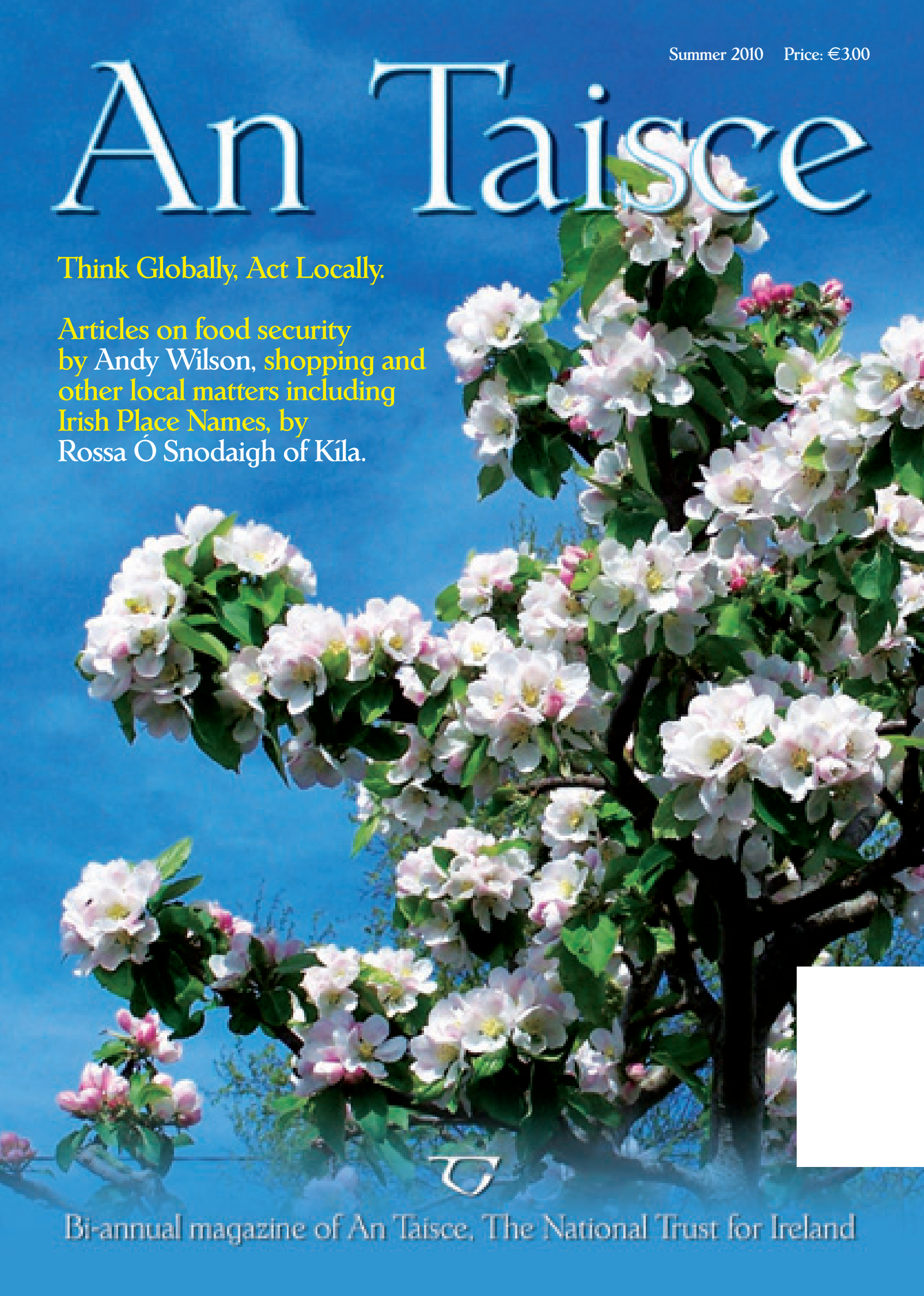
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An Taisce

Think Globally, Act Locally.

Articles on food security by Andy Wilson, shopping and other local matters including Irish Place Names, by Rossa Ó Snodaigh of Kíla.



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

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An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

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EDITORIAL

JUDY OSBORNE



JUDY OSBORNE

So all the chickens are coming home to roost, much as anticipated by An Taisce and other campaigners in the environmental sector. The economy is heading towards a precipice yet still key government position papers such as the draft Regional Planning Guidelines propose objectives that merely try to improve the existing pattern of development in small ways. There seems to be denial of the dire straits we find ourselves in. Credible information tells us that many resources in are increasingly short supply, not only money but water, energy, food and many other mineral resources vital to the current development model .We really shouldn't waste a good crisis and An Taisce would join calls for action to change driven by innovation and creativity which would place ecological economic principles more firmly at the heart of policy.

The main theme of this edition of the magazine is thinking globally and acting locally. The local theme is focused around food security with an important article by Andy Wilson who has established a reputation as a serious thinker on these matters. There are ancillary pieces by a range of activists who have specialised in aspects of the subject. There are articles from our respected Heritage Officer, Ian Lumley, describing just what has been happening around the country in respect of shopping and reports of projects run by An Taisce to empower local communities to make effective submissions to their local development plans that map out the direction for the future pattern & quality of life in their neighbourhoods . Finally, I couldn't resist an opportunity for an article that presented itself when I was offered a collection of books all on a common theme but with differing interpretations of post apocalyptic society. Gloomy as this may seem most books were a really good read and contained ideas quite relevant to present circumstances but what was most inpsiring was the notion that different futures are possible! It is this belief that keeps campaigners going when the going gets tough.

An Taisce has been building expertise and advocating sustainable development for generations, through the good times and the bad times, and we can see the clear way ahead to a future that treasures the riches of Ireland. Do join us in this journey.

AN TAISCE MAGAZINE SUMMER 2010

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Front Cover: Photo by Andy Wilson. www.andywilson.ie

An overview of future FOOD SECURITY

ALMOST ONE SIXTH OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION STRUGGLE TO GET ENOUGH TO EAT AND LIVE A PRECARIOUS EXISTENCE IN WHICH THE NEXT MEAL COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

REPORT BY **ANDY WILSON**

The survival and well-being of any species is closely linked to availability of food supplies. Populations tend to rise during periods of food abundance with corresponding falls taking place during periods of scarcity. Episodes of actual die-off, in which the human population falls by over 5 percent in any one year, are usually referred to as famines though there is no international agreed definition. Famines have occurred with ominous frequency throughout recorded history and, until the middle years of the twentieth century, were an inescapable reality for the world's poor. While the incidence of famine has eased somewhat in the last fifty years, an estimated one billion people - almost one sixth of the global population - struggle to get enough to eat and live a precarious existence in which the next meal could mean the difference between life and death.



ANDY WILSON

While many famines are attributed directly to crop failures, a number other factors play a critical role. These include the mechanisms of food distribution and storage, and various economic and political factors. The relative success achieved by humanity in averting famine during the last half century has been predicated mainly on the availability of cheap fossil fuel energy. This has facilitated the change from animal-based to mechanised agriculture whilst simultaneously providing the raw materials for the manufacture of artificial fertilisers and other agro-chemicals. Cheap fossil fuel energy has also made it possible to develop global supply chains with exceedingly complex just-in-time distribution networks.

THE COST OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION

The dramatically increased yields of this new system of food production, heralded amid great fanfare as the green revolution in the 1960s, and reinvented as the technological revolution of the last two decades, have only been achieved at an enormous environmental cost. Entire ecosystems have been sacrificed to monocultures and

In anything except the short term, food imports on the scale to which Ireland is accustomed cannot be guaranteed.



the process is on-going. While new land is continually being made available to agriculture by hacking or burning down rainforests in Latin America and South East Asia, this apparent gain in agricultural land is being matched by a corresponding loss arising from land that is degraded from the over-use of agro-chemicals, industrial pollution, depletion of subterranean aquifers, soil erosion and desertification. These losses are on the increase, and are set to rise even more sharply as a consequence of global warming and the associated changes in climates in key food growing regions.

The arable land available to food and other crop production has remained largely unchanged for the last 20 years at around 1400 million hectares. While total calorific food output has risen, this has barely kept place with population increase, and food crops are now competing for land on an ever-increasing scale with subsidised energy crops destined for transport or with feedstocks used for the (inefficient) production of animal food products.

PEAK OIL

The spectre of peak oil hovers in the background. Oil is the lubricant that maintains the global supply chains of raw materials, machinery, fertilisers, food products and animal feedstocks, that runs the tractors, cargo boats and heavy good vehicles, propels the shoppers to the food retail outlets, and which plays a critical role in maintaining the entire global economy.

ACTION!
See Andy Wilson's site www.andywilson.ie for a list of things we can do

Some of these issues are explored in Tipping Point, a sobering document recently published by David Korowicz of Feasta. Korowicz warns of the risk that a relatively minor event, such as a shortfall in global oil production of a few percent, could prove to be the determining factor that tips the entire global economy and associated supply chain over the edge. This perceived risk is not something to quickly dismiss, but demands the same degree of respect as is reserved by the world's climate change scientists for anthropogenic global warming. In terms of probability, it's not so much a question of 'if' but 'when'.

As Korowicz stated in an earlier document "Such [economic] growth cannot continue if our economy's energy base is undermined by peak oil, natural gas supply risks, and peak gas. The result of such an energy withdrawal will profoundly affect food production, our financial and economic system, with follow on consequences for the complex networks that support our modern civilisation".



Friarstown allotments (near Dublin) Photo by Michael Fox of the South Dublin Allotments Association

IS IRELAND VULNERABLE?

Given Ireland's ample hectarage of good arable and grazing land, the equitable climate with no extremes of heat or cold, and high livestock outputs, it is sometimes hard to appreciate that the country's continued ability to feed itself is very vulnerable to declines in oil production. In order to dispel any complacency regarding future food security, a number of points must be emphasised:

1. The food produced in Ireland accounts for only about one third of all food eaten by the residents of the country, with the shortfall made up in food imports._ Although large quantities of meat and animal products are exported, these can be regarded as surplus to the country's dietary requirements. The shortfalls are in grains, pulses, vegetables, fruit, the various processed food products made from these items and non-essential food items such as sugar or chocolate.

2. Food imports are extremely vulnerable to future disruptions to global supply chains, rising energy prices, and any falls in global food production. In anything except the short term, food imports on the scale to which Ireland is accustomed cannot be guaranteed.

3. Almost all food produced in Ireland is also predicated on the availability of fossil fuels. Tilled land relies on fossil fuels for running both agricultural machinery and also the trucks used to deliver crops to the markets, and for the manufacture and distribution of artificial fertilisers and other agro-chemicals used to maintain high crop yields. Livestock farming relies on fossil fuel produced feedstock, often originating thousands of miles away. To get an idea of likely crop yields and livestock outputs in the absence of artificial fertilisers, one only needs to look as far as the CSO data for Irish agriculture prior to WW2, when yields were down by one half to two thirds on contemporary production levels.

4. Food production in Ireland is locked into an extremely inflexible system of grants, subsidies and designated markets that is determined by EU policy and international trade agreements, and which is further constrained by the high levels of debt within the agricultural community. These factors make is extremely difficult for agriculture to rapidly adjust to changing internal and external circumstances.

5. The skills necessary to ramp up indigenous food production to a level capable of sustaining the entire population are not widely disseminated, and many of the contemporary agricultural or food production-related skills will be redundant in post peak oil agriculture. Nor is there any mechanism in place to ensure a rapid upskilling of the community.

supermarket shelves hold only a fortnight's supply of food

6. A final point of concern is the complete lack of awareness or preparation at national, regional or local level for dealing with food security. If a crisis occurs Ireland will be caught looking in completely the wrong direction and with its cupboards empty.

At best, supermarket shelves hold only a fortnight's supply of food, even if carefully eked out, with very little reserve in warehouses or storage depots. While Ireland would have enough residual

livestock to feed its population for at least one winter, this does not address the question of what happens after all the animals are slaughtered. It would take Ireland many years to reconfigure agriculture on sustainable lines capable of feeding the entire population. The idea that everyone could grow a few vegetables to keep themselves fed in the interim period simply does stack up. It takes one tenth to one fifth of a hectare (one quarter to one half of an acre) of good land to meet the balanced dietary requirements of one person, and even in the most efficient, ultra-intensive organic systems the increase in yield is only likely to be around a factor of two.

Although vitamins and minerals are an important part of diet, what keeps people alive in food emergencies is calorific intake. If an average daily intake of 2500 Calories is assumed (very low by Western standards), this extrapolates to 900,000 Calories per annum: the equivalent of 270 kg of wheat, 145kg of cobnuts or 1.2 tonnes of potatoes.

> A planned transition to a sustainable system of agriculture can be expected to take anything up to 12 years.

HOW MIGHT THINGS GO?

Irish agriculture, as currently configured, is incapable of feeding post-oil Ireland. At best, it might produce two thirds of the minimum national dietary requirements. At the same time, a planned transition to a sustainable system of agriculture capable of meeting national dietary requirements can be expected to take anything up to 12 years.

In Cuba, the people faced famine when the USSR collapsed and supplies of imported foodstuffs, crude oil, agro-chemicals and agricultural machinery were no longer available. In spite of massive mobilisation, it still took about eight years to ramp up indigenous food production to a level capable of meeting the basic dietary requirements of the population. Even so, many people suffered extreme hardship.

Although Cuba had little or no prior warning of the demise of the Soviet Union, it did have a few things in its favour. The tropical climate made it possible to produce two or even three crops a year. Also, there was an extremely efficient, if basic, health care system already in place, with a high number of trained doctors per head of population. An additional factor was the US trade embargo on the Cuba, which heightened the sense of international isolation among the population but which probably also engendered greater solidarity in the face of adversity.

In Ireland's case however, the sense that we cannot manage our current economic difficulties does not bode well for the treatment of future crises.

Furthermore, the complacency surrounding energy security issues, suggests it is reasonable to expect the State will also downplay Ireland's vulnerability to food shortage, resulting in the population considerably underestimating the risks involved. This will lead to lack of preparedness and false expectations that help will arrive from elsewhere. It is time to start ringing the alarm bells.

End notes

Andy Wilson is the founder of the Sustainability Institute, an independent research and educational body based in Westport, Co Mayo. In 2008, the Institute carried out a detailed audit of the energy resources of county Mayo - the first study of its type to be carried out in Ireland. Alerted to the negative consequences of the impending decline in world fossil fuel production, Andy currently spends most of his time working on food security-related issues and regularly speaks on food security issues





Facts on food [in]security in Ireland

• Approximately 2/3 of all food eaten in Ireland is imported. Each year Ireland imports approximately 250,000 tonnes of vegetables, 100,000 tonnes of fruit and 1million tonnes of grain. Mostly this arrives by container, either by truck or directly by ship.

• The fossil fuel energy required to grow, harvest, process, pack and transport this imported food is very conservatively estimated to be 1.5 million tonnes of oil equivalent (TOE) per annum - the equivalent of 1/10 of total energy use in Ireland and roughly the same amount of energy as is required to heat half of Ireland's housing stock. This figure assumes it takes 5 Calories of fossil fuel energy to produce 1 Calorie of food - half the figure generally quoted in peak oil literature.

• The livestock sector (including dairy), currently configured mainly for export markets, requires 4 million hectares of grazing land and a further 1million hectares of silage. Together this accounts for 2/3 of all land in the Republic of Ireland. Each year, the sector uses some 3 million tonnes of animal feed, about half of which is imported. Currently, it is collectively subsidised to the tune of approximately €2.5 billion per annum - considerably more than the net income.

• Tillage land in Ireland, which reached 1million hectares during the Second World War, is now at an all time low of about 400,000 hectares. About 80 % of current tillage is used for production of animal feed.

• It is estimated that the Irish agriculture sector, as currently configured, would provide no more 2/3 of Ireland's food needs even if the entire agricultural output was consumed by the domestic market. Also, this output is predicated on continued supplies of fossil fuels and artificial fertilisers. Per annum, the sector currently uses 450,000 tonnes of imported artificial fertilisers, themselves requiring upwards of 300,000 tonnes of oil equivalent (in production and transportation) and consumes 300 million litres of diesel (equivalent to 250,000 tonnes of oil).

• In order to achieve a high degree of food security, Ireland would have to make a significant change in diet, away from one based on a high level of dairy and meat consumption, to one based mainly on grains, fruit, and vegetables, with some eggs, meat and dairy produce. This would free up a lot of tillage land currently used for the production of animal feed. However, this alone would not address the issue of future food security as in the absence of artificial fertilisers agricultural yields will fall, and in the post oil era fuel for tractors may not be available. Most likely, a much higher proportion of tillage will be undertaken by hand.

Foot note

Facts collated by Andy Wilson. Sources: The raw data was be obtained from the Central Statistics Office. Most of the data can be found on the CSO website www.cso.ie

Photo from www.savourkilkenny.com. The Savour Kilkenny Festival takes place 22nd- 25th October this year.

Community Supported AGRICULTURE

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) IS A RELATIVELY NEW SOCIO-ECONOMIC MODEL OF FOOD PRODUCTION, SALES, AND DISTRIBUTION AIMED AT BOTH REDUCING THE FINANCIAL RISKS FOR THE PRODUCERS AND INCREASING THE QUALITY OF FOOD AND THE CARE GIVEN THE LAND. IT IS ALSO A METHOD FOR SMALLSCALE COMMERCIAL FARMERS AND GARDENERS TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL, SMALL SCALE CLOSED MARKET.



REPORT BY **JOHN DOLAN**

The system started in the early 60's in Germany, Switzerland, and Japan as a response to concerns about food quality and some of the negative effects of industrial agriculture. There are now 10's of thousands of CSA's which provide primary food for millions of families worldwide. This year the impetus for growth is even bigger as farmers face soaring fuel and fertiliser costs, uncertainty over WTO negotiations, and nosediving farm incomes. Consumers are worried by soaring prices, the abscence of local food security, food miles, and the ethical issues of importing food supplies that could be produced locally from a world that is rapidly running out of food.

The core design includes developing a consumer group that is willing to fund a whole season's farm or crop budget in order to get quality, locally produced food.

CSA's focus on having

- A transparent, whole season budget for producing a specific acreage of specified crops eg. oats, potatoes, kale.
- A pricing system where producers and consumers agree pricing based on acceptance of the budget.
- A shared risk and reward agreement. Consumers receive a defined share of the crops produced rather than a certain weight at a set price.
- The process protects the farmer from world competition and uncertain input costs, by utilising the premium associated with local or organic production.

Benefits of CSA system to producer

- Guaranteed price of finished product - not exposed to international competition through world market.
- Eggs are not in one basket – their customer is local. Individuals within the group may change from year to year but provided they keep producing what a local group want they will have a market.
- There is less waste because the producer is not dependant on chain store buyers definition of food or global market fashion trends, And the consumer group knows that food is variable ie potatoes come in different sizes and they will accept variations in size.
- Improved cash flow- the producer is paid in installments as expenses are incurred.
- Marketing and distribution is easier and less time consuming than a market stall.

Benefits of CSA system to consumer

- Locally sourced foods with less food miles.
- Food security - they have a food source that is not dependant on the world trade system.
- Encouraging local producers to produce crops that they would not normally take the financial risk to grow.
- Helping build a strong local economy.
- Direct contact and involvement with food supply from 'field to fork'

End Note

John Dolan is a West Cork based permaculture designer, who specialises in developing sustainable food production systems for Irish smallholders, including food forestry, pond and wetland design, and wildlife habitat restoration. He is also the founding member of Bantry CSA (bantrycsa.org).
John can be contacted at dunodolain@gmail.com

Domestic food storage – a lost layer of food security

Just as supermarket "Just in time" global delivery systems have stripped away a layer of food security, The changes in our own domestic storage arrangements over the last 40 years has removed another.

Postwar Irish homes had about 1000sq feet of living space and 2000 sq feet of food and fuel storage, It was common practice to have 6 months or a years supply of food in the home. It was stored in the form of jams and preserves, a root clamp for spuds, carrots, parsnips, a kitchen garden, a few large sacks of flour and oatmeal, or chickens running around the yard.

In modern ireland we live in 3000 square feet houses with storage faciities reduced to shelf space for a weekly shop, an oil tank, and a fridge/freezer that wont survive a week without power. Few houses have enough food for a fortnight.

In a country where food production is seasonal – home or local storage is an essential component of food security.

Concerned? Then prioritise food storage. Find or make, dry, rodent proof space in garage, spare room, under stairs, spare wardrobe for bulk storage. Then stock it with long shelf life items, Tins, rice, pasta,etc

One solution that helped bantry csa members store 140kg of spuds at a time was to use dead chest freezers for outside rodent and frost proof storage. Spuds, parsnips, carrots, swedes, can all be stored sucessfully for a season in boxes of moist sand.

IN THE AUTUMN OF 2009 PADRAIG O'FLANNABHRA, CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL ASSOCIATION, ORGANISED AN ART AND POETRY COMPETITION FOR THE SCHOOLS IN NORTH TIPPERARY. THE THEME WAS CLIMATE CHANGE AND THESE WERE THE WINNING ENTRIES.

WINNER UNDER 10
BLAKE RYAN, *(Age8)*
3rd class
BIRDHILL N.S.
BIRD HILL Co.TIPPERARY.

Climate Change

GLOBAL WARMING IS COMING SOON
THE WORLD WILL BE FLOODING

OUR WORLD IS GOING TO ROT
BECAUSE IT'S GETTING TOO HOT.

THERE'S ONE WAY TO SAVE OUR SOULS
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS COMPLETE OUR GOALS :

TURN OFF THE LIGHT
TURN OFF THE POWER
DO NOT LET OUR WORLD TURN SOUR.

WINNER UNDER 13
NIAMH RYAN, *(Age11)*
6th class
ST. MARY'S CONVENT PRIMARY SCHOOL NENAGH.
Co TIPPERARY.

Global Warming

I DON'T WANT HARMFUL GASES TO STAY IN THE AIR,
TO FILL OUR BODIES AND SPREAD EVERYWHERE.
TO CAUSE GLOBAL WARMING ACROSS THE LAND.
TO STOP THIS MESS GIVE A HELPING HAND.
WE WANT OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN TO SEE THE BEAUTY OF LIFE.
TO HELP POLAR BEARS AND PENGUINS SURVIVE.
TO TELL THE WOLD NOT TO LOOSE FAITH,
LETS DO SOMETHING BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

EVERYDAY THINGS RE.CAUSING GLOBAL WARMING
SPRAYING DEODERANTS AND DRIVING TO SCHOOL IN THE MORNING.
THE EARTHS TOO WARM THE ICE CAPS ARE MELTING ,
OUR COUNTRIES WILL FLOOD THE SUN WILL BE SWELTERING .
BUY SOLAR PANELS EVEN THOUGH THEY 'RE DEAR,
BECAUSE IT WILL SAVE YOU AND OTHERS IN A COUPLE OF YEARS
SO EVERYDAY THEY RISE TO THE AIR IN MASSES AND MASSES.

OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES WONT BE VERY LONG,
IF WE DON'T STOP WHAT WER'E DOING AND DOING WRONG.
DO EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING AND STOP GLOBAL WARMING.
IF THIS HASN'T WARNED YOU WHAT DO YOU CALL A WARNING.
SO PLEASE ,PLEASE ,PLEASE STOP BURNING COAL,
IT WILL SAVE THE EARTH AND THAT'S OUR GOAL!!!!

WINNER UNDER 16
PAUL CULHANE
Cistercian College
Ros Cré,
Co Tipperary.

2040

GRANDAD,DID YOU KNOW
ANIMALS THAT LIVED IN SNOW.
OR BIRDS THAT LIVED IN TALL TREES
AND YELLOW AND BLACK BUMBLEBEES?

IT SAYS HERE THAT LONG AGO
PEOPLE KNEW HOW TO GROW
LOTS OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES
AND DID NOT NEED ANY SUPPLEMENTS.

WHY DID IT CHANGE ,DO YOU KNOW
WHY IT IS NO LONGER SO?
GRANDAD ,PLEASE ANSWER ME.
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO GUILTY?

WINNER UNDER 19
AIDAN McGRATH
Cistercian College
Ros Cré,
Co Tipperary.

Clean Up Your Act

ROSES ARE RED ,
VIOLETS ARE BLUE ,
BUT THEY WONT BE FOR LONG ,
BECAUSE CLIMATE CHANGE IS DUE.

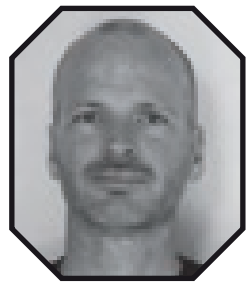
THE WATER IS RISING ,
THE WEATHER IS HOTTER,
PUTTING THE POLAR BEARS
IN A SPOT OF BOTHER.

THIS CAN ALL BE STOPPED,
IF WE CLEAN UP OUR ACT,
USING FUEL EFFICIENT CARS,
NOW THAT IS A FACT!



Nutrient Cycling

OUR FOOD SUPPLY IS DOMINATED BY A LIVING SYSTEM BASED ON A PROCESS OF RESOURCE EXTRACTION, MANIPULATION AND DISPOSAL.



BRUCE DARRELL

REPORT BY **BRUCE DARRELL**, working on Food Security with Feasta

All living systems are based on a process of resource extraction, manipulation and disposal, but there are three characteristics which serve to distinguish our contemporary society:

1. the flow of resources is linear rather than cyclical;

2. the resources are manipulated through mechanical rather than biological processes;

3. the process relies on fossil energy rather than renewable energy.

The systems which dominate our food supply are a prime example of this. Nutrients required for growth are either mined from fossil reservoirs, fixed from the air or extracted from the soil. They are then processed and distributed throughout the world in the form of food, before being dumped as waste in places where they reach toxic concentrations.

We see food all around us, but the constituent parts remain largely invisible. The major building blocks of life; carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, make up the bulk of every morsel of food. The nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, needed in large quantities for plant growth, are also present in our food, as are other essential minerals; calcium, magnesium, sulphur, sodium, etc. The trace elements; boron, zinc, iodine, manganese, to name but a few, are also present in various combinations and concentrations.

If we could see these nutrients we would not be able to ignore and discard them so readily. If goggles existed that allowed us to see the various nutrients within our food systems, we would see the pervasive abundance of some nutrients and the critical shortage of others. We would see that urban areas are, in fact, massive collectors; huge funnels through which nutrients flow from a diversity of fields, mines and factories across the world, before being concentrated and dumped into the sea or landfill.

The volume that flows through our cities, suburbs, towns and rural communities is staggering. It is usually seen as waste, often with a cost for disposal, and significant amounts of energy, facilities and transport are used to ship it 'away'. Rarely do these nutrients end up back on the fields from which they were extracted by the plants.

This situation must change, for the sake of global and local food security, as well as for the viability of our ecosystems.

The best place to start is by capturing as much of this abundant resource-flow as we can, both food 'wastes' and sewage, using localised biological processes such as composting, worm farming and anaerobic digestion. We should then include a lot of the paper and cardboard currently shipped away and mechanically recycled as fibre, or burned as energy. This source of carbon is more valuable as part of the biological nutrient cycling process.

Capturing this resource-flow is part of a Transition Strategy to build fertility and improve the structure of sterile and depleted soils, in order to develop abundant and secure food systems in the places close to where we live.

As more food is produced and consumed locally, the linear flow of nutrients through our communities will be replaced by more sustainable cyclical systems. If carefully managed, soil fertility can be increased, and the balance of nutrients improved, moving towards the 'nirvana' that is soil productivity. Conversely, without nutrient cycling, soil and ecosystem degradation will continue to occur.




Mining phosphate


Spreading fertiliser


Flush away


Signs of eutrophication in an Irish lake

Phosphates are essential for LIFE

REPORT BY **CAROLINE LEWES**, from Friends of the Irish Environment. (FIE)

Early agriculture relied on natural levels of soil phosphorous plus the application of organic matter including animal and human excreta to grow crops. In the mid to late19th century the use of organic wastes was replaced by mined phosphorous sourced from Guano (bird droppings accumulated over a millennia) and phosphate rich rocks. The Guano was gone by the end of the 19th Century but phosphate rock was considered to be an unlimited resource and the mineral fertiliser industry grew rapidly.

Coincidentally, as the need for the organic fertilisers was reduced the flush toilet was introduced to the towns so our excreta now went into water bodies instead of being returned to the soil.

From the mid-20th century chemical phosphate fertilisers formed a key role in global food production. Agricultural output soared preventing millions from starvation and reducing malnutrition despite rapid population growth. Food just could not be produced at today's levels without it. Each year over 30 million tonnes of phosphate rock and fertilizers are processed and transported across the globe.

> Ireland has no indigenous phosphate resource and yet we flush it away - polluting waters resulting in eutrophication and algal blooms

And 93% of global reserves are in the control of just twelve countries.

The top four producers (>70%) are the USA; China; Morocco and Western Sahara, and the Russian Federation. America's domestic reserves will be gone in 25 years .

China has the largest reported reserves but in 2008 imposed a 135% export tariff on phosphate preventing any exports and securing domestic supply. Moroccan and Western Saharan reserves represent over a third of the world's supply. America are already importing fertilisers from Morocco/Western Sahara to feed their fertiliser factories, as does western Europe.

Most of the remaining global supplies are in eight countries Tunisia, Jordan, Brazil, Israel, South Africa , Syrian Arab Republic, Senegal and Togo.

The list does not fill one with optimism in relation to security of supplies, and ironically, the African continent is simultaneously the world's largest exporter of phosphate rock and the continent with the largest food shortage.

Phosphate countries are likely to undergo the same political attention as the fossil fuel rich countries. But unlike energy there is no alternative to phosphates –and we cannot feed humanity without it.

Bio fuels, increasing population and increased meat and dairy consumption are all increasing global demand for phosphates set to increase by 3-4% per year. Forecasts indicate that supply will peak by 2030 and economically viable resources will be depleted by 2050 -2100.

Ireland has no indigenous phosphate resource and relies on imports. Although phosphates in animal manures and crop residues are normally returned to the soil the phosphates in food are eaten by us. What goes in must come out and we flush it away polluting waters resulting in eutrophication and algal blooms. Crazy really – this is a vital resource not a waste product. And it don't come cheap - during 2007–2008 phosphate rock and fertilizer prices increased by 700% in a 14-month period.

In terrestrial ecosystems phosphates are recycled tightly – we need to mimic this. Countries must and are looking at innovative ways to recycle nutrients. In Sweden two municipalities have mandated that all new toilets must divert urine into a storage tank. Local farmers then collect the urine approximately once a year for use as liquid fertilizer. Simple!

If we could get the nasties out of the sewage it would be suitable for spreading on land. Sanitation infrastructure should avoid mixing domestic wastes and industrial wastewaters as the latter may contain toxic persistent wastes.

Scientists want this on the agenda now – before it is too late for the millions of people that will starve if we don't manage this resource and the global population in a sustainable way.

How REFRIGERATION and the CAR destroyed local food

THE 1950S IS NOT AN ERA TO HARKEN BACK TO BUT UP TO THAT DATE IRELAND RETAINED AN IMPORTANT AND POSITIVE ASPECT: A QUALITY LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM.

REPORT BY **IAN LUMLEY**
An Taisce's Heritage Officer



IAN LUMLEY

Prior to the '50's fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, milk, eggs and produce for urban areas was produced and supplied by the surrounding hinterland. From the creamery network of rural Ireland to the small-scale bakeries across the country, most food processing including milk distribution was local, with the use of horse-drawn transport prevailing even into the 1960s. Household ownership of a car and 'fridge was an exception and most shopping was done within walkable distances, complemented with home deliveries, often using noiseless and very efficient electric vans.

Far from being a story of a nostalgic past, this is where food production and distribution must go again. Both nationally and globally, the food production and distribution system is being increasingly stretched. There is

* accelerated dependency on high level nitrate fertilizers,
* increasing energy consumption and emissions through transportation by sea, air and road,
* high energy input into food production and refrigeration
* and the generation of unsustainable use and urban sprawl through urban fringe retailing.

SPRAWL AND MODERN SHOPPING

Car based sprawl was first identified as a major problem in the US in the 1950s. Development in Ireland in the 1960s adopted the car based, urban fringe model so that by the 1980s, Irish urban centres, including Dublin, were suffering serious decline with US-type, car-based development with unlimited free carparking on the fringes. In 2005 one of the leading US commentators on land use, transportation and planning Donald C Shoup published the seminal work, The High Cost of Free Parking. This set out the fundamental argument that the accommodation of urban fringe development with free carparking to shopping malls has accelerated urban centre decline and created hugely inefficient faceless, placeless, urban fringe areas dominated by surface carparking unused for much of the time. The real price has not been costed. The 'benefits' of free parking are substantially outweighed by the destruction of the public realm, social cohesion, the maintenance of sustainable communities, pollution and emissions.

In the late 1980s, the introduction of urban renewal tax reliefs had some impact in increasing the ratio of retail activity in Irish urban centres, versus, out of town centres. However, this was based on a fatal development model of replicating the out of town shopping centre in the urban centre area. The modal involves a combination of major supermarket, large department store & mixture of chain stores and substantial multi storey carparking. It is the scale and adverse impact of inserting such developments with large multi storey carparks in locations within the medieval walled areas of Waterford, Clonmel and Kilkenny or the Georgian areas of Cork and Limerick that has led to the well documented planning difficulties for retail developments in historic Irish urban centres

While DOEHLG introduced Retail Planning Guidelines, revised in 1999, these have failed entirely to prevent urban sprawl retail. The



Urban fringe development with free parking has accelerated urban centre decline



Market Cross Shopping Centre Kilkenny is a good example of new retail outlets developed within the town centre..

city centres of Limerick and Waterford - and to a lesser degree, other urban centres – are now suffering serious functional decline, while the legacy of the Irish boom has made it an international worst case exhibitor of car-based and car-dependent, urban sprawl. In Limerick, both Clare and Limerick county councils have, in the pursuit of rates revenue, accommodated car-based urban fringe development which has accelerated urban decline. Kilkenny and Waterford county councils have similarly undermined Waterford city. This trend has been further fuelled by the development of around 15,000 one-off houses built per annum over the last decade and the placing of commuter development in villages around the major urban areas.



A DIFFERENT VISION

As in so much else to do with regulation in Ireland, Irish spatial, landuse and retail policy must be deemed to have failed. While there is a growing local food and local market movement in Ireland, it remains only a small fraction of food supply and retail spend. The Department of Transport Smarter Travel policy document published in February, 2009, recognises this and sets out clear provision for bringing about an end of out of town retail development. This has been consistently argued by An Taisce in appeals to An Bord Pleanala, resulting in significant overturns of local authority decisions, particularly in Annacotty, outside Limerick, in 2009.

Smarter Travel sets out an important principle, which needs urgent national adoption. This is the implementation of a charge or levy on all parking spaces, whether urban centre or urban fringe. At present, urban centre areas with carparking charges suffer serious disadvantage over urban fringe areas with free parking. The revenue from such a parking charge would be invested in public transport provision and cycling enhancement, with the real objective of the charge being to significantly reduce the level of carparking spaces needed in all areas.

Ireland, with its strong village network and rural hinterlands, is in a unique position to become a world leader in restoring local food production and the symbiotic relationship between an urban area and its surrounding hinterland which have produced the civilizations of the past. The stretching of production and distribution networks globally , externalizing the cost and impact across the world and into the future, is no longer tenable.

Many Irish towns containing historic market places like the wide main street of Thurles or the photogenic Rathdrum in County Wicklw are all too often occupied by surface carparking spaces. The revival of local food protection networks should make the production and distribution of local food once again our daily food staple, and not just a Saturday Irish Times supplement niche activity.

An Taisce protects Ireland's oldest shopping arcade

FOLLOWING APPEAL BY THE CORK CITY ASSOCIATION OF AN TAISCE, AN BORD PLENALA HAVE REFUSED PERMISSION FOR WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE VIRTUAL DESTRUCTION OF THE 1926 WINTHROP ARCADE IN CORK.

REPORT BY **KEVIN HURLEY**,
An Taisce Corcaigh

A planning application lodged on the 1st May 2009 with Cork City Council by Tober Investment Company sought permission for the re-ordering of the Winthrop Arcade. This in effect sought sanction for the destruction of this unique building in Cork City to replace it with two stand alone retail units.

This is the oldest surviving shopping arcade in Ireland. It reflects the metropolitan sophistication of Cork in the period of recovery after the War of Independence and Civil War. The arcade was built in 1926 but it has an air of antiquity and was built in a mock Tudor style similar to the exterior of Beamish & Crawford which itself dates from circa 1890 .

Cork City Council failed to schedule it as a Protected Structure in their Development Plan but in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) survey of Cork City the building is recorded as 'of regional significance" (Record Number 20514187).

The building is described as a "little altered early twentieth-century shopping arcade retaining its distinctive timbered façade and arcaded entrance with shop unit having terrazzo dado wall and curved plate glass façade. Internally, original features such as bronze frame display windows, glazed timber doors and ornate clock survive. Its site, as part of group of historically important buildings on Oliver Plunkett Street and the fact that it remains in its original use adds to its significance".

The planning application yielded two submissions, one from An Taisce Corcaigh and another from some concerned citizens. In the submission to the City Council An Taisce Corcaigh commented as follows:

"The building is unique in the city and the loss of the fixtures and fittings would be tragic and avoidable. What is required here is some imagination whereby the existing building is retained as is and uses compatible with its scale devised with some craft-type industry in conjunction with the Craft Council where the product is show-cased in the existing units. The idea could be targeted at our tourist trade. Arcades work in other locations such as Dublin and London and given the small scale here there should be no reason why, with a little imagination that such an enterprise could not flourish here".

Despite the concerns Cork City Council granted permission to Tober Investment Company for the destruction of this unique building. The decision created much comment at the time but only An Taisce appealed the decision to the appeal board.

An Taisce Corcaigh very much welcomes An Bord Pleanála's decision to refuse permission for the development. In an extensive report the inspector stated:

Having regard to the nature and extent of the alterations proposed, and in particular the proposed complete removal of the arcade, and display areas /shop fronts forming the same, it is considered that the proposed development would result in irrevocable loss of the function and use of Winthrop Arcade, which though not included in the Record of Protected Structures is highlighted on the NIAH and recommended for inclusion in the same. The proposed development would therefore seriously injure the built and architectural heritage of the area, and be contrary to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.









'Transition' communities are characterised by their positivity and creativity, the process is deliberately designed to be non-threatening and engaging. Its ability to bring all sorts of people and groups together with a common purpose is its strength. Are you in transition yet?

Making the transition from Vulnerability to Resilience

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS AND WORKING WITH THEM ON PROJECTS OF COMMON INTEREST IS WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF THE TRANSITION TOWNS MOVEMENT.

REPORT BY **DAVIE PHILIP**



DAVIE PHILIP

The Transition Town model helps communities come together to develop the capability to provide most of their essential needs - food, energy, water and raw materials - from a number of local sources. As more and more cities, islands, and villages as well as towns sign up to the process they are now more commonly known as Transition initiatives. Around the world thousands of communities have adopted the process, and have set out to radically reduce their carbon emissions while at the same time building their ability to thrive in a future that is very uncertain.

Transition initiatives begin by raising awareness and bringing people together in a way that engages the head, heart, and hands. Instead of waiting for someone else, or some other agency, to do something about the emergency we face. The communities embarking on the transition process are attempting to act for themselves, knowing that if they don't do something no one will. Actions include starting community gardens and allotments, creating community supported agriculture systems, localising energy production, starting car clubs, strengthening the local economy and the future proofing of houses and public buildings. Some communities have even introduced local currencies to keep money circulating in their local area. All of these initiatives build community and offer the potential of an extraordinary transformation in our economic and social systems. The principles and practices of Transition are being built up over time as communities experiment how best to build local resilience and reduce carbon emissions.

The building of local resilience will help us weather the storms that are fast approaching. Resilience can be understood as the flip-side of vulnerability and is the ability of a system to hold together and function in the face of disruption and shock. This means having the capacity to deal with adversity and the ability to find new ways of doing things when current approaches no longer serve us. Because the possibility of abrupt breakdown in our vital social, economic and environmental systems is rising fast we need to find ways to accelerate the building the resilience of our local communities.

Because the possibility of abrupt breakdown in our vital social, economic and environmental systems is rising fast we need to find ways to accelerate the building the resilience of our local communities.

Transition Ireland and Northern Ireland (TIN) has been established as a national network hub for the island and aims to inspire, inform, support, network and train communities as they consider implementing Transition Initiative in their local area. A social networking site for Irish Transition initiatives has been online for less than 6 months and already has almost 500 members, a very active national events calendar, blog posts, discussion forums and a growing library of films and pictures. www.transitiontownsireland.ning.com

'Transition' communities are characterised by their positivity and creativity, the process is deliberately designed to be non-threatening and engaging. Its ability to bring all sorts of people and groups together with a common purpose is its strength. Are you in transition yet?

End note

Davie Philip is currently the Irish co-ordinator for the Transition Ireland and Northern Ireland network. He works at Cultivate and was a founding member of both FEASTA: the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability and Sustainable Projects Ireland LTD the company behind the Cloughjordan Ecovillage in North Tipperary where he now lives. davie@cultivate.ie

Original Irish Placenames and their Importance to our Heritage

REPORT BY ROSSA Ó SNODAIGH

TABLE QUIZ

Q: What have a forest and a church got in common?
Ans: They are both represented by the misnomer Kill on road signs all over Éire.
Coill: is Gaeilge for forest.
Cill: denotes a church or cemetary but literally translates to cell.

When the passion to spread the christian message took hold in Éire, monks from the 5th century onwards would choose an area to build small stone cells in which to pray and to spread wisdom and learning. Bríd was one such female monk, now a patron saint of Éire, who went from building praying cells to establishing monastaries all around the country. These were each named Cill Bríde (Bridgit's Cell), and the villages that grew around them adopted this name too.



ROSSA Ó SNODAIGH

Q: What have a late summer upland pasture, a river mouth, a pass and a town got in common?
Ans: They have all been misrepresented as Bally on road signs around the country.
Buaileadh: is the 'upland pasture' to where cows were brought in late summer.
Béal: translates as 'mouth' and generally refers to a river mouth.
Bealach: is simply a 'way' but used to describe a road or a pass
Baile: means 'homestead' and can be found on 6000 placenames in Éire.

If such a place as 'the mouth of the way to the homestead on the upland pasture" existed, it could be signposted as Bally Bally Bally Bally.

LOVELY LIATROIM

Having moved to Liatroim in recent years I have become keenly interested in the meaning and history related to the local place names: places like Droim Dhá Ethiar (ridge of the two air demons) and Gleann Éad (the jealous glen) really fire the imagination. I have bought two fantastic books [see below] that serve as bibles as I travel the highways and byways en-route to concerts nationwide.

Sometimes a place like Lovers Lane has no romantic connotations in the original > Lána na Lobhar actually translates to the leper's lane.

Another such place name is the town of Mountmellick which is situated in the predominantly flatlands of Laois. You would easily be forgiven if you thought that some great mountain existed nearby. But a closer study of the original name Móinteach Mílic meaning the bog of the marsh, explains the intensity of local industry - peat production (raised bog destruction).

ITALY V ROME

I am hugely enriched by these new understandings, but I have become increasingly dismayed by the continuing demotion of the original names on Irish road signs to the lower case italic script while meaningless phonetic tags are promoted to Roman Capitals. This demotion not only means that no one but the eagle-eyed can read them but also that no care is taken to ensure that they are correctly spelt. So prevalent are misspellings that the Coimisinéir Teanga (Irish language commissioner) has printed and issued thousands of complaint forms for the caring public to report misspellings so their office can engage the NRA or the various councils to have them corrected.

MISPRONOUNCIATIONS

While much thought went into writing the phonetic versions, it was not considered that those who would try to pronounce them would get it so wrong.

Take for instance Sligo, which is commonly pronounced sly-goe, yet Sligeach when corectly pronounced is said thus - shlih-gock and means shelly place

The 'agh' in Ardagh and Bronagh are commonly mispronounced with an 'ah'. 'All 'agh' sounds should have been pronounced 'ock' '- Ardach awrdock (high field) and Brónach broenock (place of the quern).

But what were they thinking when they used 'ough' to get us to say Loch lough and Uachtar Ard oughterard. Were they just being reckless? 'Ough' has 9 other pronounciations in the English language:

"A rough,dough-faced, thoughful ploughman emerged from the slough to walk through the streets of scarborough, coughing and hic-coughing".

Sometimes no consideration what so ever was given to the original sound. Take the sad case of the tipperary towns Uíbh Eoghain eve owen Eoins' (place) and Uíbh Fhathaidh eve a-hee (giants' (place) which were mecilessly rendered as Iffa and Offa.

So lost in daily conversation are the correct pronunciations that I have began to use them instead of the phonetic ones. This simple act preserves their sound for that moment and to my delight I've noticed that more and more people are beginning to do likewise.

SENSE OF PLACE AND OVERDEVELOPMENT.

I have often thought that phonetic placenames have divorced people from their landscapes. If the place name has no cultural or historic value then the place itself has no value other than what it can be sold for. This may be the case with regard to recent overdevelopment in unsuitable areas. Take for instance the flooding of recently developed sites in Carrick On Shannon. The original name alone would have alerted anyone in An Bord Pleanála to its unsuitability.

Cora Droma Rúisc – the weir of the marshy ridge.
Freudian Subtexts.

Clement Freud, grandson of the great psychologist, wrote an article in The Observer in the 1980ies sharing his bemusement at the continuous orders to kill on Irish road signs. He found particular merriment when he considered the Freudian subtext of a town called Kill Cock.

It does make me squirm when cocky Englishmen make fun of the phonetic townland names. I remember one such friend taking a swipe at Tubbercurry Tobair an Choire (well of the cauldron)

"You wot? You gorra town called Tub o' Curry', you gorra be kiddin'! Wots that about then? did you 'ave a bunch Indians setting up a mini Bradford there or somefing?"

While I kin of agreed I wanted to say 'well if it wasn't for …' but



then I'd have to conclude with 'well we're in control now, so we're the bigger eejits for continuing the trend'.

I do appreciate that much mirth may be gained from anglicised words and phrases. A favourite book of mine is 'The Meaning of Liff' by Douglas Adams is a dictionary made by attaching 'words without meanings (from signposts) to meanings without words. For example - Kerry -The small twist of skin that separates each sausage on a string.

I too have had a great laugh asking people directions to the Kill, but I really don't think the establishment should continue to abandon the original ones for the sake of a joke?

The OSI (Ordinance Survey of Ireland) have not printed an Irish language map since 1971, because apparently 'no one wants them'. Now we have Google Maps and the looming postal codes to bury them even deeper away from sight. Pride of place has many positive societal benefits and I believe it starts with learning about ones immediate environment. It is my belief that it is time to give the original placenames pride of place in our daily speech, in our letters, submissions and on all application forms, but most importantly on the maps and on our road signs.

Foonote

Rossa Ó Snodaigh is a founder member of the Irish music band Kíla . Note that, it is not O'Snodaigh (O' stands for 'Of' - 5 of clock etc, but Ó means descendant or grandson. 'Ní' (short for 'Iníon Uí' - descendant daughter) is the feminine equivelant.

Useful Web sites

The Ombudsman dealing with Irish language rights infringements by Government bodies can be accessed at www.coimisineir.ie

Rialtas na hÉireann's online place name database and translator is www.logainm.ie

www.logainm.ie/mapz Is currently being developed and has the addition of having a google map type finder.

A downloadable spell and grammar checker is at www.cruinneog.com

Smart Ireland Versus Stupid Ireland

A BATTLE IS RAGING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ISLAND. OFFICIALLY, POST BOOM IRELAND IS NOW TO BE A 'SMART' SOCIETY AND ECONOMY. THE INITIATIVE EMERGING FROM GOVERNMENT TO CONFRONT UNEMPLOYMENT IS THE 2008 'IRELAND'S SMART ECONOMY BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.' WHETHER IN POLITICAL OR BUSINESS CIRCLES, 'SMART' IS VERY MUCH THE NEW BUZZWORD.



IAN LUMLEY

REPORT BY **IAN LUMLEY**
An Taisce's Heritage Officer

All of this might imply that the lessons from the Irish boom and crash had been learned and that the building of a society and economy on debt and unsustainable increase in resource consumption was no longer tenable. The reality is that the opposite is the case. The debt mountain that is NAMA can only be unraveled with a new property boom. The political and business establishment and their economic and media cheerleaders are overwhelmingly wedded to restoring a failed development model as the answer to the current debt and unemployment challenges.

Although the number of planning applications is dramatically down, a reluctance by local councils to refuse anything means that some of the worst ever development is now getting permission. An Bord Pleanala is continuing to rubber stamp motorway and fossil fuel energy projects that are going to accelerate the debt mountain and Greenhouse gas emission burden for the next generation.

Ireland faces enormous challenges in meeting EU legal standards of water quality and waste water treatment which are not being grappled with. As the new year snow episode showed, treated water supply in urban areas is at critical capacity.

The delusion that increasing 'competitiveness' to promote export-led growth will provide a magic solution is Utopian. This does not address an increasingly populated and resource-stretched world facing the converging crises of climate change, water supply and food production capacity combined with uncertainty over the price and supply of oil and gas as peak production is reached. Utopians believe that these problems will be solved by technology and measures such as trading of Greenhouse gas emissions.

During the boom, Ireland liked to present itself as a world leader, when the reality has proved to be world leadership in unsustainability; in per capita greenhouse gas emissions; per capita waste generation and the trashing of one of the world's most beautiful landscapes with car-based urban sprawl.

Now that the buzzword for the future is being 'smart', the Irish political public service and business world has adopted a new language where everything proposed is described as 'smart' or 'smarter'.

The Department of Transport's new 2009 policy is entitled, Smarter Travel and sets out targets to cap road vehicle use at current levels and dramatically reduce car-borne commuting levels. In reality, the department, through the National Roads Authority is promoting the opposite through the development of hundreds of kilometres of additional motorway, including an 'Atlantic corridor' down through the west and across the south combined with massive interlinking motorways between the main urban centres. All of these new non-tolled roads are to be funded by PPPs (Public Private Partnerships), i.e. long term debt packages to shackle the next generation.

IRELAND'S STAR "SMART DEVELOPMENT" THE CARTON "SMART PARK"

Award for the stupidest 'smart' development goes to Meath County Council, the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and the owners of Carton near Maynooth,. Carton straddling the Meath and Kildare borders is the former Seat of the Fitzgerald Dukes of Leinster and is one of Ireland's premier historic demenses - already heavily damaged by hotel, housing and two 18 hole golf course developments .

There are already thousands of acres of zoned land in the Great Dublin Area for industrial/businesspark/technology development. Anybody looking at progress on the Digital Hub around James' St will see that it has been a damp squib so far. The lack of site or zoned land availability is not a constraint to the next generation of business and technology development. Indeed, the opposite is the case, since it is the overzoning of land and

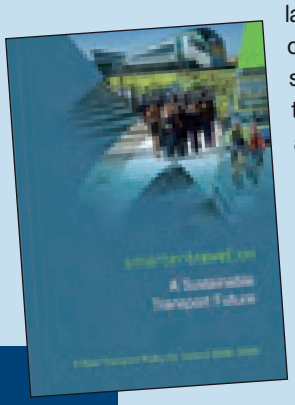


land speculation that created so much of the banking crisis and NAMA nightmare.

However, oblivious to these facts, the Carton estate owners, Meath County Council and NUI Maynooth all worked to rezone the amenity woodlands in the Co Meath portion of the Carton Estate. For the landowners this was a speculative development following on from the golf course and housing development which has already damaged Ireland's premier historic country house demesne. For Meath County Council zoning land would lead to commercial rates benefit; while for the NUI Maynooth, the project was enthusiastically supported, maybe to enhance the university's 'commercialisation of research activities.'

One of the most absurd features of the Irish planning system is that a local council can zone land or change its Development Plan in breach of either national policy or relevant regional planning guidelines. All it needs to do is go through an exercise to 'have regard' to the relevant guidelines before ignoring them. Predictably, Meath County Council zoned the Carton woodlands for business park and residential use at the developers' behest and then rubber-stamped a subsequent planning application. The other loony feature of the Irish planning system, is that the only way a concerned individual or other party can ensure that a local council complies with both its own Development Plan and national policy, is to appeal the decision to An Bord Pleanala which, of course, costs money. In this case, An Bord Pleanala predictably flung out the application in one of the strongest refusals it has ever issued for anything. Not only did An Bord Pleanala say that the scheme breached national and regional guidelines as well as Meath County Council's own Development Plan and having major heritage and ecological damage, the Board also in what is a landmark decision, stated that the rezoning of the site in the first instances, was inappropriate and constituted a breach of national policy. Section 11.3.4 of the inspectors report calculated that ,disregarding the residential units, only 26% of the floor area of the overall development was space associated with the NUIM

What then, has been the aftermath of the decision? Enter the Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise Trade and Employment . It might be expected that a committee of this title would be at the forefront in promoting the 'smart' economy and would be concerned as to how a State funded university became involved in such an inappropriate and non smart development. In January, 2010, under Chairmanship of Labour TD, Willy Penrose, sixteen members of the Oireachtas Committee met in Carton at the behest of the developer. At the forefront were Meath Fine Gael TDs, Shane McEnte and Damien English, who recommended the applicants to reapply. This had the unanimous support of the other Committee members, thereby subverting the function of a quasi judicial-making body, An Bord Pleanala, set up by the Oireachtas, itself.



LANDMARK DECISION OUTSIDE DUNMORE EAST CO WATERFORD

Since the publication of the significant Department of Transport Smarter Travel policy in Feb 2009, An Taisce has sought to have its provisions addressed in planning decisions by local councils and An Bord Pleanala.

A landmark decision from An Bord Pleanala 23 Feb 2010, sets a marker for all future planning decisions. In refusing an application for a large housing scheme outside Dunmore East in Co Waterford the Board concurred with the grounds of appeal set out by An Taisce.

Essentially, it denies permission because the proposed homes were not linked to locally-based employment and the residents would be driving to work in Waterford city, contrary to Smarter Travel policy This is a breakthrough decision, being the first to reference the 2009 Smarter Travel policy which states that:

"Work-related commuting by car will be reduced from a current modal share of 65% to 45%, which will mean that between 500,000 and 600,000 commuters will be encouraged to take means of transport other than car driver (of these 200,000 would be existing car drivers)".

Translated into annual figures, this means 50,000 fewer car commutes to work every year.





Local Services ECOSYSTEMS?

NORMALLY LOCAL 'SERVICES' MEAN SCHOOLS, HEALTHCARE, ROADS, PARKS, AND SO ON. WHAT ABOUT ECOSYSTEM SERVICES?

REPORT BY **ANJA MURRAY**
An Taisce's Heritage Officer



ANJA MURRAY

The term Ecosystem services is gathering momentum, especially since the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment published its reports in 2005 and more recently the launch of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Study). An ecosystem is a complex and dynamic combination of plants, animals, fungi, micro-organisms, all coexisting and interdependent, influencing their environment by their interaction with it. Ecosystem services are the wide ranging benefits of ecosystems, also called 'goods and services'. Goods include timber, food, fish, water, and fuel, while services include, for example, prevention of soil erosion, regulation of climate, natural protection from floods and storms, maintenance and regeneration of habitats and insect pest control.

DO BOGS PROVIDE A SERVICE?

Bogs cover 15% of Irelands land area, and provide a range of ecosystems services, including flood control and carbon storage. In terms of climate change mitigation, they store 1.2 billion tonnes of Carbon (equivalent to 4.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide), and sequester 60,000 – 140,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. With climate change in mind, peatlands must be conserved mainly in order to avoid releasing the fossil carbon into the atmosphere. Domestic peat extraction has emissions of 2.5 tonnes of Carbon per hectare per year, while industrial peat extraction has emissions of 3 tonnes per year. Additional losses occur upon burning the peat. Bord na Mona harvests 4 million tonnes of milled peat per year for energy, and Ireland's new peat fired power plant uses 1 million tonnes of peat annually. Consequently Ireland has seen a decline of more than 35% in area of active raised bog between 1995 -2005 alone.

Many countries are actively re-wetting peatlands for the explicit intention of reducing carbon emissions. 'Paludiculture' is agriculture on wet and rewetted peatlands, which makes use of harvested 'brown deserts' whilst halting emissions or even restoring the carbon absorption services of peatlands. A less favourable scheme being considered in Ireland is the production of bio-fuels on harvested peatlands; this process creates 3 – 9 times more carbon dioxide than coal. Existing bogs which are capable of restoration to active peat formation are legally protected under the Habitats Directive. In spite of the terms of the Directive Ireland has placed a derogation on turf extraction on protected blanket bogs, in addition to continued attempts by Local Authorities and the Department of the Environment to open up new midland raised bogs for extraction for horticultural peat moss. There are significant social and economic costs associated with biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, including that of bogland, that until recently have been largely disregarded.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN AT A LOCAL LEVEL?

Flooding is very much a local issue, and as we now know, a very serious issue indeed. To understand flooding, we must look at the whole catchment, including its wetlands. The sphagnum mosses that make up peat bogs absorb huge amounts of water from rainfall. This water is re-released slowly in to the rivers and streams, thus reducing flood peak and hence reducing the severity of flooding downstream. The conservation and creation of wetlands, including bogs, is increasingly regarded as one of the most effective protective measures against flooding. It is also one of the most cost effective approaches to preventing and managing flooding in flood prone catchments.

Economic services that ecosystems provide for local areas

Does your area draw in anglers from outside the area? Having a healthy population of salmon and trout in local rivers depends much on the condition of the ecosystem. Clean and well oxygenated water with silt free spawning grounds, the right balance

of shade and sun, and a plentiful supply of invertebrates for the salmon and trout to feed on are among the requirements of a healthy fish population. It is a much overlooked function of wetlands to provide the invertebrate food for the fish, and to filter out sediment from waters that feed the streams and spawning grounds. Hence it is all of these elements, and more, that will provide us with the salmon and trout that draw in the interest. I worked on a research project over a decade ago with the University of Ulster where we spent a week interviewing anglers on the Moy system in Mayo, most of whom were from outside the area. Most of them stayed in local B&Bs, ate and drank locally, and kept the local tackle shops in good standing. Each salmon was thus given a £2000 price tag in terms of direct economic benefits to the local economy. This is another example of an ecosystem service that ticks several boxes – recreational, provisioning, economic, and cultural (with Salmon having such a major place in Irelands heritage and folklore). Goods and services provided by ecosystems are vital to sustaining well-being, and to future economic and social development.

THE GROWING COSTS OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION

The Millenium Ecosystems Assessment initiative was launched by the UN in 2000 to evaluate different aspects of ecosystem health and the delivery of ecosystems goods and services across the globe. The report published in 2005 and found that two thirds of the Earth's ecosystem services are in decline or threatened. One key recommendation made by the MA was to halt and reverse the decline in 15 of the 24 ecosystem services it considered.

In economic terms, the annual loss of ecosystem services is estimated equivalent to 50 billion euro and by 2050 the cumulated welfare losses were estimated equivalent to 7% of GDP (CBD). A key purpose of TEEB study is to draw attention to the growing costs of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and promote a better understanding of the true economic value of ecosystem services and to offer economic tools that take proper account of this value.

"Biodiversity is life – beautiful, precious and fragile. But is also the basis of our economic and social well- being. This is not widely enough recognised and valued. As a result, it is in serious decline." (EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, 2009)

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ADDRESS THE IMBALANCE?

Much work in needed to address this issue. Increased recognition and awareness of the value of ecosystems among the general public, local stakeholders and decision makers at all levels is vital. Protected areas are also a big part of the solution, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). These areas protect a sample of important ecosystems, and other benefits include flood protection, water purification, pollination, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and recreational amenity.

Wider protection and management of ecosystems is enshrined in policy such as the Water Framework Directive, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, The European Biodiversity Action Plans and National Biodiversity Plan; and their full application at a local level, including incorporation in to County Development Plans, Local Area Plans, and Water Framework Directive River Basin District Management Plans. Of course without a thorough understanding of these regulations, and why they are needed, by those meant to implement them (including local representatives, county managers, engineers, planners, and the licensing and enforcement systems), we will continue to achieve little. A paradigm shift in awareness and attitudes to ecosystems is needed to halt the trends identified in The Millennium Ecosystems Assessment. Awareness is also growing of the fundamental need to decouple economic growth from the use of resources and environmental degradation, even to challenge the assumption that 'growth' is necessary. While James Lovelock considers this too big a challenge for the capacity of human collective action, many of us consider it an imminent evolution.



Bogs provide a range of ecosystem services but extraction for horticulture and burning have resulted in a decline of more than 35% in the area of active raised bog in the decade before 2005. Despite the terms of the Habitat Directive this decline continues. This photo shows tractors and trailers used in the extraction of peat in Westmeath. Photograph by James Nix (IEN)

LOOK OUT FOR CONSULTATION ON THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY PLAN

This is currently being drafted by the Department of the Environment. This Plan sets out the actions that Ireland needs to take to halt the loss of biodiversity and restore ecosystems services, including actions and commitments from sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and marine, energy, and education . The last plan was published in 2000 to cover a 6 year period, but has not been given priority by government hence the 3 year delay. It will be advertised in the National Media for consultation – have your views heard and feed in to the consultation.

WHAT IS AN TAISCE DOING TO PROTECT IRELAND'S ECOSYSTEMS?

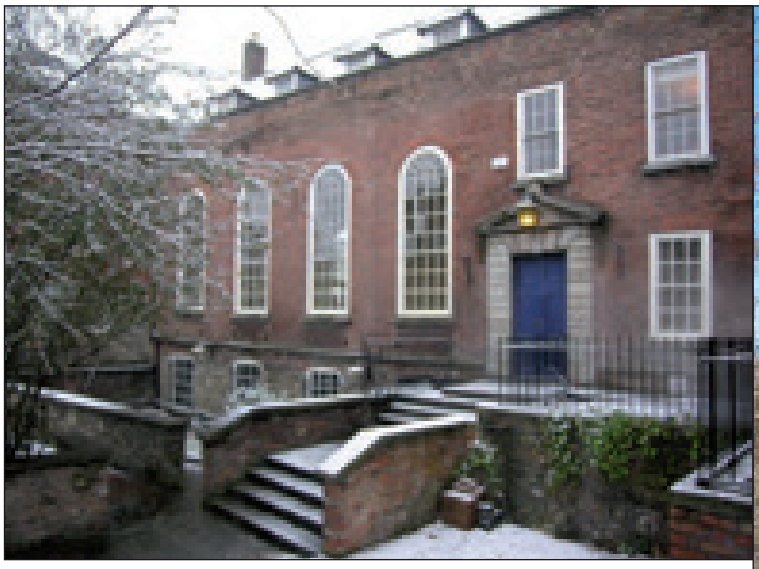
We are currently developing an illustrated booklet about Biodiversity and ecosystems Services to mark international Year of Biodiversity (2010)

We will be running an ecosystems Seminar in October for those who represent environmental interests on a range of boards and Committees.

We are embarking on a research project around the role of wetlands in flood management in Ireland, with funding from the Community Foundation for Ireland.

We monitor and comment on thousands of proposed waste licences (forestry, aquaculture and waste) and planning proposals each year, always with environmental and ecosystem integrity at the core of the submission.

We feed into dozens of different areas of poilicy development in order to foster more enlightened policies for all sectors, toward the protection of the environment, ecosystems and effectively to protect our natural capital for ongoing service provision.





The Local Value of An Taisce Properties

A KEY COMPONENT OF AN TAISCES OBJECTIVES IS TO SUPPORT THE CONSERVATION, PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF HERITAGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

REPORT BY **DAVID OWEN**
Board of Management Properties Division

Like all National Trusts, An Taisce owns or manages heritage properties on behalf of the nation. In addition to protecting the heritage this also serves to increase heritage understanding and awareness and to promote sustainable development.

Today An Taisce holds sixteen properties, each with its own claim to distinction, which collectively provide practical evidence of the positive contribution being made by An Taisce in conserving Ireland's heritage (see website). Some 10,500 acres and 45 historic structures in 10 counties nationwide are also open to the general public.



DAVID OWEN

Each property celebrates a distinctive spirit of place. Each too must nurture a web of human links – with those who loved it in the past or will do in the future, with neighbours and local communities, and with visitors for whom this special spot can become an important part of their lives. So, though the heritage we all share is immense, it is also personal and local.

The demands of conservation and public access can conflict, but shouldn't. Thinking for the long term – the sustainability of what we offer – it may appear that we have put a higher priority on caring for 'things' than people. To conserve things for future generations, we need to explain this better; but we also need to 'loosen up' our protectiveness where we can. We are now developing exciting new ways to present our properties – by firing the imaginations of the widest possible range of people without compromising our duty of conservation.

Whilst this commitment to heritage requires a wide array of skills, the benefits to An Taisce and the local communities in which they are located are immeasurable. Not only are we improving our own skills base all the time, but we are also able to play a part in creating new skills in local communities.

Our properties can provide and promote representation at both a local and national level , thus supporting a broad constituency by acting as an expression of civic engagement – through membership, donation or volunteering.

Through our property ownership we have been able to raise the profile of heritage issues and provide a view independent of government. It is interesting to note that five properties are located within existing or proposed UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Heritage properties have an important role to play in national and local identity and educating about the past to inform the future. Booterstown Marsh has been playing such a role for many years







In the opposite page Tailors' Hall. photo by Kevin Duff
Above left, The Burren Mullagmore.
Above right: Howth court house
Right these lines: The restored Stackallen Bridge on the Boyne River, photo by John Ducie

now. The number of volunteers that have got involved must run into the thousands at this stage.

Many of An Taisce's properties have been used to run educational programmes and promote the enjoyment of heritage, conservation, sustainable development and even providing evidence of climate change through research projects.

The broadening of our constituency is vital and working in partnership with other organisations including public and commercial bodies to further our objectives and activities has been and continues to create strong relationships. Currently, this is most evident in our Boyne Navigation Restoration Project.

Advising and helping people protect irreplaceable heritage – intangible and tangible, both cultural and natural not owned by An Taisce. Over the years we have played a role in supporting groups and individuals in the efforts to protect Ireland's heritage. This has been through specific projects and through simple advice over the phone.

In contrast to most government bodies, thinking long term rather than short term is the goal of An Taisce. Our approach to conservation of heritage and its presentation is to engage a staged process so that involvement of stakeholders is comprehensive, financing is project focused and best practice is employed at all times. It is our intention to increase the activity at our properties and this will require local participation like never before. We look forward to hearing from you!

For further information and opportunities to get involved as an individual, a group or as a corporate supporter, please contact An Taisce. An Taisce also has a legacy programme which includes the opportunity property donations.

As many of you will be aware, The Tailors' Hall will soon be reopening as a venue for small conferences, weddings and parties. If you know of anyone who maybe interested in renting this unique place please do not hesitate to get in contact with John Ducie, Properties Officer, properties@antaisce.org, Telephone HQ 01 454 1786 or direct line 01 707 7076

The Green-Campus Programme

The 'growing up' of the Green-Schools Programme



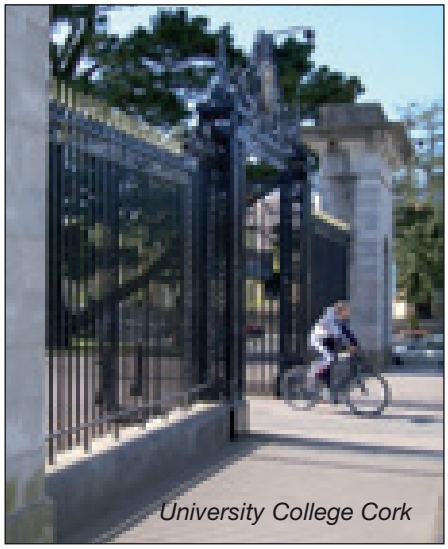
MICHAEL-JOHN O'MAHONEY

A WAY FOR FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN A THIRD LEVEL INSTITUTION IN A WAY THAT LINKS TO EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES AND STUDY

REPORT BY MICHAEL-JOHN O'MAHONEY
Assistant Director of An Taisce's Education Unit

Of late third level college students that had been in primary and secondary schools with Green-Flags had started asking the question; why can't my third level college go for a Green-flag? From this obvious progression and demand the Green Campus programme was developed. The Green-Campus Programme got fully underway in 2009 and is based on the successful Green-Schools Programme. It provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in a third level institution in a way that links to everyday activities and study, and ties in with operational requirements of a complex multi use facility. It should be noted that the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce is leading the way internationally with this programme and is providing the template and international best practice to the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) network.

In essence Green Campus is an advanced version of the Green Flag (Green-Schools) Programme for Third Level Institutions. The programme is based on the EU EMAS (Eco-Management and Auditing System) approach, and the Seven Steps correspond with the criteria of the ISO14001:2000 Environmental Management System Standard. There are currently a number of third level colleges and universities undertaking the programme in Ireland. These include University College Cork, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology - Castlebar, Colaiste Dulaigh, Dublin, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, the Garda Training College, Templemore and Sligo IT.



University College Cork

THE SEVEN STEPS

The Green Campus Programme promotes a partnership approach to environmental management in third level institutions. The programme identifies the campus as a community and places significant importance on the inclusion of all sectors of the campus community in its environmental management and enhancement. The programme does not reward specific environmental projects or implementation of a new technology or other rather it rewards long term commitment to continuous improvement from the campus community in question. In order for a Campus to qualify for the Green Campus Award (Green-Flag) the college must be registered with the Environmental Education Unit at An Taisce for a minimum of one academic year and have successfully implemented all seven steps of the programme. The seven steps are: establishing a green campus committee, undertaking an environmental review, implementing an action plan, monitoring and evaluating actions carried out, linking the programme to curriculum work, informing and involving the campus and wider community and developing a green charter.

University College Cork had been working on the programme for the last number of years and was awarded the Green-Flag for adoption of the programme. UCC were presented the Green-Flag by the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD at a ceremony in UCC on 19th February 2010. Jan Eriksen, President of FEE was also in attendance at the ceremony. In fact UCC was the first third level institution in the world to be awarded the Green-Flag and as such the event gathered a lot of media attention. The Green-Flag was presented to the President of the College Dr. Michael Murphy and the Students' Union Vice President Ian Power.

TREMENDOUS SAVING OF WASTE, WATER AND MONEY

The results to date for the university were a saving of €300,000 in waste management costs, reduction of waste to landfill by nearly 400 tonnes and an improvement in recycling levels from 21% to 60%. Furthermore, UCC has conserved almost enough water this year to fill the equivalent of the Lough of Cork (around 20 million litres). The first step for UCC was for the students to establish a Green-Campus Committee, in conjunction with the Buildings & Estates Department and academic staff. An environmental review followed. "There were absolutely no recycling facilities for students walking on the campus", recalls Maria Kirrane, a student representative on the committee. "In fact, our very first action was to put on overalls and literally dive into the skips to see exactly what types of waste were being disposed of!"

Now recycling facilities are available in front of the lecture halls,



University College Cork became the first 3rd level institution in the world to be accredited with the prestigious international Green Flag Award. The award was presented at UCC by Minister John Gormley on behalf of Taisce. Picture shows from left, Jan Eriksen, FEE, students, Mirjam Hirzel, Hazel Smyth and Darren Reidy, Minister Gormley, Charles Stanley Smith, President An Taisce, Maria Kirrane, student and UCC President Dr. Michael Murphy. Photo by John Sheehan Photography in Cork.

and in the canteens, where the staff is trained in minimising waste. Students in lecture theatres and laboratories are alerted to turn off lights and electrical equipment. College maintenance vehicles are now running on biodiesel. Carpooling is being introduced to facilitate lifts to and from campus. Enhanced Park & Ride and bike parking areas are designed to encourage more sustainable travel. Each year the Students Union holds a Green Awareness Week on campus, where real actions are supplemented by academic talks on environmental sustainability.

> UCC has conserved almost enough water this year to fill the equivalent of the Lough of Cork

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK IS THE FIRST.

It is quite a leap, transforming the Green-Schools programme, geared for the typical school of a few hundred students, to a complex campus of 130 acres, 16,000 students and almost 3,000 staff In population terms UCC is bigger than your average Irish town, so bringing together all the necessary parties and practices to develop it into a sustainable Green-Campus was a real challenge.

UCC President, Dr Michael Murphy said it is a source of great pride to the university, its staff and its students, that UCC has become the first third level institution in the world to be awarded the designation. "Over the past three years, through committed and determined effort by everyone involved, we have succeeded in saving €300,000 or €100,000-a-year in waste management costs, a testament to the can-do spirit of students from the Environmental Society who initiated the project and demonstrated with foresight and ambition what could be achieved here on the UCC campus.

It was these students, who had been part of the Green Flag programme at secondary school level, who believed from the outset that the concept could be transferred successfully to an institution of UCC's size and that by raising awareness throughout the university, we could, together, make a real difference.

An Taisce, on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), granted the international accreditation after a rigorous assessment by an expert panel. UCC is now looking to build on the award. "We'd like to make it easier for students to cycle to college, possibly through a bike purchase scheme", says Maria Kirrane. "Also, while UCC is a beautiful campus, many of the plants here are non-native. We're looking to address biodiversity on campus". In addition a programme to convert the college food waste into compost has commenced.

There is a wide of range of environmental management programmes that a third level college could undertake. However, the Green Campus programme is unique because it is student-led and they are the key decision makers," says Jan Eriksen, President of FEE. A number of other 3rd level institutions in Ireland will be applying for a Green-Flag shortly.

This is about more than making a campus green. Over the past 14 years, hundreds of thousands of students in Ireland have been brought up with Green-Schools, sometimes starting at pre-school, through primary schools and then second level. It is critical that the chain not be broken once they complete the Leaving Cert. It needs to continue into 3rd level, and from there into their professional as well as their personal lives so that they become life-long educators and ambassadors of sustainable living.

This Place Matters

"THE FUTURE IS NOT SOME PLACE WE ARE GOING TO, BUT ONE WE ARE CREATING.
THE PATHS TO IT ARE NOT FOUND BUT MADE.
THE MAKING OF THOSE PATHWAYS CHANGES BOTH THE MAKER AND THE DESTINATION"
(Australian Commission for the Future)

REPORT BY **JUDY OSBORNE**

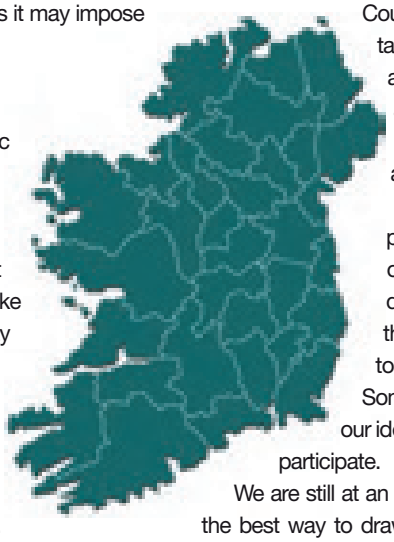
In the past few years climate change and the impact it may have on the way we live has moved to the top of An Taisce's preoccupations. All our departments, that is the Built and Natural Environment, Properties and Education, are working to integrate climate proofing into our policies and positions.

More recently it has become clear that in parallel to climate change the issue of global resource depletion is beoming even more urgent . Several articles in this magazine refer to specific resources that are finite and vulnerable to exhaustion in an alarming way with huge consequences. We haven't even touched on water yet!

The way we plan new development has a huge impact on climate change and resource depletion. It brings global issues down to the local level and yet there is still resistance to the constraints it may impose and there are massive efforts to subvert the process.

THE BENEFITS OF PLANNING.

Planning doesn't prevent a market based economic system which is reputed to be the most efficient way to facilitate development but it does smooth out some of the negative aspects of such a developer led system which have become painfully evident since the devastating crash in 2008. Planning can take account of external costs that new development may impose on the community. Planning can look at the future in a way that relying on individual choices and short term gain cannot. Planning can promote the needs of the common good in a way that relying on individual choices cannot. Planning can consider social equity in a way that individual choices need not.



A KEY OBJECTIVE IS TO CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE

All the above considerations are at the heart of good planning but another key objectives for the sector is to create a sense of place that people, almost subconsciously, respond to. A sense of place is reflected in unique and distinctive features for every city, town and village or rural area – the opposite of bland ubiquitous landscapes and urban environments. Many people will have had the experience of being in one of England's new town shopping centres and having to remind one self of exactly where you were – so many look and feel the same - the same shops, the same street furniture, the same paving treatment, the same traffic patterns.

An Taisce members tend to have a different vision of how a place should be and are generally keen to maintain the authenticity of their home place and a strong sense that This Place Matters, the name given to the project that has been run out across the country with the assistance of funding from the Department of the Environment.

It is An Taisce's belief that local people are in the best position to have local knowledge and experience of their homeplaces and therefore should be genuinely consulted when changes are planned. Only local people can know the fine detail of local conditions and those special places that need protection for their intrinsic value. It might be a special tree, strategically placed with great effect. It might be a system of streams running through an area even if rarely seen by passing traffic. It might be the heritage quality of the main street. Only local people can know how such places respond to different weather patterns or social conditions. And local people have a legal right to contribute to how their place develops based on European conventions and directives on public participation on the environment.

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Unfortuneately few people are used to contributing to the planning process and in fact rarely hear that the process is in train or know how to make an input. It is this experience that An Taice's project aims to address.

At a local level, where key decisions are taken, planning is largely controlled through the preparation and adoption of County and Local Area Development Plans of each local authority and as each County Development Plan is reviewed An Taisce will take a travelling programme to a central point in the area. The event is publicised and local associations and contacts help to spread the word, inviting people to discuss the issues and to learn how to make an effective submission.

We have taken on an experienced professional planner who is well grounded in sustainable development with great knowledge of the prevailing conditions. The audience is lead through the issues and the process and are helped to prepare submissions to each plan. So far there has been some success. Some local authorites have taken on board some of our ideas. Many more people have had an opportunity to participate.

We are still at an early stage of the project, learning as we go along the best way to draw people in to give and take useful tips , but the potential to empower local communities is enormous. It is also bringing new people to an awareness of the benefits of An Taisce membership and the shared experience of our officials and local members. With the help of further funding from the Department and from the membership subscriptions of new members this will be an ongoing programme. Several new County Development Plans are due for renewal this year so look out for notices of events coming your way.

End note.

During last year's conference of International National Trusts organised by An Taisce in Dublin many new connections were forged and strengthened, Expereince from around the world was shared at lectures and workshipos. The programme name, This Place Matters was borrowed from the American National Trust who have also had some success with their campaigns.



Taken at the environmental pillar training day 20th feb 2010 at Guinness storehouse.

The Environment Pillar of Social Partnership

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PILLAR OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP WAS FORMALLY RECOGNISED BY THE CABINET ON THE 9TH APRIL 2009

REPORT BY **CHARLES STANLEY SMITH**



CHARLES STANLEY SMITH

Social Partnership started in the 1980's and An Taisce called for Environmental representation from an early stage. After continuing work by An Taisce and the Irish Environmental Network, the Environmental Pillar of Social Partnership was formally recognised by the Cabinet on the 9th April 2009 just at the time that Social Partnership talks between the Government and the Unions were in serious disarray. In fact I drew a cartoon of the Titanic (Social Partnership) with every other Pillar heading for the lifeboats and the Environmental Pillar struggling to row towards the sinking ship. In fact no 'formal' plenary sessions of Social Partnership have since occurred, where all the partners gather in one room and have statesman like discussions.

But, I will say that the Environmental Pillar has been a major success, we are now a Social Partner with the same 'rights' as other partners.

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

One major achievement during the year was the ability for the Environmental Pillar to nominate people to County Development Boards, Strategic Policy Committees, Integrated Local Development Partnerships. This has resulted in over 160 Local Environmental Representatives being nominated and accepted to these various bodies. They are bringing the true message of Sustainable Development that involves Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability. A very successful day was organised in January that brought together a large number of these representatives to start the process of sharing experiences and information. A good number of these representatives are An Taisce members . I am sure that we will run another day and that over the next 4.5 years, we will make a difference at the local level.

ACCESS TO MINISTERS

Another benefit of being involved in Social Partnership is the access to Ministers that it gives the Social Partners. So as well as the multilateral conversations with the other Social Partners, it is possible for us to pursue particular policy issues in bilaterals with particular ministers. The Pillar always approaches these in the spirit of 'we are here to help' – we realise that there is a financial crisis but there are other approaching crises of energy security, water security, food security, biodiversity security and climate security. We believe that we can bring the needed expertise to help influence Government Policy positively.

The Pillar has had meetings with the Taoiseach, his Department and his senior advisers. We have had similar meetings with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; the Department of Agriculture and Food and the (former) Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

OTHER PILLARS

We have had meetings with members of the other pillars and whereas there have been points about which we may never agree, there have always been more points of agreement and we have begun working with them in these areas.

The Pillar currently has 2 representatives on NESC and will have the same number of representatives on the reformed NESC into which a number of other bodies have been subsumed. The importance of NESC is that it attempts to come to or explain an agreed current status or position of the country on a topic. This is then used by Government Departments as a basis on which to develop their plans or policies. These documents take some time from conception and it is difficult to make major changes at a later stage, so it is only now that you will see an Environmental input into them.

Arising from our 'status' of Social Partners, the Pillar now has representation on a number of National bodies such as the Housing Forum, Public Transport Partnership Forum, RDP Monitoring Committee, we approach these in a positive manner but have recourse to senior Departmental Officers and the Minister, if things start to go away.

To date 4 submissions have been presented through the Environmental Pillar Briefing paper on Environmental Pillar, Environmental Pillar Budget Submission, Submission to the Programme for Governmnet and the Submission to the McCarthy Report. These can be seen on the An Taisce website:
http://www.antaisce.ie/WhatsNow/CurrentCampaigns/SocialPartnership/PillarDocuments/tabid/683/language/en-US/Default.aspx



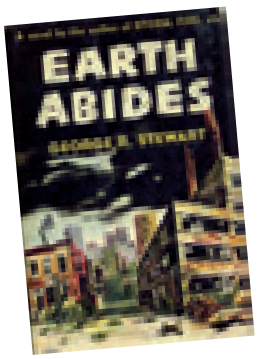
JUDY OSBORNE

POST APOCALYPTIC NOVELS ARE A FASCINATING GENRE DEALING WITH DIFFERENT VISIONS OF SOCIETY AFTER A CRASH. AN APOCALYPSE IS LITERALLY THE 'LIFTING OF THE VEIL' OR A DISCLOSURE OF SOMETHING HIDDEN FROM THE MAJORITY OF MANKIND IN AN ERA DOMINATED BY FALSEHOOD AND MISCONCEPTION. THE NOVELS SPAWNED BY THESE UNIVERSAL CONCERNS GENERALLY START AT A POINT WHERE CIVILISATION HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT LEAVING JUST A RUMP OF INDIVIDUALS TRYING TO SURVIVE IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT.

Post apocalyptic novels and visions of a future.

REPORT BY **JUDY OSBORNE**

It may be timely to have a look at some post apocalyptic visions. We are currently living in an era when philosophical thought is progressing from an age of Rationalism into an era of Systems Thinking which allows for many different futures. Certainly the novels, reviewed for this article offer a huge variety of possibilities, some more appealing than others.



In **Earth Abides,** written by George R Stewart in 1949, Isherwood Williams returns from a wilderness field trip to discover that a mysterious plague has virtually destroyed the human race. Eventually, in San Francisco, he encounters a female survivor who becomes his wife. Around them and their children a small community develops but rebuilding civilisation is beyond their resources and gradually they return to a simpler way of life.

The story is set over a period of around 50 years. The teller, Ish, is academic and thoughtful but not so his new companions. Ish tries to educate the children as they grow but they show little interest. In fact they all seem quite happy to scavange in the absense of energy or any other trappings of civilisation. Although steel and concrete buildings remained they were quickly derelict but more rapid change occurred in the natural world. Most animals did not survive. Domestic cattle reverted to more primative types, horses were rare, certainly there were no chickens for easy pickings. Crops also were quickly over run by native plants. In fact the descriptions of what would happen without the guardianship of mankind were elaborate and fascinating.

Some of the group explore wider afield and came back with tales of small communities that had survived across the USA, each following different models. Some religious, others growing wheat or corn. Each had found a way to suit their temperaments. Many philosophical issues including religion are raised in the course of the story and the purpose of governance was a central theme.



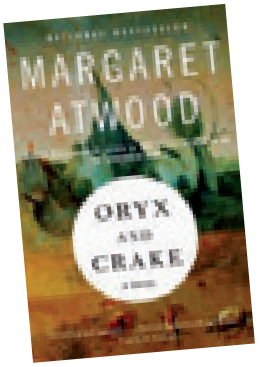
The American author is well known for his environmental concerns, as is John

Seymour but Seymour's vision in **Retrieved from the Future** is far less passive.

Many readers will remember Seymour for his participation in genetically modifed crop digouts in Wexford in 1998 and in 2003, just before his death, he wrote a seminal book The New Complete Book of Self Sufficiency so it is not surprising that much of this book is wrapped around a hero who has maintained a small mixed organic farm in Suffolk, England.

Following the CRASH, and a very harsh winter with endless strikes (does this sound familiar?) came a complete collapse in the importation of oil and with this came chaos. Things went from bad to worse. Nothing could function. Food supplies dried up rapidly. Our hero was OK but soon all vestiges of government broke down until the army stepped up to the mark. Unfortuneately their ways were not very helpful to the average citizen and although they were very protective of the giant agri-businesses who had virtually taken over farming in England by this time they got poor results. Without massive inputs of fertiliser the crops failed. Without carefully regulated medical supplies most of the animal stock was wiped out by disease. It was indeed quite a violent book with some horrific stories of brutality barely relieved by the inspirational characters fighting for their lives.

Oryx and Crake, by Margaret Atwood, takes yet a different turn. The novel deals with a number of issues that one might feel concerned about: elite gated communities, internet games and images, genetically modified organisms, climate change, for example, and pushes them to see how far they could go. Add Margaret Atwood's consummate skill in characterisation and story-telling, and her wicked sense of humour make this a good read This novel stays in one's mind long after reading. Oryx and Crake is a bleak and hilarious story of a personal and global apocalypse.



The Island in the Sea of Time by S M Sterling and subtitled " A Novel of the Change" is a fable with complete contemporary relevance. It portrays a freak time shift event in 1998 sweeping over the historic whaling island of Nantucket, south of Cape Cod in Massachusetts. After some unexplained fish kills and a realignment of the night sky, the inhabitants discover that the whole earth has slipped back to 1250BC, except their own island. Telecommunications, the City of Boston and all the settlement along the mainland has disappeared and is now in its ancient primeval forest state with hunter/gatherer native foragers.



In reality, it is not the rest of the world that has gone amiss but the island which finds itself over 3,000 ahead of time and hopelessly dependent on a no longer existing food supply , energy and technology from across the world. Huge conflicts emerge internally and with their mainland neighbours over use of resources. Sadly whale killing becomes a major part of the survival plan adopted by the islanders and much of the plot of the book concerns the challenge to the inhabitants in finding harmony with the mainlanders .

The real relevance and interest in a book like this is how it applies to us and now. Just picture any sort of global conflict or economic collapse which would leave Ireland cut off from fossil fuel imports. We survived World War II surprisingly well because there was a small-scale local service infrastructure in place around all the towns and villages. Now, our entire system of agriculture and food distribution is dependent on imported fossil fuel fertilizer and vast amounts of energy in production, processing, refrigeration, distribution,and transportation to shops which are mainly car based in location. This system would collapse if fossil fuel imports were to be cut off; and even if Corrib Gas were to come on stream, the energy would have to be rationed for hospitals and essential services. The Island in the Sea of Time is a good read as well as a forewarning of the practical issues we might have to confront ourselves some day. It raises questions about our assumptions that somehow there might be a post-apocalyptic world that any surviving humans could 'fix'.

More challenging is David Korowicz's **Tipping Point.** Definitely not a novel, Korowicz also discusses the likely systemic impacts of peak oil, including the possibility of collapse. The paper was published earlier this year by Feasta and The Risk/Resilience Network - an initiative which was established in order to understand energy induced systsemic risk, the scope for risk management, and general emergency planning.

Of all the novels, this, the factual study based on current trends is possibly the most scary but the range of ideas remind us that many different visions are possible. the sudden cessation if oil imports to cuba did not result in a violent response. In fact the film **Power of Community** a documentary - describes how that society repositioned itself to function generally successfully in a powered down situation.

Certainly the **draft Regional Planning Guidelines,** now published for all regions and open for consultation and submissions, also present a vision of the future based on a return to growth in an economy pretty much like the one we have just escaped from with a projection of the infrastructure needed in support . It has to be said though that these guidelines take little cognaisance of possible oil shortages.

An Taisce's view of this vision in the Regional Guidelines can be seen in our submissions on the website www.antaisce.org. and our view of the future lies in the hands of our members.

End Note

Bibliography of the books collected together by Daithí Ó hÉalaithe, and adviser to Minister John Gormley.

Earth Abides, by George R Stewart. London.Victor Gallanz Books, 1949. ISBN 978-1-85798-821-5 (Reviewed by Judy Osborne)
Retrieved from the future, by John Seymour. New European Publications, 1996
ISBN 978-1872410050 (reviewed by Judy Osborne)
The Island in the Sea of Time by S M Sterling. New American Library a division of Penguin Group (USA). 1998 (Reviewed by Ian Lumley)
Oryx and Crake, by Margaret Atwood. Seal Books, 2004. ISBN 0 7704 2935 1

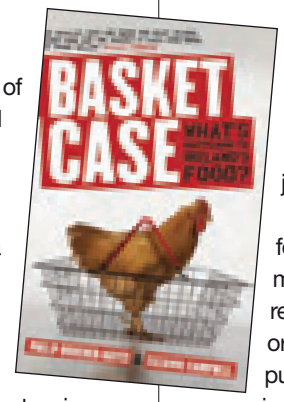
Tipping Point: Near-Term Systemic Implications of a Peak in Global Oil Production, by David Korowicz 2010 can be downloaded at www.feasta.org/documents/risk_resilience/Tipping_Point_summary.php

Other titles worth looking at are:

The Sheep Look Up, by John Brunner. USA: Ballantine books, 1973. ISBN 0 345 24948 8 195
Ecotopia, by Ernest Callenbach. USA: Banyan Tree Books. 1975 ISBN 0 9604320 1 9
The Gold Coast, by Kim Stanley robinson. UK: Futura, 1990. ISBN 0 7088 8348
Pacific Edge, by Kim Stanley Robinson. USA: A Tom Doherty Associates book, 1995 (first published 1990) ISBN 0 312 89038 9
Last Light, by Alex Scarrow. UK: Orian,2007. ISBN 978 0 7528 9327 3

Basket Case. What's happening to Ireland's food? By Philip Boucher-Hayes and Suzanne Campbell.

Gill and Macmillan 2009. 237pp notes and index. ISBN 978 07171 4579 9



Much of the first half of this book is a journalistic analysis of the conflict between new and old ireland, between urban and rural. It reflects many issues that we must all have noted and presents them in a very readable way. The couple have both worked for RTE on agricultural programmes (including Ear to the Ground) and would have extensive knowledge of the way things are and a sympathy for the farmers circumstances. It poses many questions and invites the reader to question their own attitudes.

The second half of the book tackles a number of issues related to food and farming. Starting with the poor economic state of farming in ireland and farmers protests the authors develop their analysis by discussing the impasct of out of town supermarkets - the failure of the planning process to direct new stores into town centres and the impact on our diets. This leads to the whole subject of functional food and the nutritional value of modern food and the alternative of farmers markets. The matter of global food production and trade and rising levels of malnutrition and starvation leads into discussion of industrialised farming and a study of recent food scares and flu epidemics in Ireland europe and china affecting poarticuolarly pig and chicken production . The topic of chemicals and pesticides in farming and their abuse deals with ghastly cases of rogue producers.

The finasl chapter does not exactly propose solutions to many of the problems described throughout the book but it does present a symopathetic view of the need to nuture and care for the rural economy and farming. There is huge potential to take advantage of the natural resources of ireland.

A couple of references to An Taisce once again illustrate to us the need to better promote our vision as the comments do not acurately present our true perspective but that will only spurr us on to do better! (reviewed by Judy Osborne)

Freedom from Fear magazine

F3 is published by The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and to raise awareness on the international community's priority issues, with a special focus on crime and justice-related matters.

This E-zine embodies a forum of discussion for governments, media, academia, research institutes, international organizations, experts and the public at large. The present edition is dedicated to Environmental Crimes, as environmental issues ranging from eco-crimes to climate change are nowadays a pressing matter far beyond the capacity of any single nation to cope with. These are global problems with local outcomes, whose answers can only be global. That is why the key to protect the environment, and vicariously mankind too, lies in a concerted and multilaterally agreed response.

The magazine can be read online at www.freedomfromfearmagazine.org

Advances in Ecopolitics

The Transition to Sustainable Living and Practice. Advances in Ecopolitics, Volume 4. Editors: Liam Leonard and John Barry . 2009 ISBN: 9781849506410

The Advances in Ecopolitics book series presents a broad range of theoretical issues in environmentalism, sustainability and related disciplines, with each volume providing the reader with an array of international contributors who examine a common theme from the world of ecopolitics. Contributors to the Advances in Ecopolitics series present an analysis of the significant environmental issues which have emerged in the era of climate change, sustainable development and green lifestyles, and each contribution explores these salient ecological concepts with an underlying vigour, motivated by a sense that the planet we share with one another is fragile and finite. Moreover, as recent events have demonstrated, the socio-economic and political models that were once considered to be sustainable have proved to be the opposite; so the exploration of green alternatives presented in this series acquires a cruciality for all those who agree that the future is in our hands and that understanding the theoretical concepts surrounding ecological thinking has gained additional significance for our changing planet.

If trees could talk

by Michael Carey. Coford,2009. ISBN: 1 902696 64 6

In "If Trees Could Talk – Wicklow's trees and woodlands over four centuries", Michael Carey explores the evidence for former woodland cover and the various tree planting initiatives carried out in the county between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries.

The book is a valuable resource that reminds us of the importance of trees and woodlands to local economies, livelihoods and landscapes. Using surveys and other sources Michael Carey's work explores and explains the changing forest landscape of Wicklow, particularly over the past four centuries. He shows that besides being a significant feature on the landscape, woodlands and trees have influenced and continue to impact on the lives and culture of those who live and work in the county, particularly in rural areas.

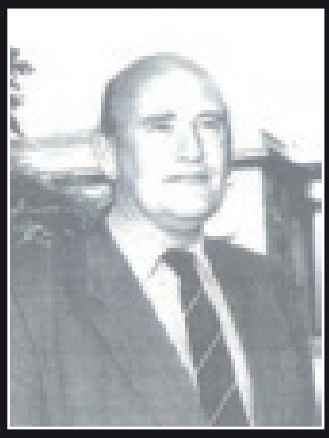


The book discusses timber uses and the profitability of the timber industry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Included is a review of documentary material related to the Watson-Wentworth-Fitzwilliam estate based at Coolattin in the south of the county. The progress of the industry over the period is put in context of the overall social and political evolution of the county.

Copies will be available at a cost of €25.00 exl. postage from the COFORD office (tel: 2130725, info@coford.ie) and can be ordered online from www.coford.ie.

Obituary.

Bill Watts. Former Chairman of An Taisce



Bill Watts former provost of TCD and Chairman An Taisce 1967-69 Hon Sec 1966-67 died in April this year. Bill was a long term supporter of An Taisce and was instrumental in securing prescribed status for the organisation. He was retained by An Foras Forbartha (The Physical Planning Institute funded by the state) to advise local authorities on nature conservation in 1965 and was Joint Author of the seminal Dublin and Dunlaoghaire Study published by An Taisce in 1967. His death following that of Frank Mitchell brings to an end the direct line to Praegar and Trinity of the founders and shapers of the An Taisce we have inherited. He is among the giants whose shoulders the organisation is standing on, he was always ready to help and provide good counsel when asked. Our sincere condolences to all his family and friends.

Ecological Economics

This Journal is yet another interesting if academic monthly journal which are now available on the web as well as in hard copy. It is not entirely free but the web-site lists the articles and copies could be obtained through the library service. The latest issue includes a special section on payment for environmental services which ties in with the article in this magazine by anja Murray. see www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/09218009

Another article of particular interest In Ecological Economics 69 (2010) is Facilitating the Transition to a Steady State Economy: Some Macroeconomic Fundamentals, by Philip Lawn. The article describes the government's fiscal/monetary system in a clever and clear way. It suggests that current policy is based on a misguided understanding of the macro economics of modern economies and in fact central government has unlimited spending power as the issuer of a national currency. In the process of outlining some of the policies required to facilitate the transition to a no growth economy the paper explains how a central governmnet can use its unique spending and taxation powers in an policy effective way that will also protect the environment. It is quite hope-inspiring because of its breezy can-do tone.



Sustainable Rural Development: Managing Housing in the Countryside

Strive report 44 Edited by mark scott. Prepared for the EPA by the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy, UCD. 2010. ISBN: 978-1-84095-338-1 available on the web at http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/research/econ/name,27812,en.html

For anyone interested in one off rural housing this is a must read. With contributions from a dozen academics the report covers a broad range of issues associated with rural housing with some interesting work on the economic and social costs. There are also interesting papers on rural housing and landscape preferences which seem to illustrate that a primary consideration is the poor quality of village housing estates which might have provided an alternative choice. It also highlights the dichotomy between satisfaction with the rural lifestyle and dissatisfaction with the level of amenities available.

UNAUTHORISED INDUSTRIALISED PEAT EXTRACTION in Westmeath.

Friends of the Irish Environment have been seeking to control the wide spread industrialised extraction of peat without authorisation or assessment of environmental impact in the bogs between Lough Derravaragh and Lough Sheelin since 2009. The sites cover more than 10 square kilometres and the Report's photographs show Amazon-like vistas of destruction, aerial maps overlain with drainage markings and totally ineffective sediment traps.

The reports amply illustrate the weaknesses in the legislation which allows development by incrementation. see http://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.net/cmsfiles/files/library/peat_site_reports_april2010.pdf

Áine Ryall, Effective Judicial Protection and the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive in Ireland

Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2009. 286 pages. ISBN 978-1-841 13-500-7. GBP 45.

This book is obviously aimed at the legal sector but is still worthy of review by An Taisce members whose campaigns may bring them to the courts. Aine Ryall has gained considerable respect from her peers for the comprehensive and detailed work on the application of the Environmnetal Impact Assessement Directive, particularly in Ireland , but campaigners will also take heart from the support offered by the arguments that the restrictive approach to the application of the EIA Directive by the judiciary and the potentially high costs, is to restrict access to justice in environmental matters in Ireland unacceptably. I'm sure An Taisce members would agree that participation, and the increased local knowledge that goes with it, improves the quality of the ultimate decision taken (p. 51), acting as a "mechanism for delivering more environmentally aware decisions"

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