice can be shared. Understanding the relationship between sustainable development and good planning practice, emanating from the European Union and formulated in Directives, will guide members in participating in the planning process and making a positive contribution to civil society.

WHAT IS IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE) BILL 2006?

Section 3 of the Bill proposes that specific types of infrastructure, in addition to existing local authority projects, will be eligible to apply for planning permission in a single step process to An Bord Pleanála instead of applying initially to the local council. These projects, listed in the new schedule 7 will include, wind farms, airports, harbours and ports, landfill and incinerators, water and wastewater facilities. (It does not include nuclear power facilities.)

An Bord Pleanála will decide

» If an application is of strategic or social importance to the state or a region;

» Whether it contributes to the objectives of the National spatial strategy;

» If it would have a significant effect on the area of more than one authority.

An Bord Pleanála will keep a written record of the preliminary consultations.

» On request, An Bord Pleanála will give the applicant guidance on what should be contained in an environmental impact statement (EIS). (It is at this stage – the scoping phase of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) – that the public consultation should start.)

» If An Bord Pleanála considers the application or the EIS to be inadequate, it may refuse to deal with it. If it accepts the application, the applicant must place a notice in a local newspaper. The public has six weeks in which to make submissions. The applicant must send copies of the application and the EIS to the planning authorities and to prescribed bodies. The manager of the local authority must submit a report to council members who will add their comments before it is send to An Bord Pleanála, within 10 weeks. (Environment Minister Dick Roche commented in his introductory speech that this provides a role for local councillors to express their views to the Board saying hat this would be a welcome change from the point of view of democracy'. The Board may still overrule Development Plans in the national interest.

» This new clause enables Bord Pleanála to seek additional information, including a revised EIS where it deems the original to be inadequate. (This inadequacy is not unusual and was one of the reasons for the refusal of the ESB Transmission Lines across the Connemara.) The Board will have new powers to hold meetings with stakeholders.

» In making its decision, An Bord Pleanála must take into account all the submissions received, all the information gathered and the likely impact on the local environment. It should also consider any designated sites, development plans, the National Spatial Strategy, government policy and the national interest, (which is not defined.) Dick Roche, in his introductory speech said 'National benefit must be balanced against purely local concerns to arrive at the best decision for the country as a whole'. An Bord Pleanála may grant or refuse permission but Roche says 'It is hoped that projects which are unacceptable because of their location or environmental impact will be identified at the informal preliminary stage'.

An Bord Pleanala can overrule a development plan and can require development contributions, the provision of community facilities and/or the submission of further detail prior to the development starting.

» The decision is sent to the applicant, all those who made submissions and the relevant local authorities. It will include the reasons for the decision, the conditions applicable to the development and the sum of money to be paid to An Bord Pleanála to cover its costs and those of local authorities.

» An Bord Pleanála has 18 weeks to make a decision, although the Minister may introduce a shorter decision timescale for specific types of projects.

» Section 50 of the original Planning Development Act 2000 deals with the process of judicial review of decisions of An Bord Pleanála. This bill will amend section 50 so that access to apply for leave for judicial review is extended to include environmental NGOs that have been operating for a year or more (such as An Taisce). Such NGOs will have to establish substantial grounds for a challenge within eight weeks of the decision and they may be asked to provide for damages.

In addition to dealing with strategic infrastructure this Bill will be used to amend other sections of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Another important section in this Bill relates to unfinished housing estates and rogue developers. Section 35 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, will be amended to enable planning authorities to refuse permission to a developer on the grounds of his or her past history of non-compliance with planning "permissions", meaning that the applicant would be required to apply to the High Court if they wished to have the decision to refuse permission overturned. In effect this amendment reverses the burden of proof: the developer rather than the planning authority will have to prove that such a decision to refuse permission is not warranted.

The passage of a Bill through the Dail

A Bill is the draft form of an Act. Before the Act can become law, the Bill is discussed in both Houses of the Oireachtas and within committees. At the committee stage, Senators and TDs may propose amendments before eventually voting on whether 'the bill do now pass'.

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Bill 2006 was presented in the Seanad on 3rd March 2006 by Mary O'Rourke and introduced by the Minister of the Environment Dick Roche. His speech and the debate can be read online at www.oireachtas.ie. In the first week of May the Bill was sent to committee stage in the Seanad (consisting of the whole house) where a detailed consideration of the Bill, section by section, takes place. In the Report stage the Seanad will consider any proposed amendments and take a vote again on the motion that 'the bill do now pass'. The bill, if passed, is then sent to the other house where the stages are repeated. In the Dail the committees are generally select committees and it is possible to lobby the TDs who sit on the committee. They will probably invite known experts in the field as well. An Taisce has been invited to make representations to several Dail select committees.

As a general rule, once both houses of the Oireachtas agree a bill, the President is required to sign a bill presented to her for signature within five to seven days.

BROADLEAVES? not in our LIFETIMES!

'Much of the land going under forestry is not suitable for hardwoods. Perversely, good agricultural land is necessary to grow hardwoods properly. Much of the land we have will not grow hardwoods. As Mr. McCarthy said, our objective is to get to 10% broadleaves because that is as much land as we have that is suitable for growing hardwoods. Hardwoods are not commercial, do not produce a return and require good agricultural land. If hardwoods are to be planted they should not be regarded as a commercial proposition.'

Michael Lowery, Chief Executive Officer, Coillte Teo.
Oireachtas Joint Committee On Agriculture And Food,
23 June, 2004



REPORT BY CAROLINE LEWIS

Until November of 2005, those opposed to Irish national forestry policy had never been given access to the calculations that underpinned the basic tenet that conifers are economically profitable and broadleaf/native species are not.

Coiillte Teo's estate contains less than 5% broadleaves. The Government only requires 10% broadleaves planting when 'sites permit' – ie when an economic return is possible. The Government target is 30% broadleaves.

Friends of the Irish Environment's [FIE] member of the Irish Forestry Certification Initiative, Caroline Lewis, repeatedly requested Coillte to provide its economic justification. IFCI was incorporated in 1999 to develop a standard to certify forestry in Ireland. It has representatives from environmental, social, and economic interest.

The outcome was Henry Phillips' 'Economic Analysis of Broadleaf Afforestation' & 'Future Species Scenarios and Impacts on Coillte Teoranta'.

The Paper was presented at the IFA Farm Forestry Conference last autumn. Phillips was joined in his presentation by Ted Horgan, the last Coillte research scientist.



THE COILLTE OFFICES at Newtownmountkenny in County Wicklow. Coillte was established under statute in 1998 as 'The State Forestry Board' with the Ministers for Agriculture and Finance as the sole shareholders. In spite of this – and three rulings in the EU Court of Justice - it continues to argue that it is a limited company operating in the market place with a commercial remit, subject to neither the European Access to Information on the Environment Directive or the Irish Freedom of Information Act. While forestry plays an increasingly small part in the Company's activities and it no longer initially forests significant areas, it is reafforesting more than 11,000 hectares of clearfelled plantations every year with less than 8% broadleaves.

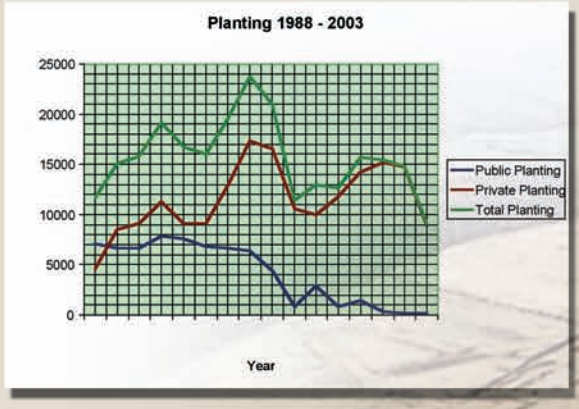
A well grown stand of birch, from Joyce, P.M. (1998) Growing Broadleaves. Phillips gave 8/m3 as the price of birch while giving firewood a value of 18. Caroline Lewis points out that Coillte's own sawmill in Dundrum. County Tipperary, sells birch at 1,200/m3.

Ms. Lewis used a Report just published by the Woodlands of Ireland to address a 'case study' of birch.
Mr. Phillips had assigned birch a Yield Class of 6 and a 65 year rotation with a price of €8 m3 – half of that he assigned to fire-wood at €16 m3. He claimed birch would cost Coillte Teo €10 a hectare a year to grow.
In 'Realising Quality Wood From Ireland's Native Woodlands' by well-know Irish academics John Cross and Declan Little, the rotation period was only 37 years and the value was €216 per hectare per year profit less management costs.
While conifer construction timber retails for €220 m3, Ms. Lewis pointed out that birch retails for €1200 m3 – at Coillte Teo's own sawmills in Dundrum, Co. Tipperary.

Levelling the gun, Horgan said 'starry-eyed, silviculturally illiterate pressure groups with unrealistic targets for broadleaf planting' were guilty of a 'crime'. Phillips claimed that Coillte would have to contribute €230 per hectare per year over the lifetime of a beech plantation 'to bring the rate of return up to the hurdle rate'. FIE was incensed. Friends of the Irish Environment published a 30 page response as their 'contribution to Tree Week'.

THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

Caroline Lewis, the Director of the Irish Forest Certification Initiative who had sought the justification originally, forensically took apart the presentation. Mr. Phillips methodology was 'inappropriate'. There was no such concept in forestry economics as that used by Mr Phillips - a 'negative discounted revenue'. Ms Lewis



'In Ireland only the Sitka program 'works'. But it 'works' with methods impossible elsewhere in central Europe - huge clearcuts, negative soil impact and degradation, ugly monocultures, the poorest biodiversity.'

RICHARD RAMSAUER. Richard Ramsauer was Chief Executive Officer of the Austrian Federal Forests 1990 – 2000 and is chairman of the Irish Natural Forestry Foundation, which has developed a sustainable forestry demonstration site on a 300 acre estate on the Bandon River in County Cork. He and his wife own 'Crusheen', the historic house in Castletownsend, Co. Cork. 'Coillte Teo.', he writes, 'is the only State Forestry Board in the EU not to fulfil national forestry policy.

The Review includes two peer Reviews from outside Ireland

A member of the Board of Directors of the United States Forest Stewardship Council gave one peer review:

'Analysis should be conducted by experts with appropriate understanding of non-plantation forest management, particularly with hardwood/broadleaf species, and with processing/marketing of broadleaf species. The writers of this report do not appear to be either independent or expert in the subject under discussion.'

The ex head of the Austrian Forest Service did not mince his words either:

'In Ireland only the Sitka program 'works'. But it 'works' with methods impossible elsewhere in central Europe - huge clearcuts, negative soil impact and degradation, ugly monocultures, the poorest biodiversity. Everywhere in Europe these brutal methods would lead to similar short term financial results - but no other European government would allow this kind of financial exploitation of state assets at the cost of the environment.

explained that expenditure is always a cost and that revenue can not be negative. The she took issue with Mr. Phillip's claim that it was 'worrying' that the analysis of how much of the Irish forest estate will support broadleaves has not been undertaken 'by the proponents of increased species diversity and broadleaf planting'. It is not the remit of environmentalists to undertake such an analysis, Ms. Lewis responded, but rather that of the principle landowner – Coillte Teo.

She suggested that if Mr. Phillips was right to claim that 'a significant proportion of Coillte's estate is unlikely to support broadleaves' then it follows as night must day that the remainder of the estate – less this 'significant proportion' – is in fact able to support broadleaves.

CHALLENGED

Ms. Lewis challenged almost every one of Mr. Phillip's figures. Small diameter conifer thinnings wrere given a value. But small diameter hardwood thinnings were valueless. The Yield Class of conifer was 'inflated' by Mr. Phillips. An 'average' yield class of 18 was 'unrealistic'. The opposite approach was taken for broadleaves. 'The yield class for all broadleaf species are below averages cited elsewhere', she wrote.

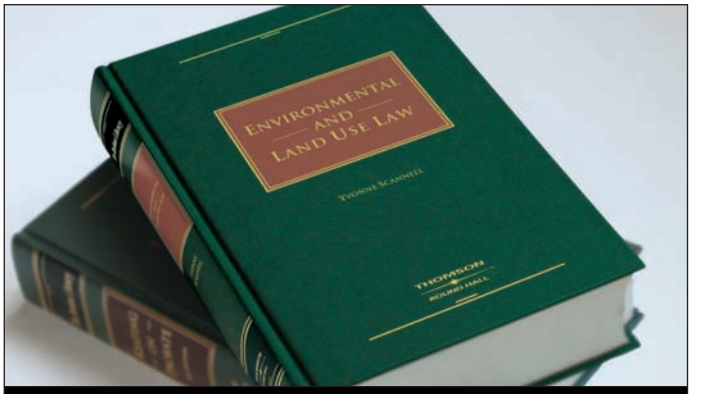
Mr. Phillips' claim that 1.2 million m3 production would be lost if the estate was composed of 50% broadleaves becomes a gain of 0.6 million m3 if the Yield Class of the conifers is adjusted from 18 to 14 and the broadleaves from YC4 to YC 8. Mr. Phillip's hardwood prize size data was 'unrealistic', drawn as it was from an unmanaged semi natural UK Woodland Trust woodland while conifer yields and prices were drawn from fully managed and thinned commercial plantations.

FIE's work seriously challenges the basis of the current Irish forestry policy. Will anyone listen?

The Review of Phillips' Report and the Report itself are available on-line www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.net

Editors Footnote:

"Coillte have asked us to point out that the above article is based on a critique of an unpublished piece of research. This research, commissioned by Coillte, was conducted by internationally-renowned forestry consultant Mr. Henry Phillps, and the views expressed by the author are his, and not necessarily those of Coillte."



Environmental and Land Use Law
by Yvonne Scannell

Environmental and Land Use Law by Yvonne Scannell covers all new legislation, including the Consolidated Planning Act, and legislation and case law relevant to land-use. It systematically describes and analyses conservation and biodiversity, planning, air, water and waste management, noise, hazardous substances, remedies for environmental damage and the Environmental Protection Agency.

ISBN: 1-85800-359-8 **Format:** Hardback **Price:** €320.00

Order your copy today...
Call us now on 01 662 5301

THOMSON ROUND HALL

THE PAPER FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING



ISSUE 5 ON SALE MAY 26TH

THE LOCAL PLANET
THE PAPER FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Fivealley, Birr, Co. Offaly.
Tel. 0509 33119 / 33985 / 33962

www.localplanet.ie





Philip Mullally, Louise Opperman and Lewis Clohessy of the Glounthane Community Association at the Dunkettle planning appeal in Cork West.
Picture: michael mac sweeney/provision

Dunkettle
A Community Success

The recent decision of An Bord Pleanála to refuse permission for a change of use of Dunkettle (or Dunkathel) House and the development of 629 houses in the grounds of the house, a protected structure sited a few miles east of Cork city, represents a significant victory for community involvement in the planning process. In particular, the Board's decision validates the decision of the Glounthaune Community Association (GCA) to take on the corporate power of one of Ireland's largest housing developers, O'Flynn Construction, which recently acquired the property from its long-time owners, the Russell family, for the purpose of developing what amounts to a new suburb for Cork on the demesne lands (including the historic walled garden) while transforming the house and its curtilage into a retail complex broadly similar to that developed at Powerscourt House, Co. Wicklow.

Alarmed by the lack of pre-planning consultation offered to the local community by the intending developer, GCA, chaired by Philip Mullally, former National Chairperson and current Council member of An Taisce, decided that it had no option but to object to a development which appeared to have the most serious negative implications for the quality of life of the local community and of prospective new residents and for the sensitive conservation of Dunkathel House and lands. Accordingly, the Association lodged with Cork County Council a third-party objection to the proposed development, based on four serious impacts which the development would have on Dunkettle and environs: excessive traffic generation on the national and local road networks, threats to the protected structure and setting, damage to the character of the area and negative effects on the residential amenity of both the existing community and prospective occupants of the new housing units by reason of poor layout and inadequate provision of social and amenity facilities.

Because of the highly-developed social sensibility of GCA, which has been formally acknowledged by the Irish Government to be one of the most effective practitioners of Local Agenda 21, the question of residential amenity took on a particular importance in the Association's approach to what would constitute suitable development in the area coming within GCA's remit. The Glounthaune/Glanmire/Dunkettle neighbourhood has been characterised by a pattern of small village communities within which high levels of personal contact and social self-sufficiency have been maintained. In its objection to the proposed development, the Association maintained that the abrupt introduction of a huge isolated suburb, lacking adequate social and commercial facilities and with ill-considered access arrangements, into a long-established and effectively-functioning community would be disastrous for existing and prospective residents alike and would have the potential for serious social alienation.

Cork County Council clearly agonised over its decision and, over a period of months, sought further information from

Above: Dunkettle House. Below: Cahir Castle. Photo by Andrew Kelly



the prospective developer on two occasions. However, in spite of serious concerns expressed by the professional planning staff, permission was eventually granted by the Council, subject to a remarkable 65 conditions, for 527 housing units. GCA were dismayed by this decision and immediately lodged a third-party appeal with An Bord Pleanála, based on the original grounds of objection to the County Council. As it happened, the developer was also unhappy with the decision, which had the effect of removing over a hundred houses, and lodged a first-party appeal, requesting an Oral Hearing in the process.

An Bord Pleanála agreed to hold the hearing and, accordingly, for two days in early February 2006, the three representatives of GCA (Philip Mullally, Louise Oppermann, Secretary of GCA, and Lewis Clohessy, planning advisor and Properties Committee Chairperson of An Taisce) confronted two formidable teams of Senior Counsels and professional/technical experts representing the developer and the County Council. Although An Taisce were not parties to the appeal, Lewis Clohessy strongly indicated that the organisation at national level supported the community's stance on the protection of Dunkathel House, a heritage property of national importance. In response, the developer maintained, on the basis of a letter which he had sought and received from An Taisce Corcaigh, that, although that body had expressed concern about interventions into the fabric and setting of the building, it appeared to be less opposed to the proposed development than was the national organisation.

In the event, the determining factor in the Board's decision was not the intensity of An Taisce's concern about the proposal but, as it should be, the validity of the arguments advanced by GCA and three other third-party appellants. In refusing permission for development, An Bord Pleanála used no less than five reasons, closely reflecting GCA's grounds of appeal.

In brief, the reasons for refusal were:

1. Prematurity in relation to the determination of the layout of road improvements, particularly to the Dunkettle Interchange, and contribution to congestion on the national road network.

2. Prematurity having regard to deficiencies in the local road network and endangerment of public safety by reason of traffic hazard.

3. Introduction of inappropriate elements adjoining the protected structure, Dunkathel House, materially and adversely affecting the character and setting of the protected structure, to the detriment of the reuse and refurbishment of the existing fabric.

4. Deficiencies in the housing layout, resulting in a substandard and inappropriate form of development that would seriously injure the amenities of future occupants.

5. Having regard to the large-scale residential component and the location of the site remote from local services and facilities, the proposed development would, by reason of the under provision of such facilities, result in a substandard and unsustainable form of development for future occupants.

A more precise and comprehensive reflection of GCA's grounds of appeal would be hard to envisage. Having said that, the matter of how Dunkathel House and its lands are to be developed in the best interests of the common good is still unresolved. The prospective developer has indicated his intention of immediately re-applying for permission to Cork County Council. GCA have, for their part, expressed willingness to participate in future pre-planning discussions with a view to achieving the appropriate type and scale of development on these important lands and ensuring the sustainable conservation of the great house and its setting.

It remains to be seen if O'Flynn Construction have the vision to consult meaningfully with the local community before they submit revised plans. In view of the comprehensive nature of An Bord Pleanála's refusal, such a course would appear prudent.

Cahir Castle

The intervention by An Taisce to protect Cahir Castle was one of our most important appeals in recent times. This heritage site is by any standards one of Irelands major medieval monuments and the focal point of the attractive designated Heritage Town of Cahir. An Taisce was the sole appellant to An Bord Pleanala against the development of an eight-storey hotel on the mill site opposite the castle and adjoining the river Suir.

The Council decision for Cahir is a major example of the way short term vested interests prevail against European and National policy at Local Authority decision level. The Cahir development was supported by an assertive lobby group and a number of county councillors who maintained a relentless local media campaign against An Taisce.

The An Bord Pleanala refusal referred to the site as being "of unique sensitivity and national importance" and that "The replacement of the existing mill building, by reason of the excessive height, scale and bulk of the proposed hotel, would aversely affect the settings of Cahir Castle and the character of the Cahir Architectural Conservation Area would fail to achieve an appropriate scale in relation to the castle. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed development, by reason of it's design, would constitute a discordant and visually obstructive element on the streetscape of Cahir and would interfere with the views of Cahir Castle from Bridge Street which are protected ion the current South Tipperary County Development Plan for the area ", and "that the proposed development, by reason of its design, in particular the monolithic-type blocks and their roof treatment along the bank of the Suir River (which blocks would be prominent in views from the bridge and from the wall walk of Cahir Castle), would be visually discordant and out of character with the pattern of the development in the area."

The Board also assessed the sensitive riverbank location of the site and stated " the Board is not satisfied that the proposed development would adequately respect the River Suir, a candidate Special Area of Conservation, which forms the south-western, southern and south-eastern boundaries of the site, would avoid interference with the riverbank and would ensure the retention of all mature trees on site, while providing for a public walkway and for the proposed quantum of development. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area."

At last... Grants for renewable-energy home heating

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES E27M 'GREENER HOMES' SCHEME

This is an opportunity not to be missed. Install a home-heating system that uses renewable energy and the government will help you pay for it. The government is providing grants of between €1,100 and €5,000 to home-owners who install one of the renewable-energy heating systems they have on offer. The grants vary depending on whether you choose solar panels, a wood-burning stove or boiler, or a geothermal heat pump system. Your choice will be installed for you. The Greener Homes scheme, launched in March by the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Noel Dempsey, is being rolled out over a five-year period. It will spend e27m on supporting the conversion to renewable energy of potentially as many as 10,000 Irish homes.

This is the first time that householders have been allowed a grant for renewable-energy heating – and the take-up is likely to be dramatic and swift. There is pent-up demand fuelled by rising costs of home-heating oil and the desire to reduce the impact of fossil-fuel burning on the global climate. The scheme is expected to save the equivalent of 54,000 barrels of oil every year and to reduce carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions to the atmosphere by 23,000 tonnes annually. This is equivalent to taking 6,700 cars off the road – not a lot, in fact, but it's a start.

Renewable energy systems have low running costs...but up to now the high equipment and installation costs have excluded many people from making the switch. The Greener Homes scheme will support those who switch to low-emission heating systems, whether in new or existing homes. The scheme is administered by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI), using installers registered with SEI. Ireland is heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels, such as oil and coal, which cause emissions that are harmful to the environment and can be subject to volatility of price and availability. The government wishes to reduce this reliance and move towards greater use of our own renewable energy resources. The main sources of renewable energy are the sun (solar energy), the wind, moving water (hydropower, wave and tidal energy), geothermal (heat below the Earth's surface) and biomass (wood, certain wastes and energy crops). Ireland has an abundance of these, and their development will reduce emissions of harmful greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

The scheme will help ensure a faster uptake of renewable heating systems. It will enable homeowners to 'green' their homes and play their part in reducing emissions and moving Ireland towards more sustainable energy use, ultimately benefiting the planet.

SEI is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 with programmes part-financed by the European Union. Details and application forms are available on the SEI website and a dedicated low-call phone line 1850 734 734 has been opened to deal with queries and applications. For further information, visit www.sei.ie/greenerhomes

Dundalk's Sustainable Energy Zone

Though setting standards lower than those being set now regularly in development plans in Fingal, DunLoaghaire and Wicklow this project hopes to achieve the following standards:

- 20% of electricity used within the community to be generated from renewable energy sources.
- 40% improvement in the energy performance of selected buildings.
- 20% increase in the amount of heat generated from renewable sources in housing and community sectors.

The Sustainable Energy Zone is a relatively small area, yet it already contains within it all the elements of a community – private and public housing, industry, hospital, college, sports centre and retail outlets. A hotel, student accommodation centre and further housing and industrial buildings will be built over the next few years. The project will take a holistic approach, aiming to touch every aspect of people's lives in the community in one way or another. It will take the current best practice and push these standards even higher. The zone will include:

- a combined heat and power installation
- district heating in a residential area
- refurbishment of low-income housing to high standards of energy efficiency
- new houses built to standards up to 40% better than current building regulations require
- increased use of renewable energy, mainly wind and biomass
- advanced metering technologies to measure energy use
- a voluntary agreement programme with industry
- improved energy efficiency in industrial and commercial buildings
- improved energy demand management across the

board. The opportunity will be sought to use solar thermal and photovoltaic technologies and to provide education and training in sustainable energy.

The zone will demonstrate the concept of sustainable energy use in action, covering all aspects of life and activity in a limited area. It will use some of the technologies, policies and practices that will be needed to develop sustainable communities across Ireland. It is essential that such changes are made throughout the world if greenhouse gas emissions are to be reduced and the potentially disastrous consequences of global warming are to be avoided. A vital part of the project will be an accompanying research project that will seek to understand how people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour are changed – in their homes, at work or at leisure – by living in a more sustainable environment. This will be key in rolling out the lessons learned in Dundalk across Ireland.

The headquarters of Sustainable Energy Ireland are being moved to Dundalk as part of the government's decentralisation plans. The new HQ building will showcase the most advanced technologies and techniques. The project partners are SEI, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dundalk Chamber of Commerce, Dundalk Town Council, Louth County Council, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA.











Low energy buildings and wind turbines in Dundalk

ACTION!

BRING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY RATINGS INTO YOUR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states that Local Area Plans can include objectives set "by the planning authority for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which it applies, including detail on […] standards for the design of developments and structures". The Act also gives power to local authorities in terms of "regulating and controlling the design, colour and materials of structures and groups of structures, including streets and townscapes, and structures and groups of structures in rural areas", and crucially, in terms of "promoting design in structures for the purposes of flexible and sustainable use, including conservation of energy and resources".

This means that is legally possible to include sustainable energy standards in development plans and this is now being done on increasingly frequent occasions. The first was in Cappagh, County Fingal, followed by North Ballymun, Northwest Balbriggan, and Castlelands. DunLoaghaire Rathdown have include standards in their Kilternan /Glenamuck Local Area Plan as have Wicklow County Council for their Marlton Local Area Plan, Wicklow Town Members can lobby Council Officers and Councillors to include these standards in ALL new plans and reviews of Development Plans. The following clause and other similar clauses condition homes in the Greater Dublin Area.

A collective average reduction of at least 60% in CO_2 emissions deriving from energy usage for space and water heating within the housing development, relative to a baseline of prevailing regulatory and design practice. This initial baseline of comparison is to be represented by the provisions of Technical Guidance Document L (TGD L) to the Building Regulations, 2002 using a conventional gas fired heating boiler with an assumed seasonal efficiency of 75%. The calculation is to be carried out for the time being using the Heat Energy Rating Method in TGD L, pending adoption of the official national methodology for determining energy performance of housing for the purposes of the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD).

In meeting this CO_2 performance target, the development shall include:

» A collective average reduction of at least 60% in energy consumption for space and water heating , relative to the baseline of existing regulatory and design practice and using the methodology outlined above*

» A contribution of 30% by renewable energy supply systems to meet the collective space and water heating requirements within the housing development.

Even at current energy prices these standards will have a significant financial benefit for the householder and will help to limit fuel poverty which will be a particular problem in social housing as the price of oil, gas and electricity continue on their upward spiral. The reduction in CO_2 will also make an important contribution to meeting Kyoto targets and limit the charges that will follow a failure to keep in line with commitments.

Marine wildlife neglected as offshore drilling continues

THE FIRST STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SLYNE ERRIS AND DONEGAL BASIN HAS IDENTIFIED LARGE DATA GAPS IN THE REGIONS BIODIVERSITY AND THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO ISSUE NEW FRONTIER EXPLORATION LICENCES. SEISMIC SURVEY EFFORT WILL DOUBLE IN THE REGION. THE DRAFT SEA CONCLUDES NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS ARE EXPECTED TO RESULT. WHALES AND FISH ARE KNOWN TO BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO SEISMIC SURVEYS



Shay Fennelly

REPORT BY **SHAY FENNELLY**

In October 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published the National Environmental Monitoring Programme for Transitional, Coastal and Marine Waters: A Discussion Document. This outlined the monitoring activities considered necessary for the protection of the marine environment and for the fulfilment of Ireland's national and international obligations, notably the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Oslo and Paris Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the north-east Atlantic (OSPAR). Under the OSPAR convention, Ireland is obliged to:

» prevent and eliminate pollution at sea

» take the necessary measures to protect the maritime area against the adverse effects of human activities

» safeguard human health and conserve marine ecosystems.

The EPA document states: "The Petroleum Affairs Division [of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources] is responsible for licensing and control of offshore oil and gas activity...As yet, there are no field monitoring requirements in place. This is considered appropriate in the context of the low level of offshore activity."

LOW LEVEL OF ACTIVITY?

Since the 1970s, over 150 exploration wells have been drilled in offshore Ireland. How can the Petroleum Affairs Division protect the marine environment when it undertakes no field monitoring?

We asked the Marine Institute what marine environment monitoring protocols currently existed or were applied to the offshore oil and gas sector here. It replied that "while currently there are no published environmental monitoring protocols for the offshore industry, baseline environmental information is required prior to any drilling works."

For the 150 wells drilled since the 1970s, how many provided baseline environmental information prior to any works?

In 2005, the European Commission took Ireland to the European Court of Justice for its failure to implement the EU Habitats Directive and protect Irish marine wildlife listed in that directive, including otters, whales, dolphins, porpoises and leatherback turtles. The court says Ireland has failed to establish a system of strict protection and has not undertaken sufficient sur-



ACTION!

Planning law now requires that the environmental impacts of major developments and plans are assessed so that any damage can be avoided or mitigated. This planning technique, devised to protect the underlying eco-system on which we all depend, is quite new and planners, developers and other stake holders in the process are still learning how best to implement the practice. The next edition of the An Taisce magazine will look at Strategic Environmental Assessment more closely.

veillance of the conservation status of these species.

The blue whale and the northern right whale are two species in question – both are listed as being under threat and in decline in Irish waters. An American marine scientist, Dr Chris Clark, recorded six blue whales (as well as twenty fin whales) calling off Ireland's west coast from December to March 1996-'97, using acoustic arrays operated by the US and Royal Navys. And yet, no baseline whale survey has been undertaken on the continental shelf edge near the Corrib gas field, despite Ireland's legal obligations to protect whales.

Where does the Irish Offshore Operators' Association stand on this question? According to their chief executive, Fergus Cahill, "our members conduct their operations in accordance with best international environmental practice, and comply with the environmental regulations of the relevant Irish authorities."

In 2003, the EPA and the Marine Institute established a marine monitoring forum to oversee the development and implementation of a national environmental monitoring programme. However, it has not met formally since 2004. At present, there is no sitting chairman, though the forum is planning to meet in the first quarter of 2006.

NOT MUCH DONE AT CORRIB GAS FIELD

The Corrib gas field off the coast of Co Mayo is located in a marine habitat of major importance for whales and dolphins, seabirds and fish species, with unique, deep-water Lophelia coral reefs. Only limited ecological surveys have been undertaken here since the gas discovery in 1996, and the surveys that have been carried out are inadequate, according to the government-appointed consultants who examined the Environmental Impact Assessments for the Corrib gas project.

In their report to the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources in 2002, the consultants, Posford Hoskoning, said the impact statements were, in general, satisfactory but that the ecological monitoring work proposed by the developers lacked sufficient detail. They recommended that further detail on monitoring be made a condition for final approval, and that more information be supplied on offshore marine biology surveys in the area, on dispersion modelling and on the impact of the project on local EU-designated sites.

Accordingly, the marine department's licence vetting committee set 28 conditions requiring compliance prior to commencement of works. These conditions were attached to the final consents for the Corrib gas project, and the committee recommended that they should be "rigorously enforced."

Three years later, no overall report has been published on compliance with these conditions. In January 2006, however, a spokeswoman for Royal Dutch Shell said that preconstruction surveys had been conducted in Broadhaven Bay and that environmental monitoring will satisfy the requirements of the consents. (Shell is the lead partner in the project along with Statoil Exploration and Marathon International Petroleum Hibernia.)

The Marine Institute has confirmed that a monitoring programme has been submitted by Shell and that they are discussing it with the North Western Fisheries Board. The programme includes monitoring of an outfall discharge as well as the benthic or sea-bottom environment. When the programme has been agreed by all parties, it will be submitted to the Petroleum Affairs Division for approval.

On the opposite page: Whalewatch 2002 at Old Head of Kinsale.
Below: Fin whales.
Both photos by Shay Fennelly

Irish photographer **Shay Fennelly** has documented Ireland's marine sector since 1996. An exhibition of his work is on show 29 June –1st July in Killybegs, Co. Donegal.
AQUAPHOTO PICTURE LIBRARY
shayfennelly@eircom.net Tel 087 642 8902

COFORD

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FOREST RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
AN CHOMHAIRLE NÁISIÚNTA UM THAIGHDE AGUS FORBAIRT FORAOISE

COFORD plans, develops, co-ordinates and monitors research programmes in all sectors in the forest industry



www.coford.ie



Visit www.coford.ie to:

- **Download or order COFORD's publications;**
- **Apply for research funding;**
- **Study details of research projects funded by COFORD;**
- **Subscribe to COFORD's free monthly email newsletter;**
- **Sign up for the free text alert service;**
- **Find out about forthcoming events**

COFORD
Arena House, Arena Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18
Tel: 01-2130725; Fax: 01-2130611
Email: info@coford.ie Website: http://www.coford.ie

THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE REVEALED



A Unique Gift

Professionally researched, written and presented, an Eneclann house history is an ideal present for birthdays, weddings or Christmas.

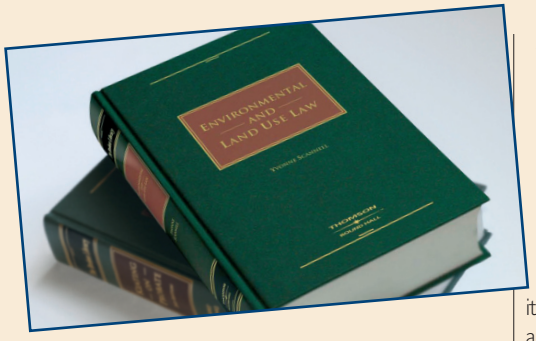
Tax Relief

A house history is also a valuable resource when seeking planning permission for a listed building, tax relief under Section 482 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, or a local authority conservation grant.

If you would like more information please phone us at: 01 671 0338, or e-mail info@eneclann.ie

ENECLANN

Unit 1, Trinity College Enterprise Centre, Pearse Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01-6710338 Fax: 01-6710281
e-mail: info@eneclann.ie
www.eneclann.ie



ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND USE LAW

By Yvonne Scannell

ROUNDHALL THOMSON, 2006

ISBN: 1-85800-359-8

€320.00

This new book is a unique and extremely thorough examination of land use law in the context of planning and development and is a complete up date of this legal area. Land use law relating to habitats of flora and fauna, protected buildings, archaeological sites, the foreshore, and major accident sites is covered in detail.

You also get invaluable coverage of air, water, noise pollution and remedies for environmental harm. It has an extensive analysis of waste law, which is currently one of the most active areas in Irish environmental law. It contains a clear and easily understood analysis of Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment requirements. It is clearly written and easy to understand and avoids technical phrases and legal jargon, making it easily understood by the non-lawyer.

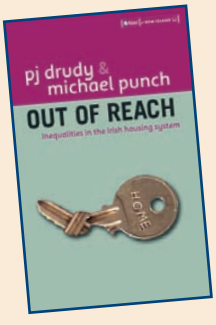
OUT OF REACH: INEQUALITIES IN THE IRISH HOUSING SYSTEM

By PJ Drudy and Michael Punch

PUBLISHED BY TASC@NEWISLAND, 2005

Beginning in 2003, TASC, the think-tank for action on social change, has published a series of cutting edge analyses of some of the major public policy issues of our time. Out of Reach is the most recent in this series.

The authors PJ Drudy and Michael Punch set out to explain why an adequate home, one of the most basic requirements of any population is such a problem for so many. The book raises a number of the questions that need to be urgently addressed



Why have house prices and rents escalated in an exceptional manner over the last decade? Why has state expenditure on rent supplement (a subsidy paid to private landlords in order to house tenants who cannot afford market rents) exploded from just a few million euros a decade ago to 350 million in 2004? Why are standards of accommodation and insecurity in the private rented sector persistently raised by tenants and their representative organisations?

And what of social housing? Why has the waiting list increased to about 250,000 people during this decade? Why has Ireland still got several thousand homeless people despite various initiatives? Why have we failed to deal effectively with 1,600 traveller families and hundreds with disabilities who urgently require housing? Why do local authorities continue to sell social housing at a discount at a time when the stock of such housing is at an all-time low? And how effective have other initiatives (such as Part 5 of the 2000 Planning Act) been in achieving a reduction in housing segregation - a phenomenon that is particularly obvious in Ireland?

The answers to these questions depend on our philosophical view of housing. Is housing just a commodity to be bought and sold on the 'market' like motorcars or stocks and shares? Or is housing to be regarded as a shelter, and a home - a right to be achieved by all, irrespective of ability to pay?

The TASC book concludes that housing must be seen as a basic human right. This means that housing has to be treated as a social good not simply like a commodity for trading and wealth generation. In the light of this there are a number of critical recommendations for immediate action. Among these is the call for a New National Housing Authority to be established and proposals for concrete measures to reduce segregation; provide real competition to private property developers and thus reduce house price inflation; an accelerated programme of public housing build; and the discontinuation of the current policy of selling off local authority housing at a huge discount.

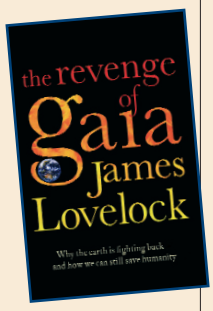
For more information on TASC visit www.tascnet.ie or contact them on contact@tascnet.ie.

THE REVENGE OF GAIA

By James Lovelock

ALLEN LANE, 2006

£16.99



James Lovelock, a radical and visionary environmental scientist, first propounded the theory of a self-regulating planet (christened 'Gaia' by William Golding) some forty years ago. The idea that organic life and inorganic Earth mutually sustain each other through a vast web of feedback loops is now well understood. The causes of the vicious spiral of climate change are also understood - mainly emanating from our use of fossil fuels. Our earth is overheating and Lovelock's latest book, the Revenge of Gaia suggests that the only answer is nuclear.

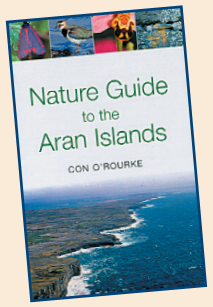
"We simply do not have the time to wait for cheap solar energy", says Lovelock, and "it is madness to use land to grow crops for biofuels, since Gaia needs its forests if it is to prosper". Likewise, he calls wind power "outrageously expensive and unreliable". Lovelock's answer - nuclear energy – is not popular with environmentalists, yet he is sticking with it. Lovelock argues for fission in the short term and fusion in the longer. Fission, he says, is a safe energy source, and disposing of nuclear waste is not as difficult as critics claim. But he doesn't stop at nuclear technology. He seriously entertains reducing solar radiation, and thereby global warming, using large sunshades in space. And while he acknowledges that sequestering frozen carbon dioxide underground is impractical - a year's output would make a mountain one mile high - he says it is technically possible to convert it into magnesium carbonate and use it as a building material. He also suggests adding sulphur to aviation fuel to create sulphuric acid droplets in the stratosphere, which would reflect sunlight back into space and help reduce global warming. He envisions high-tech sailing ships for emissions-free travel, and redesigned compact cities where people could walk to work and the shops. As he points out, 75 per cent of energy usage goes into transport and buildings.

This is clearly a book that will be oft quoted so it may indeed be useful to check it out to see exactly what Lovelock is really saying and how much of it still holds good. Certainly, one of the writers (David Fleming) in the An Taisce magazine would seriously question whether he has taken all the issues into account in considering the use of nuclear.

NATURE GUIDE TO THE ARAN ISLANDS

By Con O'Rourke

2006



This Nature Guide to the Aran Islands throws open a window onto one of the environmental treasure-troves of Europe's western seaboard. The outcome of lifelong study and observation by an expert in his field, it will become an invaluable and enduring reference work. . It extracts the key facts from the volumes written on Aran, illustrates them copiously with over a hundred colour photographs, and condenses the whole into a single, comprehensive, handy source for exploring the diverse and abundant wildlife of the islands. The author graduated from UCD in General Agriculture, and trained in microbiology and plant pathology, working for Teagasc (the Agricultural and Food Development Authority) for forty years. He has been President of the Institute of Biology of Ireland, Chairman of the Science Committee of the Royal Dublin Society, and served on various committees of the Royal Irish Academy, while organizing natural history courses 'as Gaelige' in the Aran Islands for trainee teachers, students and tourists.



A LASTING LEGACY FROM CLARE O'FLAHERTY

Clare O'Flaherty who sadly passed away in 2005 made a wonderful gesture when she bequeathed 10% of the value of her Dublin home to An Taisce. This has resulted in a six figure donation for the organisation and is a wonderful example of generosity and philanthropy and of how leaving a legacy to An Taisce makes a real difference. Clare during her lifetime was also extremely generous with her time and was involved with many different organisations. Clare and other members who have also included An Taisce in their wills are an inspiration and the simple task of including An Taisce in your will or amending your existing will is a wonderful way to ensure that Ireland's heritage in the future is protected and cherished.

WILL YOU GIVE AN TAISCE A HELPING HAND BY MAKING A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE?

An Taisce is launching a new guide for friends and members of An Taisce who might consider including An Taisce in their wills. If you haven't already received a copy, please contact us in the Development Office. The guide is a comprehensive review of how to go about making a will and also provides examples of how your support will be used by An Taisce in the years and decades to come. By way of example, some members may choose to leave monies to the new Nature Fund for Ireland that will focus on conservation issues, the purchase of additional nature reserves and the greater promotion of bio-diversity issues in Ireland. In Ireland An Taisce is to the forefront in protecting designated areas, such as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas , public amenity areas and historic town centres. However in this development focussed era many of these lands are under threat and An Taisce needs more resources to ensure greater protection.

SSIAs

Many hundreds of thousands of Irish people took out SSIAs. A number of An Taisce members have mentioned that with SSIAs maturing over the coming months, this provides a timely opportunity for members and friends to consider supporting An Taisce. If you have been in the habit of saving a fixed monthly payment and would like to consider making an ongoing or periodic pledge to An Taisce, you could even time it to coincide with the maturing of your SSIA. If you would like a fundraising pack to help you get started, please contact the Development Office at the numbers below.

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES FROM ABROAD

In the US and UK a "rewilding" process is taking place – the transformation of cultivated land into nature reserves and the reintroduction of vanished native plant, animal, bird and insect species. The enthusiasm for conservancy schemes is being financed by mass-membership organisations and grants from lottery and other funding bodies. Private reserves are also being established by people quitting city life. Clustering of reserves is now taking place to create even more viable wildlife sanctuaries. The 47 local wildlife trusts in the UK have extended their own reserves from 55,000 hectares in 1994 to 82,000 hectares in 2005. Their membership has more than doubled in that period to 600,000 members. Their combined income in 2005 was over €160m. The RSPB with more than 1 million members manages a further 129,000 hectares.

An Taisce is one of the few Irish environmental charities with a number of nature reserves and we would love to do more in this area. Without the requisite funding, it is difficult however. We will be launching a nature fund, which, with sufficient funding, will aspire to purchase further nature reserves.

The message for An Taisce is clear. We need more members and we need to increase our funding. As a first step, why not encourage your sons, daughters, grandchildren, other relations and friends to join An Taisce. There is greater strength in numbers.

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

There are considerable tax savings to be had on all donations to An Taisce over €250 in one year, whether given in a lump sum or by regular standing order.

Under the 2006 Finance Act it was announced that tax relief would also be available on donations of shares to charities such as An Taisce. At the time of writing, details had yet to be released.

If you would like further information, please contact Niall in the Development Office at the numbers below.

To contact the Development Office
Phone **Niall 087-997 4977**
Lorraine 01-454 1786



European Network of National Heritage Organisations

Practitioners in Partnership

for European Heritage Conservation and Access

ENNHO's mission is to support permanent mutual exchange, learning and partnership-building between heritage conservation organisations in European countries.

2006 CONFERENCE (hosted this year by An Taisce)

'Sustainable Development – Reconciling Heritage Conservation with Prosperity'

5-9 October 2006, Emmaus Centre Conference Rooms, Swords, Co Dublin

The European Network of National Heritage Organisations (ENNHO) is a network of 40 organisations in 28 European countries. Each is a cultural and natural heritage conservation body dedicated to access, advocacy and learning. Many work in both cultural and natural areas while some specialise in one.

Members and partners range from well established national trusts and NGOs to governmental bodies such as Ireland's Heritage Council, English Heritage and the Czech National Heritage Institute. The ENNHO secretariat is currently hosted by the National Trust of Slovakia.

Members and partners are heritage conservation practitioners, and most own and manage heritage properties. Many, including An Taisce, are statutory consultees under planning law and carry out educational programmes.

The conference will include site visits to heritage sites in both the Republic and Northern Ireland over two days, plus specialised workshops in:

- Coastal and Maritime Heritage
- Country Houses and Landscapes
- Military & Industrial Heritage
- Urban Heritage
- Vernacular Architecture
- The Cultural Landscape

Register online at:-
www.ennnho.org
or contact John Ducie at
www.antaisce.org.

There will be a limited number of places for non-ENNHO members and partner delegates.

The conference is being hosted with the kind assistance and support of The Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, Fingal County Council, The National Trust (UK) and ENNHO.


Castletown House


Kilkenny Castle


Emo Court


Luttrellstown House

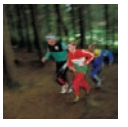
ONLY THE BEST FORESTS IN THE WORLD MAKE THE GRADE

The awarding of a five-star grade in any industry is recognition that a list of criteria and guidelines laid down have been met, maintained and in some cases surpassed.

In the summer of 2001 Coillte received Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. This was recognition from the FSC, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to responsible forest management on a global basis, that our forests are well managed in accordance with strict environmental, social and economic criteria. In short, our forests were given a five-star rating.
Certification to FSC standards is a voluntary process. Being presented with certification was an important milestone in Coillte's sustainable forest management initiative begun in 1998, the aim of which was to develop a management system that would ensure a correct balance between economic, environmental and social issues in the management of Coillte's forests.
This award doesn't come easy and the achievement of certification is not an end in itself. FSC certification commits Coillte to a process of continuous improvement, independently monitored and assessed on an ongoing basis. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards in the management of our forests, through the implementation of strategies including nature conservation, species diversity, forest design and archaeology.



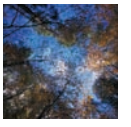








In the meantime, you can enjoy the treasures of Ireland's best kept secret - 1.1 million acres of forest land, all open to the public to enjoy. We've dedicated recreational areas, picnic sites, guided trails, even children's playgrounds. Witness wildlife in its natural habitat, discover an abundance of flora and fauna, and scenery that will take your breath away. Coillte forests are now a unique five-star experience… and that's official.







coillte
The Forestry People

FSC accredited certification means that the forest is managed according to strict environmental, social and economic standards.
SA-fm/coc-0706
FSC Trademark ©1996 Forest Stewardship Council A.C.

To find out the location of your nearest Coillte forest, log on to **www.coillte.ie**