

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

An Taisce Magazine

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Climate Change

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Each recent magazine has focussed on a theme. The theme of this year's magazine is Climate Change. Climate Change has long been an important arena for An Taisce and featured in many of our recent magazines but I make no excuses for making it the theme of this magazine.

Although a large number of people understand the future stresses that Climate Change will bring to near future generations, this is not true of policy makers and many policy influencers.

During the period that this magazine was written, the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) – Summary for Policy Makers was published. With an opening highlight of "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal.....".

The launch, garnered some column inches in the national and international media, but that died away after a week and it's back to the usual state of indifference.

An Taisce has brought the many interlinked aspects of Climate Change to the notice of the Irish public and in 2013 decided to form a specific 'Climate Change' committee in order to convince Irish policy makers and influencers that the scientific evidence shows inevitable dangerous warming as a consequence of continued rising emissions.

The reason that I am editing this year's magazine is that Judy Osborne, who has so successfully edited the magazine for at least the past 8 years, has taken herself off to the far east on a well earned sabbatical.

However, committed as ever, Judy has supported me in the production of this magazine and has written an article on 'Heritage Tourism'. I must thank her and the authors of all the articles for their contributions.

You will find a detailed report on the work of An Taisce in the Annual Report that accompanies this magazine. You should also follow @AnTaisce on Twitter and An Taisce on facebook, where we daily bring you the latest environmental information. If you don't already receive our eZine, please check that we have the correct email address for you on the 'Contact Details' form we post with all membership cards and renewal letters.

Remember to attend the AGM on 14th June –details enclosed in your pack.

Charles Stanley-Smith

Note from Valerie Bond.
The last issue of the magazine (May 2013) contained an article on the Tree Council's history in which it was stated that An Taisce's Trees Committee was set up c.1980 under the chairmanship of Richard Webb.
In fact An Taisce's Trees Committee had been working since the early 1970s, with Patricia Kilroy as its first Chairperson. She was succeeded by John McGuire, who was succeeded by Richard Webb.

Foreword

by Prof. John Sweeney

President of An Taisce

Global temperatures have increased by 0.85°C since 1880 and about 0.5°C since 1979. While this doesn't sound that much, it is now clear that even this seemingly small global change in a primary climatic parameter is having a profound effect on the frequency, intensity, spatial extent, and duration of some extreme weather and climate events across the globe. These include occurrences such as intense rainfall, heat waves, frost incidence, storm surges and related hazards such as floods and droughts. Although warming has been slower over the past decade or so, explanations for this are emerging as researchers improve their understanding of how the global climate system operates. What is clear is that each of the last three decades has been warmer than all preceding decades since 1850, and the last 30 year period was the warmest 30-year period of the last 800 years.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their recent 5th Assessment Report attributed, with 95% certainty, the warming of the past half century mainly to the burning of fossil fuels. There are those for whom a 95% probability is still not enough, but for most reasonable people the 'smoking gun' exists in the mounting evidence. As such, the denialist option is a dangerous strategy to adopt, rather like the stalling tactics that clouded the health link between cigarettes and lung cancer for many years. The scientific debate over the main cause of contemporary climate change is now over.

Apart from the trends in extreme events, discernible trends in non extreme parameters, such as changes in the growing season and loss of biodiversity, raise the spectre of serious economic and social issues emerging. These are not just of concern for the developing countries, but also for places like Ireland where an assumption of climatic stability pervades the public consciousness. During the last 30 years Ireland has warmed by 0.5°C and annual rainfall has increased by 5%. Increasingly sophisticated climate models are agreed that this warming will continue, and most likely accelerate, and that seasonal changes in rainfall will become more pronounced. Drier summers and wetter winters are projected for Ireland. Although memories tend to be short, it is worth noting that last summer was the warmest and driest in Ireland for around a decade, with drought conditions declared in July.

This past winter has been the wettest on record at many locations, and the stormiest in some places for over 70 years. Perhaps the climate models do not have as much uncertainty attached to them as is frequently claimed.

Ireland emitted just under 58M tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2012. This was about 12.4 tonnes for every person in the country and represents about twice the equivalent emissions of countries like France, Spain or Italy, significantly less than Germany or the UK and is among the highest of the EU 28 countries. It is much higher than China on a per capita basis and only slightly below that of the USA. If we are to attribute blame for climate dislocation and seek to administer climate justice in the Developing World, Ireland stands in the dock more so than most other countries.

A reluctance to seriously tackle national emissions has been a recurring feature of the political system. Grandiose National Climate Change Strategies have not been implemented as intended when the vested interest groups waded in. Aspirations expressed in Programmes for Government are ditched or put on the long finger when meaningful actions are required. Where compliance with international obligations such as the Kyoto Protocol has occurred, it has been driven mainly by a contracting economy. In 2013 emissions began to rise again, driven by the early effects of agricultural intensification and a shift to coal and peat burning in power stations. The likelihood is therefore that the binding annual targets which Ireland signed up to from 2013-2020 will not be met. The outlook is not good. A number of climate change bills have foundered in the Oireachtas as powerful vested interests exerted their muscle. The current Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2013 lacks any targets to impose discipline on sectors such as agriculture, buildings, transport and waste. Yet, in 2013 Ireland is allowed to emit only 45Mt of greenhouse gases before potential sanctions kick in. Getting from 58Mt in 2012 to 45Mt in 2014 is not feasible in a recovering economy, especially in the absence of strong legislative controls. Yet as the country stumbles towards the prospect of having to spend huge amounts of money to buy 'hot air' (In the National Development Plan 2007-13 some €270M was earmarked for buying carbon credits) the plan is to increase our carbon emissions in key sectors such as agriculture. Some will benefit, but the population at large will foot the bill. This is after all the common story of environmental mismanagement.

Ireland's vulnerability to weather and climate extremes has been well demonstrated over the past winter. The damage to coastal infrastructure, transport and communications from storms, floods and lightning has provided a reality check as to what needs to be done should such events become more frequent as the Atlantic warms further and sea levels rise. Adaptation to inevitable climate change is clearly a critically important response for the country as a whole to improve the resilience of sectors such as agriculture and forestry, and zones such as coastal regions, to cope with what lies ahead. It makes economic sense to position Ireland for the future not to be spending its finances in damage control, but rather to enable competitiveness in a changing world to be maximised by wise preventative action now.

But mitigation is also important. An Ireland that does not pull its weight internationally can hardly be expected to be welcomed by countries willing to follow a more sustainable trajectory. It is not valid to think that one small country should ignore its contribution to the biggest problem facing humanity in the present century because it is some kind of special case, which it is not. Everyone must share the burden, with no exception for those who shout loudest or have the ear of decision makers. An Taisce believes that leadership and an effective domestic policy is urgently required to capitalise on the emerging opportunities associated with mitigating and adapting to climate change. Enlightened countries are already seeing substantial employment opportunities emerge in clean tech, sustainable tourism and renewable energy technologies. To achieve this, and to enjoy the benefits of being an 'early mover', it is imperative that the true environmental cost of plans, programmes and policies be laid out in a transparent manner. This can be done through establishing the true cost of carbon and ending the practice whereby the exploitation of environmental resources for private gain results in the burdening of the costs of so doing across society at large. We need urgently to start valuing our ecosystem services, our biodiversity and landscape resources, our water, air and soil resources with a view to enhancing their asset value for the next generation, not sacrificing it on the altar of short term gain. The theme of this issue is the theme central to An Taisce - the protection of our 'treasure'.

The Role of the An Taisce Climate Change Committee (ATCC)

by Prof. Barry McMullin, Committee Chair (climatecommittee@antaisce.org)

An Taisce's new Climate Change Committee (ATCC) was formed at the National Council meeting of the 8th February 2014. By focusing exclusively and persistently on the issue of climate change, ATCC can assist in the difficult but essential task of calling the media and politicians to account and either encouraging or, if necessary, embarrassing them into taking their responsibilities seriously.

ATCC will point out the extraordinary and dishonest contradictions between Ireland's Copenhagen Accord commitments and Ireland's current political and economic planning decisions.

ATCC will challenge the use of climate change deniers by the media. Providing 'false balance' as if there is still a debate on the key scientific issues must be contested. Someone denying the link between smoking and cancer would not be given air-time. The link between global warming and human activity is of the same order of proof. Truth-telling is one of the most important tools to promote the transition to a truly sustainable society, and therefore to avoid the worst effects of climate disruption. According to Buckminster Fuller, "all of humanity is in peril if each one of us does not dare, now and henceforth, always to tell only the truth and all of the truth, and to do so promptly right now".

ATCC will provide both local spokespersons on climate-related issues and lists of internationally recognized and media-savvy scientists and science communicators. Most Irish media people are not actively trying to 'do the wrong thing', they just haven't given climate change all that much thought and should be responsive to constructive criticism and engagement.

ATCC will further improve communication and engagement with the media by offering small-group workshops or sessions where they get to meet with well-known credible experts or leadership figures in the climate field.

ATCC will develop a national 'Guidelines on reporting of Climate Science'. Further areas to report on include:

- Countering media mis-information/ mis-truths
- Following the climate change legislative process and influencing it for good
- Supporting the 350.org divestment campaign (which is the 'action' end of leaving fossil fuels in the ground)
- Developing links with concerned farmers
- Mobilising and providing information to the public
- Lobbying politicians and candidates
- Educating schoolchildren and focusing on their needs
- Inventive, creative and provocative actions
- Linking with similar initiatives internationally
- Promotion of equity and ethical behaviour, both nationally and globally
- Challenging the cult of consumerism
- Taking on 'economic orthodoxy', especially where it promotes unsustainable practices
- Providing advice on climate change to other organisations including local authorities, community groups and universities.
- Encouraging academic and professionals in the social sciences, particularly economists, to pay attention to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) conclusions.

What does ATCC want to promote and encourage?

ATCC is in favour of a national climate policy covering all departments of Government that is consistent with the 2°C target to which Ireland has committed. ATCC seeks an honest framing of climate science and an effective and equitable policy response that enables realistic planning and informed decision-making by all citizens, businesses, farmers and policy makers. ATCC expects Ireland to join with other countries that are taking the climate crisis seriously. This would involve:

- Enabling an honest discussion of CC policy choices within the accepted bounds of peer-reviewed climate science. This clearly demands that urgent action must be undertaken in every country to halt the human-caused accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to fossil fuel use, land use change and agricultural practices.
- Emphasising the rural/urban, global and intergenerational connectedness of the problem.
- Emphasising that Ireland must play its part in actually achieving real change.
- Promoting the achievement of urgent, large-scale emissions reduction measures and carbon sequestration through:
  - Nationwide local community engagement and dialogue, setting out the basic reality of the energy and consumption choices that lock in future emissions– in particular, in electricity, heating, transport and agriculture policy.
  - Urging the replication of high achieving exemplar projects, such as the world-leading radical emissions reductions and sustainability planning achieved by Dublin Fire Brigade, first at Kilbarrack and now throughout the Brigade.
  - Encouraging a national discussion and direct citizen-to-politician climate lobbying to set a fair and independent annual GHG budget – both national and sectoral (totalling to the national) – as per the EPA's own recommendations.
  - Urging all cost savings from all emissions savings projects, and revenues from all GHG-related ('carbon') taxes, to be ring-fenced only to further emissions saving. This would create major investment certainty in future jobs including in emission reduction sectors such as renewable energy, public transport, building insulation and energy management.
  - Early community involvement in all energy decision-making.
  - Linking internationally to countries at all stages of development to affirm our common cause in addressing the reality we must face together.

Background to the An Taisce Climate Change Committee

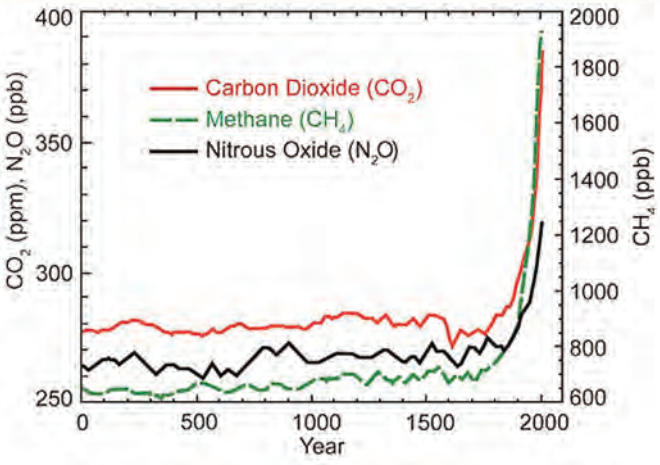


The Scale of the Climate Crisis

Climate change presents a clear existential threat to humanity. A 'business-as-usual' approach places global average temperatures on a trajectory well beyond the +2°C "red line" defined by the IPCC in its AR4 report, and subsequently adopted by the EU and G20 as an upper threshold. If this limit is approached, or even exceeded, the world will be moved into a regime of very dangerous climate change. Already global average temperatures have increased by 0.8°C versus pre-industrial levels, with approx. another 0.7°C 'committed' in unavoidable temperature increases due to lags in the climate system. That leaves an extremely narrow 0.5°C 'margin for error' before the 2°C danger mark is crossed.

A key finding of recent climate science, and a vital component of policy, is that it is the total accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHG) that directly determines the probability that an amount of global warming will occur. This means that all choices made now and in the next few years, especially energy technology and consumption choices, particularly by wealthy countries, are critical as they effectively already lock in specific commitments to future cumulative emissions.

To date, since the start of the industrial age, humanity has released approximately 1,950 billion tonnes (Gt) of CO_2 (see [2], Table 4, based on 2012 reference date). McKibben, drawing on the peer-reviewed science, has estimated that to have a greater than (say) 80% chance of limiting future warming to +2°C, total future emissions of CO_2 must be limited to no more than 565Gt [1]. However, if all the recoverable hydrocarbons estimated by the world's extractive industries are burned, this is estimated to amount to around 2.5 trillion tonnes of CO_2 or at least two and a half times the amount allowed by the politically defined 2°C limit. In other words, some 80% of all the fossil fuels already discovered must remain in the ground. The IPCC states: "Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions." 'Business-as-usual' is not an option. Climate change may be irreversible but that does not mean it is unavoidable. Immediate and urgent action to rapidly reduce emissions can still significantly reduce risks of future damage [3]. This is an agreed political imperative, but economic and political systems remain wedded in practice to an exponential growth paradigm and much of this growth in consumption is being fuelled



by hydrocarbons, mainly due to their low cost and easy accessibility. By ignoring clear and strongly evidenced scientific warnings, our political leadership and global corporations have instead engaged in a massive gamble, weighing short-term growth and profit-taking versus medium and long term risks of a literally incalculable scale. The climate system does not care about economic growth or political ideology.

The general public is largely unaware that their future and their children's futures are on the line. It is arguable that, were the public to have an honest picture of the nature of the climate change gamble now being made in energy and land use choices, they might prove far more risk-averse than is currently the case.

[1] UNFCCC, "Decision 2/CP. 15 Copenhagen Accord," FCCC/CP/2009/11/Add. 1, 2009 [Online]. Available: http://www.rewi.uni-jena.de/rewimedia/Downloads/LS_Ruffert/SS+2010/V%C3%B6lkerrecht/Kopenhagen_Akkord-EGOTEC-qp7co4rmpge4h6203avrad6kb3.pdf. [Accessed: 05-Feb-2014]
[2] D. H. Meadows, D. L. Meadows, and J. Randers, Beyond the limits, confronting global collapse. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 1992.
[3] R. B. Fuller, Critical path. New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1981.
[4] H. D. Matthews and S. Solomon, "Irreversible Does Not Mean Unavoidable," Science, vol. 340, no. 6131, pp. 438–439, Apr. 2013.

Current Irish and EU political commitments and intentions

Though not legally binding, under the 2009 Copenhagen Accord [1], Ireland and the EU committed to the following:

"We agree that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science, and as documented by the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report with a view to reduce global emissions so as to hold the increase in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius, and take action to meet this objective consistent with science and on the basis of equity. We should cooperate in achieving the peaking of global and national emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that the time frame for peaking will be longer in developing countries and bearing in mind that social and economic development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing countries and that a low-emission development strategy is indispensable to sustainable development."

Rather than committing to a high probability of avoiding 2°C, the EU emissions roadmap appropriates to itself a GHG budget that, if generalised on an equitable basis to the rest of the world, is very likely to exceed 2°C with cumulative emissions that are roughly twice a budget consistent with the EU's Copenhagen Accord commitment.

The scientific evidence shows inevitable dangerous warming as a consequence of continued rising emissions but the Irish government, rather than achieving deep cuts in emissions and looking only to low GHG growth and consumption, is instead supporting further exploration for hydrocarbons, continued road-building, extending the life of peat-burning power stations and massively increasing dairy and beef cattle production.

The Government says that we will meet the agreed EU emissions target to 2020 because they intend to pay for "offsets" funding emissions-saving projects in other countries. Such offsets have been shown to be at best ineffective [4] and there is no guarantee that they will be available in the future.

The contrast between Ireland's Copenhagen commitment and our actual 'business-as-usual' actions represents a stark and embarrassing level of hypocrisy.



They all deserve a future

Current attitudes to climate change in Ireland.

The attitude to climate change in Ireland appears to be largely one of indifference and lack of understanding rather than outright polarisation along partisan lines, as is the case most notably in the USA. Political engagement with climate change is confined to the Department of Environment, containing it as an 'environmental issue', despite the fact that dangerous climate change is very likely to seriously damage the global economy and global security, particularly due to food and water supply problems, posing risks of severe dangers to Ireland's wealth, health and security.

The fact the Ireland's domestic emissions contribute to international climate change impacts has been largely ignored. Locally-funded research has been directed towards adaptation to modest local climate changes and occasional extreme weather impacts. This emphasis does not recognise the escalating rate of these extreme events and ignores the reality that impacts beyond the limits of adaptation are beginning to occur. Only radical emissions mitigation reduces the likelihood of breaching these limits. Every nation, especially richer nations like Ireland, must play their part in peaking emissions as soon as possible.

There is also a low level of media coverage of climate issues. RTE and Independent Newspapers both almost completely ignored covering the recent UNFCCC* COP19 in Warsaw. Climate change is an extremely problematic topic for news media that prefer stories with identifiable heroes and villains and some kind of clear 'outcome'. Positively, RTÉ have recently appointed George Lee as Agricultural and Environmental Correspondent. Among print media only the Irish Times has such a role, and was the only paper to send a reporter to Warsaw.

As a result the public appears to be collectively experiencing a mix of confusion and denial, resulting in the 'bystander effect', i.e., no one appears to be responding to climate change, and this very lack of response is itself giving rise to a false sense of reassurance. People are prepared to set aside their own individual concerns if their friends and community appear unconcerned. Ironically, the media and politicians in turn cite lack of public interest in this topic as an excuse for not giving it coverage or priority proportionate to its actual importance as an existential global crisis.

Many NGOs seem happy to advocate compromise targets involving a percentage decrease by 2030, or, even worse, the Government's preferred, far distant 2050 and ill-defined, 'carbon-neutral' target. However, such 'rate by a date' targets have no scientific basis.
In fact any reality-based target must be based on a long-term GHG budget, made up of annual or five-year budgets following an emission-path in line with Ireland's contribution to a safe total of global emissions.
These must be real budgets - not mere targets - so any overspend in time or in sector must carry forward and be reflected in the following period. If targets are not forthcoming or are not based on a budget contributing to a realistic chance of avoiding 2°C warming then we are actively committing to potentially devastating consequences. So far, our governments and political parties have not even discussed this reality and some NGOs, like the media, seem happy to indulge this fantasy.

* United Nations Framework Convention on Clime Change

HERITAGE IN SCHOOLS SCHEME

A VISION FOR EDUCATION A FOCUS FOR PUPILS

We are delighted to announce that the Heritage in Schools scheme has re-opened under the direct administration of the Heritage Council.

The Heritage in School scheme is unique in Ireland and provides a panel of over 165 diverse Heritage Specialists who work directly with children in primary schools throughout the country, at the request of the school. In 2012 just over 1,108 visits were made with over 87,770 children enjoying and benefitting from these visits, experiencing the cultural, natural and social heritage that is all around them.

Heritage in Schools Scheme: How it works

- Log on to the dedicated website **www.heritageinschools.ie** for full details of specialists and online booking system
- A visit can be a half day or a full day duration
- A small fee is paid by the school for the visit
- Teachers are always present during a visit

Heritage Experts offer a variety of expertise including birds and their habitats, tapestry, work horses, bees, flowers and pollination, biodiversity, capturing heritage using film and podcasting technology, creating school gardens, Ireland in the 1950s, our built environment, marine habitats, weaving and many more. Experts usually conduct their visits in or close to their own county, although many are prepared to travel.







If you have never used the scheme and would like to find out more, go to our website at www.heritageinschools.ie

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Tackling the climate crisis

by Andrew Jackson,
Natural Environment Officer



We are duty-bound to use the law to vindicate environmental rights in Ireland

Introduction

Writing in last year's An Taisce magazine, I commented that the EU's Habitats and Birds Directives - which protect our most threatened species and habitats - could be in the immediate firing line politically. This as a result of a deregulatory agenda at EU level driven by the economic times, the political left-right balance of power in the EU (right at present), and the Tory-led UK government's manoeuvring to renegotiate its relationship with the EU in advance of a potential 'in-out' referendum post-2015.

This has since proven the case, the European Commission - led by President Barroso - having recently announced that the Natura 2000 network of protected areas under the Habitats and Birds Directives (comprising 18% of the EU's entire land territory - 13% of Ireland's) will be subject to a "regulatory fitness check" under the Commission's REFIT "Fit for Growth" initiative. As the European Environmental Bureau reflects, "The REFIT Communication presents the environment, at worst, as an obstacle to growth and, at best, as something to be exploited for short-term economic advantage."

Quite how EU nature policy will emerge from this REFIT process remains unclear at present, but the episode is illustrative of a more general trend: while the science on many of the environmental crises we face is ever clearer and better communicated, current policy responses seem to range from poor in the best cases to directly counter-productive in the worst.

Take the case just mentioned: faced with a biodiversity crisis of such magnitude that many believe we have already entered the sixth mass extinction event in the Earth's history, the response of EU political leaders appears to be to consider whether the Habitats and Birds Directives should perhaps be renegotiated or replaced to reduce "red tape" and make life easier for certain businesses (if not for the ecosystems on which we all depend for our survival).

Biodiversity loss and climate change are of course inextricably intertwined, as the EU itself reflects: "Just as we cannot halt biodiversity loss without addressing climate change, it is equally impossible to tackle climate change without arresting biodiversity loss." So we need to address both problems, together – and now.

Climate change

Policy-makers' general lack of urgency on climate change is well documented. Worth noting, however, is the relatively recent (and growing) trend of far-from-radical individuals and organisations issuing radical-sounding reports and press releases on the subject. When one factors in the normally measured, even understated, tones of many of these messengers, the tenor of the messages they are now delivering is striking.

That is, while we might rightly be alarmed by the publication in our lifetimes of a journal article entitled "Can a collapse of human civilization be avoided?" by Paul and Anne Ehrlich (published in 2013),[1] some might try to brush this off on the basis that the Ehrlichs have made predictions of catastrophe in the past (e.g. 1968's "The Population Bomb"), and that such predictions have not (or not yet) come to pass.

However, the Ehrlichs are by no means alone regarding the seriousness of climate change. Indeed, one could say they now are part of the mainstream. Consider Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who called in 2013 for a grassroots movement to put pressure on politicians to act to avoid passing on "a lousy, spoilt and defiled planet" to future generations.

Given Pachauri's position - chair of a major intergovernmental body - this direct entreaty to the public was as extraordinary as it was welcome.

Consider also the World Bank – as establishment as can be, and heavily criticised in the past for environmentally-damaging investments – which in 2012 warned of a "cascade of cataclysmic changes" which would be triggered by 4C warming (which is unfortunately where we seem to be headed at present). When even the World Bank is using the C word – cataclysmic – one would perhaps expect politicians and the public to sit up and take notice. But for the moment, international negotiations continue to ape the old comic strip routine: "After you, Alphonse. No, you first, my dear Gaston."

Indeed, as recently as March 2014 our own Department of the Environment put out a press release trumpeting the following headline: "Phil Hogan raises challenge of EU 2030 climate ambition with EU Climate Commissioner". One might be forgiven for hoping that the Minister was challenging the lack of EU ambition, but no:

> "At a meeting with the European Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard, in Dublin on Friday (7th March), Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan, T.D. signalled concern regarding the potential economic cost of delivering a 40% EU-wide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030."

That this stance – from our Minister for the *Environment* - might be considered a vote winner is, frankly, scary. Who in the cabinet is batting for the environment? We owe it to future generations - and to all concerned for the future of Ireland and the world - to send the government a loud and clear "not in our name".

[1] *For full text (free), see: http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/280/1754/20122845.full*

Agriculture

How can we deliver this message? One way, of course, would be by trying to ensure that the climate message is heard politically, and that new policy - e.g. the long-awaited Climate Change Act - reflects this message. This remains extremely challenging. As Jack McCarthy and I reflected recently in a piece in the Irish Examiner, even with the huge dedication of our staff, interns, volunteers and members, it is very difficult for a charity like An Taisce to compete with louder voices such as the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA).

As readers will know, the IFA and the Department of Agriculture are cheerleaders for the industry-led Food Harvest 2020 plan. This plan - based on so-called 'sustainable intensification' - will exacerbate the environmental crises we are facing. Of particular concern is the target to increase the volume of dairy output by 50%, much of this to supply a growing international demand for infant formula. The environmental assessment carried out for the Department of Agriculture predicts negative impacts in terms of water quality, greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity, yet the government remains wedded to the plan.



In 2012 agriculture was responsible for one third (32.1%) of Ireland's total climate emissions.

It is worth reflecting that agriculture was responsible in 2012 for one third (32.1%) of Ireland's total climate emissions. This is much higher than our transport or energy or industrial sectors. The EPA projects an increase of 12% in agricultural emissions by 2020 as a result of Food Harvest 2020, so things are set to get worse, not better, based on current policy. This presents a huge challenge.

The argument presented by the government, the IFA and others is that Ireland produces meat and dairy more efficiently (in carbon terms) than other countries, such that the growing food demands of a projected world population of 11 billion by 2100 (up from 7 billion now) should be met by foodstuffs produced here, and not elsewhere. This argument has a superficial appeal, but it will not help to secure the large absolute greenhouse gas reductions which are needed. Nor does it engage at all with the demand/consumption side of the equation. It is business as usual, writ large.

Where we can make a difference

As will be clear from the introduction to this article, times are not good for environmental policy development in the EU. EU legislative activity in the environmental policy field is down to a trickle – in that regard, the new EU Invasive Species Regulation represents a very welcome development against a backdrop of almost no new EU environmental legislation.

Whilst we of course need to lobby hard for ambitious new international, EU and national climate policy and law, we also need to recognise pragmatically that in many other areas of policy there are not likely to be new developments (in the sense of new legislation) for some time. We must therefore work better with what we have in many areas.
As luck would have it, we have pretty good environmental legislation in the EU, covering a wide range of areas.
We also, unfortunately, still have a major implementation and enforcement deficit at the national level in Ireland.

Here we can and should make a big difference. It used to be the case that one's first port of call with an environmental complaint would be the European Commission, in the hope that the Commission would take on the case.
But this is a path of ever diminishing returns.
Not only does the Commission have insufficient resources in an EU of 28 countries, it has also reprioritised its enforcement work away from the traditional citizen complaint.
The Commission now goes after straightforward transposition failures at one end of the spectrum (i.e. failures to translate directives into national law by the deadline) to 'systemic breaches' at the other – i.e. don't bring the Commission just one example of a pollution incident, bring them 20 examples from 20



different counties. This is a very big ask for most citizens and environmental NGOs.

Accessing justice

We can and should, however, focus on freeing things up at the national level such that we don't even need to think about complaining to Brussels.
The Aarhus Convention – which Ireland ratified in 2012 – is of central importance in this regard. Amongst other things, the Convention requires the government to ensure that we all have access to courts at the national level to vindicate environmental rights in a way that is not prohibitively expensive. The government has sought to tackle this problem in certain specific areas, as it was required to do under EU law. But ratifying the Convention itself is a game changer.

The government's solution on the question of prohibitive expense has been to change the rules on the apportionment of liability for legal costs. The standard rule in litigation – 'loser pays' – understandably puts many off litigating. Losing a case where this rule applies could easily result in a bill of >€100,000 in respect of the other side's costs, to say nothing of your own. This is enough to put many off crossing the threshold of the Four Courts.

However, the rules on legal costs were changed in Ireland in 2010/11 in respect of certain areas of environmental law: namely, cases under the EIA Directive (environmental impact assessment), IPPC Directive (industrial permitting), SEA Directive (strategic environmental assessment), in respect of access to information on the environment disputes, and in a range of third party enforcement actions. In these cases the rule on costs is now – in general – 'each side bears its own costs'. This means that you can go

into certain types of litigation confident that you will not be exposed to the other side's costs. This is a good start. But one's own legal costs can also be a prohibitive barrier. In this regard the law provides that the court has discretion to award a winning public interest applicant its costs. This means that lawyers can sometimes be persuaded to do cases on a 'no foal no fee' basis, on the expectation that their fees will indeed be paid by the losing side if the case is successful.

This solution is imperfect in certain respects, but it has nevertheless opened up the possibility of litigation to individuals and organisations which would have been put off in the past by the potential financial exposure. The practical impacts of these legal changes - insofar as they go - are tangible, and they extend to climate protection. For example, An Taisce's legal action in 2012/13 challenging the permission granted to Providence to test-drill for oil in Dublin bay resulted in the surrender of the company's licence and a change in the law (an EIA case). More recently An Taisce has commenced legal action against An Bord Pleanála for granting permission for the continued operation of Edenderry peat-fired power station, post-2015, without first carrying out an environmental impact assessment of the extraction of the peat fuel source (an EIA case).

Conclusion

If civil society is to stand any chance of tackling the climate crisis, we will need a multi-pronged approach. Education, advocacy, lobbying, direct action and divestment are all important, and are all in the mix. All eyes are on the UN-FCCC meeting in Paris in 2015. In the event of an unambitious deal - or no deal at all - it will fall principally to civil society and grassroots movements around the world to fight what seems an impossible battle. One weapon which has not yet come into its own is the law: while governments in Europe can to some degree take or leave consultation responses and lobbying (depending on the weight of public opinion), legal action forces them to listen and engage.

A key piece of work is therefore to have Ireland's rules on legal costs liberalised such that access to justice in Ireland is not limited to a short list of EU directives and specific types of enforcement actions. Individuals and organisations like An Taisce should have affordable - i.e. not prohibitively expensive - access to procedures to challenge acts and omissions by private persons and public authorities which contravene provisions of any Irish law relating to the environment. This is mandated by the Aarhus Convention. In the event that the government does not facilitate this, an important front in the climate battle in Ireland may therefore come to be fought in Geneva – before the Aarhus Convention's Compliance Committee – rather than in Dublin, Brussels or Luxembourg.

The stakes could not be higher. Writing in the Guardian on St. Patrick's Day this year, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu commented, "What happens in [respect of climate policy] could have life-or-death repercussions for millions of people now and billions more in the future. Climate change is a slow, grinding crisis but urgent action is needed to defuse it."

One way to facilitate such action in Ireland will be to democratise the basic human right to access justice. In this way, rather than a small handful of organisations and individuals litigating in the public interest, we may lay the groundwork for hundreds – even thousands – to vindicate critical environmental rights.

Writing of the financial crisis in 2011, Anatole Kaletsky commented insightfully that "events can move from impossible to inevitable without ever passing through improbable." The same seems likely to prove true of the climate crisis. If environmental law can assist us in any way in trying to stay ahead of this curve – and I think that it can – then we are dutybound to use the law.





The Monkey Trap

by John Gibbons

In parts of Asia, indigenous populations have developed an extremely simple yet ingenious way of catching the otherwise elusive wild monkeys. The trap involves a hollow object such as a gourd, which is securely staked to the ground, with a narrow opening on the top, just about wide enough for a monkey to squeeze its arm through. Inside, something sweet, like a banana or rice, is set as the bait.

Attracted by the smell, a curious monkey comes along to investigate, and pushes his arm into the gourd or jar to reach the treat. Then, because the hand is full, the monkey is unable to withdraw it. So far, nothing too unusual. What happens next is quite extraordinary.

The monkey continues to pull and twist his hand to no avail, and even the sight of the hunter returning to the trap is not enough to persuade the hapless monkey to give up what it believes is its prize. The trap in this case is entirely of the monkey's own construction.

That inability to accept a modest, temporary loss of something seemingly within its grasp, even when weighed against the enormous loss that such tenacity entails would, at first, sound like one of those parables about how our cousin primates are, let's face it, not very clever at all.

That judgement is harsh. Monkeys are powerfully programmed by evolution to hunt relentlessly for food, and to hang onto it for dear life – in this case, literally. What this primate is suffering from is an extreme example of short term reasoning, and a fatal weakness in an otherwise skilled scavenger and survivor.

Author Robert Pirsig, in "*Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance*" describes what he calls value traps. Of these, "the most widespread and pernicious is value rigidity. This is an inability to revalue what one sees because of a commitment to precious values…the facts are there but you don't see them". In the case of the monkey trap, Pirsig writes: "the monkey reaches in and is suddenly trapped – by nothing more than his own value rigidity. He can't revalue the bait. He cannot see that freedom without the bait is more valuable than capture with it".

The wisest of apes, the highly evolved genus homo sapiens on the other hand would of course never trade certain future disaster for the possibility of avoiding modest losses in the here and now – right? The evidence that we have indeed evolved to be able to detect and so evade latterday monkey traps is, to put it mildly, unconvincing.

Over the 200 millennia or so since our species first evolved, we gradually overcame just about every obstacle that nature could fling in our path, from sabre toothed tigers to lethal microbes, expanding our numbers and our reach to now occupy almost every habitable square kilometre on the surface of the planet. While there are today over seven billion humans alive, our numbers have more than quadrupled in just over a century, and risen seven-fold since the 1830s.

Despite much talk of the population explosion having been defused, Earth's numbers continue to balloon by the population equivalent of the Republic of Ireland every two-and-a-half weeks.

In just the last two centuries, we have figured out how to harness the colossal power of fossil energy to literally reshape the world to our enterprises. More than half the forest cover on the entire planet has disappeared since 1800, as humans pushed ever deeper into uncharted regions and brought them under the plough.

The evolutionary monkey trap has now been well and truly sprung. Science has, for probably the last half century or so, begun to grasp and quantify this massive unstructured reshaping of the biosphere by the actions and waste products, some deliberate, many incidental, of billions of humans simply going about their business.

Veteran broadcaster David Attenborough put it in the plainest of language recently: "We are a plague on the Earth. It's coming home to roost over the next 50 years or so. It's not just climate change; it's sheer space, places to grow food for this enormous horde. Either we limit our population growth or the natural world will do it for us, and the natural world is doing it for us right now."

Oceans cover two thirds of the Earth's surface and, since humans don't actually live there, you would expect our impacts on these vast systems to be limited. The opposite is the case. A lethal cocktail of chronic overfishing, widespread pollution, eutrophication, increases in near-surface water temperatures, reef destruction and rapid ocean acidification has already taken

a fearsome toll on the web of marine life.

Even if all human impacts stopped tomorrow, "the recovery from the changes we're making will probably take a million years", according to Achim Steiner, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A million years, bear in mind, is five times longer than the evolutionary history of our species. But of course we won't stop fishing, we won't stop polluting and, rather than conserving the world's greatest reef system, the current Australian government plans to use parts of them as an offshore dump for mining waste.

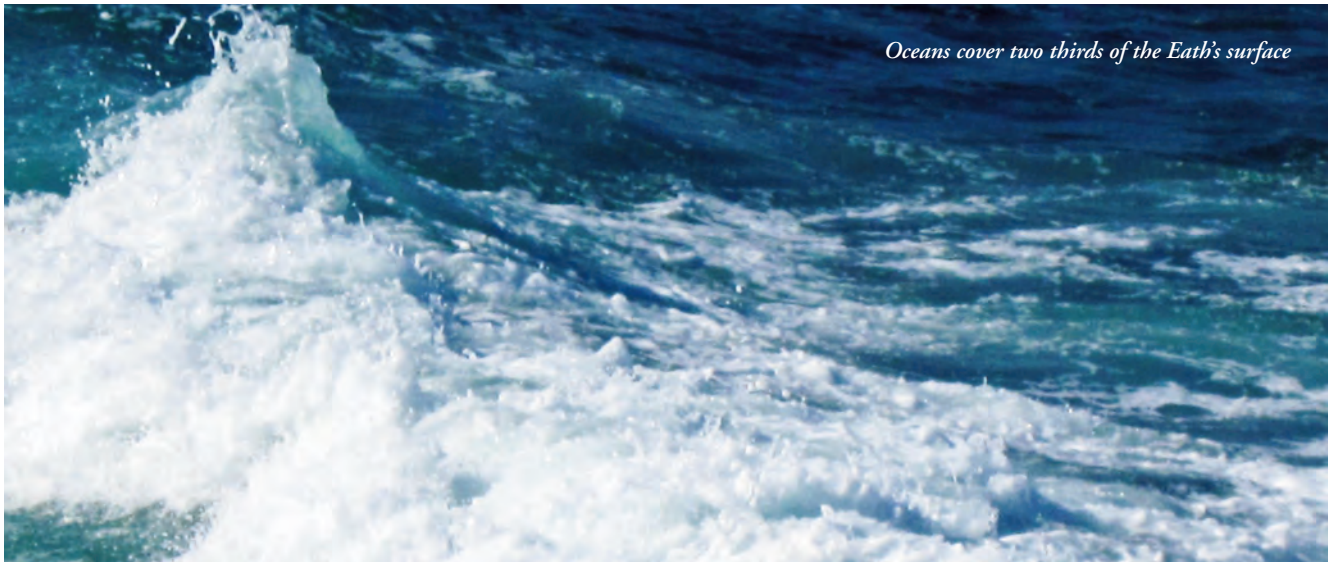
The greatest monkey trap of all is climate change.
The overwhelming scientific consensus is that our current business-as-usual trajectory will see average global surface temperatures increase by between 4 and 6 degrees centigrade this century, with 'positive feedbacks' in the climate system causing temperatures – and sea levels – to continue rising for hundreds, perhaps even thousands of years into the future.

resource plunder, habitat destruction and pollution in the last two centuries, as China, India and much of the Far East raced to play 'catch-up' with the world's major polluters. This unprecedented evisceration of the rich diversity of life on Earth has been celebrated as an era of record "economic growth".

So what exactly is at stake? A major paper in the science journal Nature argued that Earth is on the cusp of one of the greatest ever die-offs, involving mass extinctions of species.

"When we kick over into a mass extinction regime, results are extreme, they're irreversible and they're unpredictable," according to Dr David Jablonski of the University of Chicago. Prof Stuart Pimm of Duke University added: "We are living in geologically unprecedented times. Only five times in Earth's history has life been as threatened as it is now."

Mistaken ideologies and distorted politics make a resolution of



Oceans cover two thirds of the Eath's surface

Back in 1992, leaders of all the world's governments got together for the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Even though the data was nowhere near as robust as is available today, scientific guidance on the scale and severity of the growing climate crisis was unequivocal. Climate change poses an existential threat to life on Earth, including human life.

What emerged from the conference were the 27 Principles of the Rio Declaration, a bold document drawn up to guide humanity onto a sustainable path with the natural systems upon which we depend. Environmental protection was finally to be placed as a key pillar of all future human progress, rather than some annoying afterthought.

And to make sure the politicians were left in no doubt as to the scale of this crisis, later in 1992, a panel of 1,700 senior scientists issued a public appeal, headlined: "Warning to Humanity". Humans and the natural world were, they wrote, "on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment . . . if not checked, many of our current practices . . . may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life as we know it".
What followed instead were two decades of the most relentless

our ecological crux all but impossible within the prevailing growth-fixated paradigm. "The current political system is broken," according to the British government's chief science adviser, Dr Bob Watson. "Nothing has changed in 20 years, we are not remotely on a course to be sustainable."

Tackling climate change was, for a short few years, beginning to gain traction on Ireland's political agenda. The electoral wipeout of the Green Party in 2011 heralded the sudden end of that brief dalliance. The appointment of a political fixer with zero interest in or understanding of the 'Environment' brief was Enda Kenny and Eamon Gilmore's two-fingered salute to sustainability.

In the 20 years since the Earth Summit, Ireland's average temperature has increased by 0.75°C, exactly in line with a projected 4°C calamity this century. The last five years in particular have seen our once-benign climate turn distinctly hostile, with record-breaking flooding events followed by almost unprecedented Arctic conditions, followed by still more flooding. The fodder crisis in 2012 in particular was a wake-up call to those in Irish agriculture who think that climate change is somebody else's problem.

Three major recent reports, from the World Bank, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) and the European Environment Agency all point to the same stark conclusion: the climate crisis is rapidly turning into a planetary emergency that is fast moving beyond humanity's ability to contain, let alone reverse.

"This isn't about shock tactics, it's simple maths," according to Leo Johnson of PwC. "One thing is clear: businesses, governments and communities across the world need to plan for a warming world – not just 2 degrees, but 4, and, at our current rates, 6 ." While this is strikingly unvarnished language coming from a firm of management consultants, PwC's Johnson did gloss over one salient fact – neither individuals nor societies can possibly 'plan' for a 4-6°C apocalypse.

The climate change monkey trap is a self-constructed trap into which humanity has plunged its right arm. Its left arm is up to the elbow in another gourd labelled 'ecological overload'.

'Extinction: Evolution and the End of Man' was written by Prof Michael Boulter of London's Natural History Museum. He summed up our existential conundrum pithily in an interview in 2008: "I think human beings are a failed species – we're on the way out. Our lives are so artificial they can't possibly be sustained within the limits of our planet."

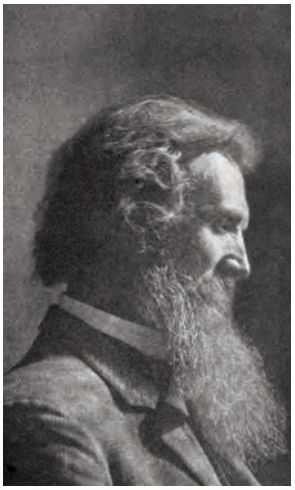
If this all sounds like bad news, Boulter, with the cold eye of a scientist, was able to point to a silver lining: "The planet would of course be delighted for humans to become extinct, and the sooner it happens, the better."

Persisting in the belief that, once the world wakes up to the certain fact that we're in the process of wiping ourselves out, we will decisively draw back from the brink, appears little more than a comforting myth. Author Chris Hedges explores this painfully when he wrote "We stand on the verge of one of the bleakest periods in human history, when the bright lights of civilizations will blink out and we will descend for decades, if not centuries, into barbarity."

Even now, at two minutes to midnight, there are real steps we can take to at either delay or (if extraordinarily lucky) even dodge disaster. For starters, scientists now estimate that 80 per cent of all known fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground to avert disaster.

We now have no choice but to forgo the easy wealth that comes from burning this vast carbon store and switch to low-carbon sources. Like it or not, this also means the winding down of consumption-based capitalism and major declines both in energy consumption and living standards.

And this remains, perhaps the greatest challenge of all. Homo sapiens, the 'wise ape', having struggled to overcome all natural obstacles, is now facing the most intractable evolutionary conundrum of all – learning and accepting our own limitations as but one species among many, which together form the web of life on Earth. Only by letting go can we hope to escape the trap our ingenious rapacity has sprung for us. This description coined by the great 19th century naturalist, John Muir has never been bettered: "when one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world".



John Muir

John Gibbons is a specialist environmental writer and commentator and tweets @think_or_swim



Habitat destruction by "clear-cutting"

INTO's Climate Change Action

by Professor Simon R. Molesworth AO, QC Executive Chairman, INTO

The International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) has been an active participant in climate change debates. When the INTO Congress met in Dublin in October 2009, coinciding with the 13th ICNT (International Conference of National Trusts) which An Taisce so magnificently hosted, the INTO members present unanimously endorsed the Dublin Declaration on Climate Change. This Declaration, on behalf of the citizens of the global heritage movement, urged world leaders to take strong and decisive action to address climate change and its impacts on heritage through both mitigation strategies that reduce climate change and adaptation strategies to cope with its unavoidable consequences.

The ICNT itself had a number of sessions focussed on climate change which included leading presentations by the Hon. Mary Robinson, Professor John Sweeney (President of An Taisce), Dick Moe (then President of the US National Trust for Historic Preservation), and, most movingly, a young 16 year old Irish schoolboy Eamonn Hayes, speaking on behalf of the younger and future generations.

Following the conference, INTO members throughout the world endorsed the sentiments expressed and thereby endorsed INTO's pro-activism in this area. Shortly thereafter I led INTO's first delegation (comprising 5 delegates) to COP15 convened at Copenhagen in December 2009. The COPs –Conferences of the Parties – are convened annually by the UN to focus on the UNFCCC – the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. At COP15 we widely distributed copies of an INTO booklet on climate change in which we set out the Dublin Declaration and described National Trust projects from across the globe as exemplars of mitigation and adaptation strategies being implemented. Participation in COP15 was followed by a smaller INTO delegation comprising just myself and Oliver Maurice (INTO's Director of Membership) attending COP16 at Cancun in Mexico in November 2010. Due to my then recent appointment as a professor in La Trobe University's La Trobe



COP 17 Durban Molesworth Climate Change TV interview

Institute for Social & Environment Sustainability, the costs of INTO's delegation were largely funded. This support continued for COP17 in Durban, South Africa in 2011, and COP18 in Doha, Qatar, in 2012. In Durban Geoffrey Read (INTO's Director of Special Projects) joined the delegation as did Timothy Molesworth (international affairs consultant) in Doha.

Prior to COP17 in Durban, INTO members gathered again at the 14th ICNT in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, in October 2011, where again the INTO Congress adopted, unanimously, a new declaration dealing with climate change – The Victoria Declaration on the Implications for Cultural Sustainability of Climate Change. The Victoria Declaration took the focus of INTO's climate change campaigning a few steps further by specifically drawing out the failure of the international deliberations of the UN and national governments to sufficiently acknowledge the implications of climate change for the sustainability of culture. INTO's participation in COP15 and 16 had confirmed its concerns that cultural heritage was not even on the agenda, despite the fact that the implications for sustaining cultures were and are dire in the face of climate change.



INTO COP18 booth was visited by many hundreds of UNFCCC delegates

INTO argues in its Victoria Declaration that the failure to communicate the threat of climate change in terms which describe the dire implications for cultural identity, diversity and sustainability and consequential social degradation fundamentally weakens the prospects for global reform to combat climate change. We stated that climate change has the capacity to substantially undermine the integrity of the world's cultures, altering most, if not all, and destroying many. INTO determined that it could not stand by and witness this impact occurring as the destruction of culture is a fundamental breach of the principle of intergenerational equity, in that a culture destroyed or diminished within the time of the current generation will deprive members of future generations of their right to their cultural inheritance. This principle has been confirmed in many UNESCO Conventions.

History has shown that the obliteration of a culture can lead to social annihilation, for instance where the connectivity between a people and their place and their history has been destroyed. The intangible importance of cultural relationships, such as "a sense of place" of a people, is critical to their social identity, diversity and sustainability. The cultural connectivity between a living people and their historical roots engenders pride of place and a spirit to defend it at all costs. Climate change is the current generation's most fearsome threat most likely to undermine all people's cultures thus destroying the integrity and continuity of those cultures as we know them.

INTO has campaigned arguing that, for the sake of future generations, we must collectively tackle climate change not just because of changes in the physical environment, not just for reasons of sustaining human health and welfare, but to recognise that the core strength and connectivity of all the socio-economic systems of humankind, is maintaining cultural identity, diversity and sustainability. We say that if the global community acts too slowly in response to climate change, or acts insufficiently, the cultural legacy for those that follow the current generation will be irreparably diminished.

INTO and its member National Trusts have the capacity to demonstrate that cultural heritage holds not only the record of past successes and failures to adapt to climate change but also the record of successful ways of minimising greenhouse gas emissions and thereby shows how climate change may be mitigated. Our perspective of resource conservation involving soil, energy, water and other natural components of our biosphere can demonstrate that a wise and balanced approach to sustainable land management is achievable. Throughout the National Trust movement, there are many exemplary management approaches that convey a strong, practical and positive message.

A few have questioned whether it is appropriate for INTO to involve itself, on behalf of the National Trust movement, in the climate change debates. In response, I ask the reader to ponder this question: what is at the heart of the heritage conservation work of National Trusts? I suggest it is work focussed on the cultural and natural values of places, celebrating them and seeking ways by which they can be better conserved and appreciated in perpetuity. In focussing on values to be preserved and the need for conservation action to safeguard them, I believe there is absolutely no distinction between identifying threats against heritage as might be manifested in the form of inappropriate development insensitively sited within a heritage precinct or poor town planning on the one hand; and identifying climate change as such a threat on the other hand - save that with the latter the threat is somewhat more all-encompassing.

National Trusts are not all experts in climate change science, but we are expert in understanding the social and cultural implications of climate change. So INTO has not been talking about the science of climate change, rather we have been talking about the ramifications of climate change and what society ought to be doing about it. We have been describing the implications of climate change in terms of its impact on culture and societal values (which includes the values we identify in natural places and processes) and the manifestations of culture, being our heritage.

We have the capacity to talk about climate change in terms and in language that has a greater chance to be understood across the widest spread of communities. On the other hand, scientists often tend to use language, or cite examples of impacts, which effectively "talk" to other scientists. As a consequence of this "communication" trait which has characterised the discussion of climate change, the broader community often "switches off" or becomes dismissive, erroneously believing that the impacts will be largely irrelevant to the continuation



The new norm in Australia - bush fire reddened skies.

of the things that are important to them in their everyday lives.

I maintain that across the globe, sadly, the debates about climate change have been largely hijacked by language that does not resonate with the wider population. Without the wider population being truly engaged, the political processes involving, ideally, politicians listening to and acting in response to their constituency fails. In the climate change field, as a consequence of the failings in communication, politicians then tend to only hear the extremists at either side of the debate without appreciating that the wider community is in fact concerned or would be concerned – if only they understood the impacts on their way of life in terms meaningful to them. INTO's actions are directed at addressing this issue. In talking about climate change in meaningful terms, terms which resonate with people's values, INTO and National Trusts have a unique opportunity to influence.

In both the areas of mitigation and adaptation, National Trusts are strategically positioned. With mitigation, National Trust properties can be used as exemplars, in addition to actually achieving real material benefits on their own properties for themselves. Conserving energy, soil and water, safeguarding natural places, and reusing built structures, National Trust actions are mitigating emissions. With adaptation, the National Trust involvement is critical to influencing political leaders to start thinking about how we might safeguard cultural values in to the future. We must devise strategies by which cultures, and the heritage legacies of them, are sustained in a changed and changing world. This is no different to the role

National Trusts have always played in the face of other threats, such as ill-considered destruction: conservation action has always looked for alternatives, safeguarded the best, ensured photographic, scientific and oral records are maintained.

INTO must continue to perform this role as, quite frankly, there are virtually no others in the climate change area performing a similar role. This statement may surprise, but sadly a review of UN debates, a close examination of the terms of the Conventions and a review of which organisations are contributing to the international climate change "discussions" will reveal an absence of focus on cultural sustainability. It is true that UNESCO has been a (quietly spoken) player at the COPs, as have been a number of indigenous peoples through their leadership organisations, but comparatively the cultural sector has been almost unseen and unheard.

One of the key roles that INTO members have asked of INTO – one of the rationales for their continuing membership – has been to provide models, examples of best practice, projects that can be exemplars of action that might be taken to better safeguard their heritage. Entirely consistent with this "need", INTO's climate change work, in part, fulfils this need.

Another aspect of INTO's climate change work which is fulfilled by our proactive stance, has been to be seen as a global voice for those of our members who would not otherwise be heard. The majority of our INTO members are relatively small organisations (nevertheless important within their nations) and are often impecunious (with all their funds being allocated to critical heritage conservation activity and operational needs). In this context, few INTO members have been able to afford dedicated officers working on climate change issues or broader sustainability issues. By supporting INTO's climate change work these INTO members, in fact the majority, have been pleased that via INTO their views supporting action have been collectively fulfilled without themselves directly allocating scare resources.

So as a concluding summary, INTO maintains that if the threat of climate change is largely, or even solely, described in terms of impacts on physical processes, as has been occurring in the UN debates for too long, then the prospect of achieving global consensus for climate change action will always be undermined. However, if the threats of climate change are also couched in terms of culture – of societal values – we believe there is likely to be greater responsiveness across the global community. Put in terms of cultural identity, diversity and sustainability, the path to wider community understanding and so support for climate change action (both mitigation and adaptation) should be more achievable. There will be engendered a greater willingness to embrace essential reforms. With this perspective INTO has maintained its presence within the climate change debates believing it is essential to do so as, sadly, few others are espousing such views.



Ireland needs a holistic energy strategy

Tomás Bradley, Planning & Environmental Policy Officer
Franziska Dettner, Energy Policy Officer

Ireland's energy challenge is immense. It is now more than two decades since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro when scientists warned humanity that 'no more than a few decades remain before the chance to avert the threats we now confront will be lost and the prospects for humanity immeasurably diminished'. In terms of actual concrete action, however, the worldwide response to these messages from those in a position to bring about change has been almost nil.

It is imperative that Ireland sets out a clear, rational, evidence based and plan-led strategy for the future development of energy and all associated matters to address energy security and climate change.

So what is the strategy? Unfortunately, there is a clear fragmentation in policy with several stakeholders pushing different agendas with the links not obvious to the ordinary public, which has lost confidence, and feels largely disenfranchised by the process.

There needs to be an open partnership with the people of Ireland carried out now, when some options remain open and effective public participation can take place. The promotion of public participation during an early stage of policymaking is key to gaining acceptance and a sense of partnership in the process.

The announcement in March 2014 by the Minister for Energy, Communication and Natural Resources, Pat Rabbitte TD, that plans to export wind energy from Ireland to the UK are unlikely to go ahead in the short term gives the Minister an opportunity to win back public confidence – the support needed to advance a holistic energy strategy for Ireland that actually involves the public, in line with the Aarhus Convention, and accommodating much more than just the wind energy sector.

The Simple Option – Energy Efficiency

The political players in Irish politics see progress in building hard infrastructure; it is something visual which can be highlighted when going abroad, or to the electorate. However, there is now a large resistance to the type of infrastructure which comes with energy. Not alone does it fail to woo voters any more, support for such infrastructure is a political liability. The upshot is clear: the simple approach of curbing energy consumption should be heavily pursued by government in the first instance, something likely to reduce the need for the hard option.

A national energy strategy should be primarily concerned with how energy consumption will be reduced, and thereby herald a society conscious of energy savings – and how to secure them.

There are several options to move in the direction of a more energy efficient society. As a start, a simple yet effective approach would be to better incentivise the migration to LED lighting, daylight-adaptation lightning, motion sensors, A++ rated electrical appliances, thermostats, changing your boiler to a more efficient one and simply making oneself aware of energy consumption, generation and use.

One of the more effective and permanent solutions is to adopt a clear annual target for retrofitting housing stock and carry out full retrofits including insulation, new low-carbon heating systems and so on. Within this strategy should be a comprehensive household energy programme under which 100,000 homes each year are enhanced to cut heating bills and improve comfort levels.

Furthermore, energy efficiency should be given higher subsidies, e.g. the €80 - 85m in annual peat subvention could and should be reallocated towards energy efficiency. Grants are available and more than 250,000 homes have seen some level of intervention since 2000. However, there has been a distinct slump in recent years with little more than 25,000 homes enhanced in 2013 (see graph on the next page).

Key to the implementation of these measures are not only strong, publically-made energy policies but also the provision of a support structure in urban and rural areas for households, landowners and businesses to initiate better area-based energy efficiency schemes and energy sourcing from a range of low-carbon sources. Also, the support of pilot schemes in alternative energy sources to fossil fuel (such as biogas and combined heat and power) should be further progressed.

The Hard Option – Renewable Energy (and associated infrastructure)

While energy efficiency will deliver significant results, it will not overcome our need for energy. Renewable energy has a major part to play in Ireland meeting the targets it signed up to under European Union Directive 2009/28/EC with its 20-20-20 requirement by 2020, namely a 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, a 20% improvement in EU's energy efficiency by 2020, and 20% of the EU's energy consumption to be from renewable sources by 2020.

The generation of electricity in Ireland is envisaged to be mainly covered by wind energy. Defined guidelines for all renewable energies are important to have regard to the interests of communities and at the same time recognise the importance of renewable energy (such as wind) as a relatively clean energy for the future of our environment, as well as having a positive effect on the economy.

A holistic energy strategy should clearly outline the background rationale for shifting from fossil fuel consumption and also the associated issues with renewable sources. For example, wind cannot be relied on to give security of supply without associated grid connections, be it over or underground. Without – or pending – additional grid connection, more conventional sources of energy of equal capacity are needed to ensure supply in times of low wind.

At present, these issues are not being conveyed, making renewable energy an even harder option to support, with significant public resistance to wind farms, pylons and associated infrastructure.

Cessation of Peat Burning

As another core issue, the strategy should address how peat extraction should be wound down as soon as possible. Given not only the impact on our natural heritage, but also the effects burning peat has on our environment and climate through emissions. Peat simply is the most inefficient emission-intensive heating source in terms of the level of greenhouse gas emissions per kW unit.

In that context, it is necessary to include cessation of peat-based electricity generation in the strategy, the phasing out of coal burning at Moneypoint, and the timetabled phase-out of all peat, coal and oil in domestic heating. The dependency on imported fossil fuels worth €6.5 billion every year should be brought down as quickly as possible using the freed up money for retrofitting schemes and the investment in renewable energies.

Moving away from the rhetoric

The science behind climate change has strengthened very substantially in recent years. In light of the current urgency, there is a need for policy-makers to rethink their processes, methods, skills and perceptions of what constitutes a resilient Ireland.

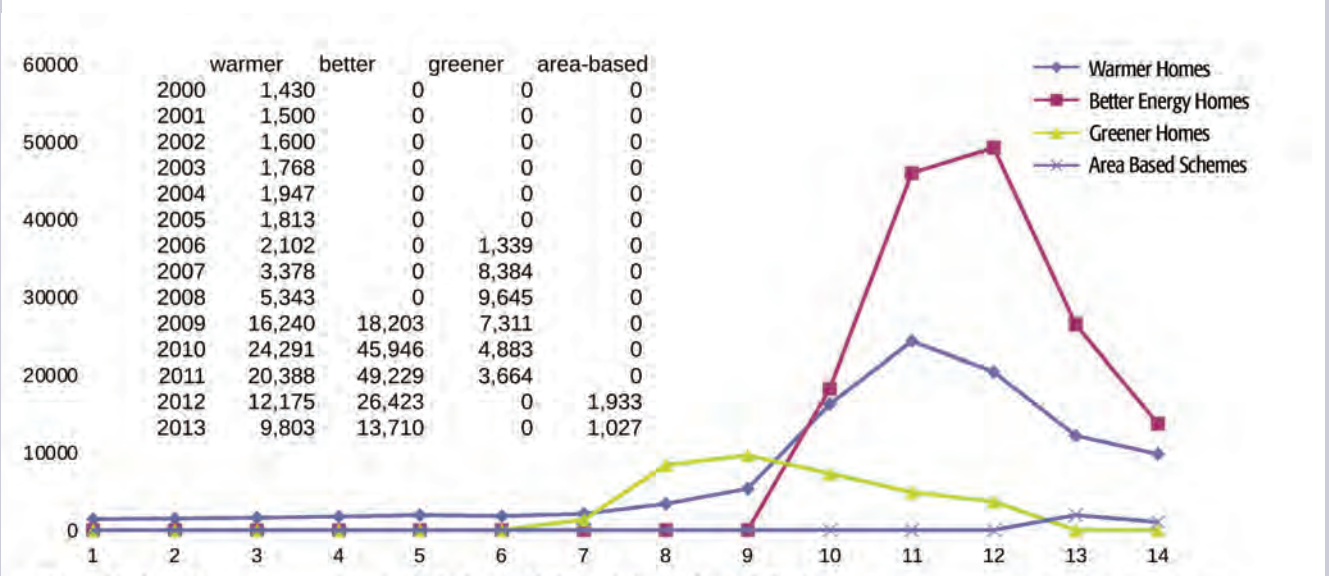
Ireland's planning system governs the provision of new housing, commercial space and other buildings. And there is no shortage of very well intentioned planning policy documents published in Ireland by Government, quasi-Government and Non-Governmental Organisations promoting sustainable development and reduced energy use.

However, the reality has been (and remains) a widespread absence of implementation and almost complete divergence between policy and practice. Planning policy guidance has been habitually ignored in favour of pressing short-term economic factors - gaining revenue from commercial rates and lobbying from special interest groups being the two most prominent.

In the planning arena we have the policies - but implementation has been the Achilles' heel. Clearly that needs to change. Stronger policies will ensure that new buildings consume less energy, and that we consume less energy travelling to them –because they are not in sprawl based locations.

Turning to the energy and climate policies needed for buildings, vehicles and facilities we already have, we need a new policy departure – one that involves people - and lays out the path to low-energy, low-carbon, sustainable society.

It's time for a National Energy Strategy – and with it policies that we can, and do, implement.



	warmer	better	greener	area-based
2000	1,430	0	0	0
2001	1,500	0	0	0
2002	1,600	0	0	0
2003	1,768	0	0	0
2004	1,947	0	0	0
2005	1,813	0	0	0
2006	2,102	0	1,339	0
2007	3,378	0	8,384	0
2008	5,343	0	9,645	0
2009	16,240	18,203	7,311	0
2010	24,291	45,946	4,883	0
2011	20,388	49,229	3,664	0
2012	12,175	26,423	0	1,933
2013	9,803	13,710	0	1,027

The graphic above shows programmes operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. The data was given in response to parliamentary questions. The first link below gives data up to mid-Sept 2013. The second link gives information for the full year 2013 and has been used to compile the line graph.

http://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2013-09-18a.2294
http://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2014-03-13a.373&s=better+energy+%22better+energy+homes%22+1999-01-01..2014-04-05

Climate Change and Food Harvest 2020

by Jack McCarthy
Agri-Environment Officer

Food Harvest 2020 (FH2020) now heavily underscores the Irish government's agricultural policy. The aim of this programme is to increase Irish dairy production by 50%, aquaculture output by as much as 300%, and increase the value outputs for beef, pork and poultry products by something in the region of 20% each by the year 2020.

The main justification made by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM), amongst others, is that Irish agriculture is inherently sustainable and, as such, from a moral standpoint Ireland must increase its agricultural output in order to feed a growing global population.

However, it seems this justification has pretty blatantly cherry picked the figures it chooses to cite. Yes, a 2009 UN Food and Agriculture Organisation report foresees a need to increase global food production by 70% by the year 2050[1]. Both Bord Bia and DAFM often cite this figure of 70%. What they do not refer to is the type of increase advocated by the UN. A subsequent 2010 UN report[2] argues that diets must move away from meat and dairy consumption in order to mitigate against climate change, protect biodiversity, and create farming systems with long term viability. FH2020 completely ignores this recommendation and pushes for expansion in these very areas.

We are already seeing the disproportionately large impacts of climate change on developing countries in the form of droughts, floods and other extreme events. This poses a serious threat to food security as it compromises the subsistence farm yields upon which almost 1 billion people rely.

The global livestock sector, which accounts for 14.5% of total human induced GHG emissions, is a serious contributor to this problem. FH2020 is already driving an increase in cattle numbers in Ireland and, as soon as the milk quotas are lifted in 2015, many more farmers will convert to intensive dairy farming. This type of farming requires higher quality grass, more fertiliser, and increases methane and nitrous oxide emissions – two of the main greenhouse gases.

The Environmental Protection Agency predicts that achieving FH2020 goals will bring a 12% increase in emissions from Irish agriculture[3]. It seems then that FH2020 will exacerbate the problem that it is supposing to relieve whilst claiming to be sustainable.

The only real motive here is increased profit for dairy and meat processors, a small minority of farmers, and a chance for the government to show that it is being proactive in creating jobs. On this point it is important to note that intensified farming and the highly mechanised dairy practices that are being pursued under FH2020 provide fewer jobs and support fewer families in rural Ireland when compared with organic and extensive low-input agriculture.
Indeed, socially and economically disadvantaged areas in the West, the border counties and upland areas will see few benefits from FH2020. What's more, the increased output in high-end dairy and beef products will not be accessible for the 1 billion or so people who remain in rural poverty globally.

It is the swelling wealth of the Indian and Chinese middle classes as well as global infant formula markets that are ripe for flooding with Irish produce.

In order to hide this seemingly obvious contradiction, there are spectacular marketing efforts at play. Bord Bia have launched the Origin Green quality assurance scheme which aims to portray Irish agriculture and its bounty as intrinsically harmonious with Ireland's natural environment.

The main promotional video is extremely convincing in this regard. The video includes landscape shots of golden cereal crops, cattle on lush green pastures, and candid farmers ogling at the camera in quintessentially Irish family-farm scenes. This appeal to our sense of collective 'Irishness' is completed with a narration provided by Ireland's own Saoirse Ronan.

The image promoted here is that of an agricultural industry, which by virtue of its tradition is irrevocably sustainable and in tune with Mother Earth. This, we are told, could be "the defining opportunity of our time, because the rewards it can bring us are breathtaking".

The Origin Green scheme thus buttresses the assertion of FH2020 that agricultural expansion can bring profitability to Ireland's farmers while also alleviating global hunger in an environmentally sustainable way. The stated aims of Origin Green to improve the sustainability of Ireland's agriculture as a whole are laudable. However, the promotion of the innate sustainability of Ireland's agriculture is deeply flawed and, in the case of the expansion of intensive dairy farming, downright irresponsible.

The trade-off then seems to be the following: Ireland increases its luxury agricultural outputs to meet the market demands of the wealthier citizens of developing countries with some profit for a few Irish farmers; the majority of the deficit is borne by the most vulnerable citizens of developing countries who are almost entirely reliant upon local crop based production systems.

In terms of climate change then, the expansion of the Irish dairy industry is being given precedence over the subsistence of the world's poorest people. Although Bord Bia and the DAFM present FH2020 in the most benevolent of terms, this scheme is responding purely to market demands and thus ignores many of the problems it may exacerbate. It is extremely important that we build a healthy and sustainable agricultural sector that contributes to a vibrant rural Ireland. However, in climatic, economic, ecological and moral terms, FH2020 is not the way to do it.

References:
1: 'How to Feed the World 2050', Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, 2009.
2: 'Priority Products and Materials (Assessing the Environmental Impacts of Consumption and Production)', UNEP, 2010.
3. 'Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections: 2012 - 2030', EPA, 2013.

Climate Change

Oxfam's perspective



by David Healy
Policy and Advocacy Officer, Oxfam Ireland

Development agencies, such as Oxfam, are involved in climate change policy because of the impact climate change is having on development and food security. We start from a recognition of the injustice at the core of climate change – those who are most vulnerable to climate change and least able to adapt to it are the communities who have contributed least to the problem. Oxfam's particular focus is on the impact of climate change on food security.

The world faces a real and imminent risk of major setbacks in efforts to combat hunger because of climate change. That risk is not a remote future threat. It is emerging today and will intensify over the coming decades.

Greenhouse gas emissions are changing the world's climate by trapping heat, warming the oceans and the atmosphere, altering regional climates, and creating increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather. The probability of extreme weather events is increasing. The odds of an extremely hot northern hemisphere summer were about one in 300 during the period 1951 to 1980, but increased to nearly one in ten by 1981 to 2010.[1] If the remainder of the 21st century unfolds like its first decade, we will soon experience climate extremes well outside the boundaries of human experience, ever since agriculture was first developed.

Despite global recognition that warming must be kept below the critical 2°C threshold, emissions are rising rapidly, and much higher levels of warming are likely. The earth's atmosphere has just reached a carbon dioxide (CO_2) concentration of 400 parts per million for the first time in about three million years. The last time levels were so high, global temperatures were 2–3°C warmer than they are today, and sea levels were up to 25 metres higher.[2]

Poor people are most exposed

Climate change affects everyone, but developing countries will be hit harder than developed countries and the world's most food-insecure regions will be hit hardest of all.[3]
Although low-income countries in tropical and sub-tropical regions contribute least to climate change, in future they are likely to endure sharp changes in annual rainfall and climatic conditions that will put them at risk of greater food insecurity, especially in Africa and South Asia.[4]

Already, food production and prices are being hit globally by extreme climate events. Other climate impacts and climate change have also been shown to be a key factor in disasters, such as the 2011 Horn of Africa drought.[5]
According to one estimate, climate change and its impacts on hunger and communicable diseases are currently

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[1] J. Hansen, M. Sato, and R. Ruedy (2012) 'The New Climate Dice: Public Perceptions of Climate Change', NASA, Goddard Institute of Space Studies. http://www.giss.nasa.gov/research/briefs/hansen_17/

[2] IPCC (2007) 'Climate Change 2007: Working Group I: The Physical Science Basis', chapter 6.3.2 'What does the record of the mid-Pliocene show?' http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg1/en/ch6s6-3-2.html

[3] M. Parry et al. (2009) 'Climate Change and Hunger: Responding to the Challenge', World Food Programme, http://www.wfp.org/content/climate-change-and-hunger-responding-challenge

[4] G. Nelson et al. (2009) 'Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Costs of Adaptation', International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); and IFPRI (2009) 'Building Climate Resilience in the Agriculture Sector of Asia and the Pacific', Asian Development Bank

[5] F.C. Lott, N. Christidis, and P.A. Stott (2013) 'Can the 2011 East African drought be attributed to human-induced climate change?', Geophysical Research Letters 40, 1177–1181.

[6] DARA (2012) Climate Vulnerability Monitor 2012, 'Findings and Observations', p.241.

[7] This estimate assumes 'a development pathway of continuing high population growth and regional disparity of income'. M. Parry et al. (2009) op. cit., citing W. Easterling and P. Ag-garwal (2007) 'Food, Fibre and Forest Products', in M. Parry et al (2007) 'Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change', http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_ipcc_fourth_assessment_report_wg2_report_impacts_adaptation_and_vulnerability.htm

[8] G. Nelson et al. (2009) op. cit.

[9] Rome Declaration on World Food Security, http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.HTM

responsible for 400,000 deaths a year in the world's poorest countries.[6]
The poorest people are bearing the brunt as climate change exacerbates pre-existing conditions that make them more exposed to the risk of food insecurity.

Today one person in eight goes to bed hungry. It has been estimated that the number of people at risk of hunger by 2050 could increase by 10–20 per cent more than would be expected without climate change;[7] and child malnutrition could increase by 21 per cent, eliminating the improvements that may otherwise have occurred.[8]

Climate change is transforming the hunger challenge

Those attending the World Food Summit in 1996, which came after nearly 30 years of progress in the fight against hunger, believed that food security was attainable.[9]
For Oxfam and others, eradicating hunger is an achievable goal, and one that must be underpinned by an assessment that hunger occurs not because of the scarcity of food but because of inequalities and injustices in the way that food is distributed.

However, climate change is transforming the nature of the hunger challenge and, potentially, our ability to deal with it – and, alarmingly, it is happening at the same time as global demand for food is increasing.

Without urgent action to reduce emissions and build resilience, climate change will challenge the safety and security of the global food system and with it the prospect of ensuring that everyone's basic human right to food can be met. Our food system cannot cope with unmitigated climate change, which could lead to a permanent increase in yield variability, excessive food price volatility, and perpetual disruption to livelihoods that could leave many poor countries and communities with potentially insuperable food security challenges.

EU policy from 2020

The EU is currently discussing what it will do to tackle climate change from 2020 onwards. It has the chance to spearhead a real low carbon revolution, reaping all the health, jobs and economic benefits this will bring, as well as help achieve a global climate deal at the UNFCCC* meeting in Paris next year.

Development and environmental NGOs working together through Stop Climate Chaos are pushing for Ireland to advocate for a strong European position, as well as bringing in a Climate Change Act in Ireland to set a framework for the transition to a low-carbon economy. Unfortunately Irish Ministers speaking at the Environment and Energy Councils in March were very much focussed on the specifics of Ireland's situation and not on the overall transition to a low-carbon economy throughout the EU. Ireland needs to recognise that climate change constitutes a planetary emergency and play an enthusiastic part in responding to the threat.



Elisabeth Tamara with Nevado Huascaran - the highest mountain in Peru - in the background. This area of Peru is already affected by glacial retreat. Locals, who depend on melt for their water supplies, say the level of ice and snow on the mountain is retreating. In Utupampa, the community has introduced drip irrigation to help with the efficient use of water in the dry season.

** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*



Confronting Irish Car Dependence

by Ian Lumley
Heritage Officer

Transport accounts for 18.8% of Irish green house gas emissions. On top of this impact is the 6.5 billion annual fuel import burden. Climate emissions fell after the 2008 crash and the more recent introduction of a 6% biofuel mix, but are now rising again. EPA projections show that 2020 targets under the EU Effort Sharing Decision in the Non Emission Trading Sector, which includes transport, will not be met.

Increasing the level of what is mainly imported biofuel to up to 10% will not achieve a real proportionate emission reduction, since impacts are caused by the cultivation and production process across the world. Biofuel also causes also causes potential conflicts with food production or biodiversity and diversion of resources from the exporting country.

Even if climate emissions were to be reduced by vehicle efficiencies, there are multiple parallel issues to be confronted. The level of car dependence in Ireland creates congestion, slows down public transport and service vehicle movement, undermines cycling, causes air pollution both local and internationally from vehicle manufacture and fuel production, exacerbates urban sprawl and inefficient land use, is causing historic urban centres to decline in favour of out of town shopping, is suburbanizing the rural landscape and promotes unhealthy lifestyles and contributes to obesity levels.

While Government is actively increasing climate emissions from agriculture and taking no effective action to reduce electricity and heating fuel use apart from public buildings, progressive targets were at least adopted for transport in 2009 through "Smarter Travel", published by the Department of Transport.

Smarter Travel -
A NEW TRANSPORT POLICY FOR IRELAND 2009-2020 provides that from 2009:

- **There will be a considerable shift to public transport and other sustainable forms of travel.**
- **The present levels of traffic congestion and travel times will be significantly reduced.**
- **Work related commuting by car will be reduced from a current modal share of 65% to 45%.**
- **The total kilometres travelled by the car fleet in 2020 will not increase significantly from current total car kilometres**

The National Cycling Policy Framework 2009 proposed a target of 10% modal share of cycling to work by 2020

Implementing Smarter Travel

The Smarter Travel policy to reduce car dependence is not even being implemented by agencies directly under the funding control of the Department of Transport. The NRA is proposing to increase the level of traffic generated from the catchment areas feeding the M7 into the greater Dublin area, supporting Kildare County Council in a current application to An Bord Pleanála proposing to add two lanes to 13 km of the M7 between the Newbridge and Naas interchanges.

This would encourage more car based travel from the catchment area in counties Kildare and Laois feeding into the M7, undermine modal share with rail and bus, and encourage extra traffic from the Greater Dublin Area and beyond to funnel into the Red Cow junction and M50. This would undermine the national modal share targets, which need to be higher in the Greater Dublin Area if the overall national targets are to achieved by 2020.

Planning applications are being made both at local authority and An Bord Pleanála across the country which ignore Smarter Travel targets and are dominated by outmoded concepts of accommodating car traffic demand.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) was given the role previously held by the Dublin Transport Office (DTO) in commenting on planning applications affecting traffic generation. Regrettably this function continues to be exercised without the due respect of Smarter Travel, which was adopted by Government in 2009.

The publication of Smarter Travel policy has been systemically ignored by local authorities and the NTA in decisions such as the Kerry Group campus in Naas with 780 car parking spaces, and by An Bord Pleanála in decisions such as the retail expansion of the motorway orientated Liffey Valley and Kildare Village shopping centres, as well as the extension of car park provision in Dublin airport. It is also reflected in a large number of decisions for fast food drive through takeaways

across the country with An Bord Pleanála taking an inconsistent approach in early 2014 granting an application in Drogheda and refusing in Greystones on design but not traffic generation grounds. Applications for new and expanded schools are also failing to provide for meeting Smarter Travel targets, with some failing to supply the school travel toolkit created by An Taisce's Education Unit as part of Green Schools Travel and published by the National Transport Authority.



An Taisce School Travel Promotion: Walk on Wednesday

Limerick

It might have been expected that the designation of Limerick as Ireland's 'Smarter Travel Demonstration City' with 9 million euro funding support would have some impact on planning applications and decisions. In reality the opposite has happened. Planning permissions have been granted in early 2014 for multiple developments in the Raheen, University Hospital and National Technology Park areas for development ignoring Smarter Travel and approving excessive levels of surface car parking.

Kilkenny

Kilkenny City represents the worst example of outmoded car based planning. The inexplicably An Bord Pleanála approved "Kilkenny Access Scheme" is a road and bridge severing the St. Canice's Cathedral area from the remainder of the historic city centre. The discovery in 2013 of the substantial late medieval remains of a house in Vicar Street on the route means that the demolition of a National Monument would be required to proceed with the scheme, which will require Environmental Impact Assessment. This should enable a review of the whole project to be made in favour of traffic management to meet Smarter Travel targets and proceeding with the continuation of the northern section of the ring road.



Gable end of the house in Vicar Street

The prevailing national problem is that even where token deference is given to Smarter Travel by a Council or An Bord Pleanála for a workplace project, excessive car parking places are uncritically approved based on outdated local authority parking standards, which entirely conflict with meeting the 2020 Smarter Travel targets.

The standard procedure is to attach a condition for the adoption of a detailed Mobility Plan with the detail then left to be resolved, which is rendered meaningless by the level of free car spaces approved.



The so called "Irish Motor Industry" is a vested interest which imports its entire product and evades environmental responsibility on end of life recycling. The collection and management of used vehicles and tyres in Ireland often evades planning and environmental regulation. All over the country stockpiles of cars and tyres accumulate on unauthorized and non compliant sites in a business where lack of regulation accommodates so many cowboy operators. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government carried out a consultation in early 2014 which needs to be translated into effective action on management of end of life for vehicles and tyres.

CONCLUSION

The shambles of adopting of what is a progressive Government Smarter Travel policy in the public and national interest and ignoring its implementation can no longer continue.

Part of the problem is the status of Smarter Travel as a Government policy published by the Department of Transport. It is not given sufficient weight in the planning arena. It needs to be given the status of a Ministerial Policy Directive by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government under Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Significant intervention is now required by the Department of Transport and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to promote public awareness and ensure that the NRA, NTA, Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála work to a strategy of meeting Smarter Travel targets by 2020. This will require a complete redirection of transport investment, reducing car parking provision for all categories of development, imposing parking charges for out of town retail and promoting public transport and cycling.



The European Union:

The way back from stalled environmental reform

by James Nix, Policy Director

Pushing climate change down the agenda isn't something EU policy-makers are doing secretly. It's a very open demotion. "Europe will soon be the only continent dependent on imported energy … the emphasis on competitiveness and prices is an indication that environment and climate concerns are falling down the EU's list of priorities" Herman van Rompuy, European Council President, told the European Council Summit less than a year ago.

Voter participation in elections in falling across Europe (just 43% cast a ballot in the EU elections of 2009, down from 62% in 1979). Also, there is a perceptible lurch to the right, something seen most clearly in France, Hungary, the Netherlands and Greece, while Poland has been antagonistic to environmental reform for more than a decade now.

The growing retrenchment is already visible in policy-making. The new EU climate and energy policies announced this January are disappointing.

Renewables need only rise to 27% by 2030 (a business-as-usual approach delivers 24.4% anyway), and this figure isn't binding on member states – so there's no way to enforce it.

The future of the Fuel Quality Directive, Europe's brake against the importation of highly-polluting fossil fuels, oil from tar sands and shales, for example, is not certain from 2020. On top of that, there is no target for energy efficiency, with discussions on this issue deferred to the consideration of the Energy Efficiency Directive due later this year.

How can we react? Is there a way back to progressive policy-making, and if so, what is it? This is a theme picked up in "Mapping the Green Transformation", a recent publication by the Green European Foundation. With contributions from commentators across Europe, including philosophers, politicians, sociologists and others, the book offers many rich insights.

The opening chapters see a head-to-head debate between the idea that we need to embrace frugality and halt economic growth on the one hand, versus the belief that technology will come to our rescue on the other. Putting the case for the former, Catherine Larrère calls for a "convivial society" to replace our competitive one, asking if we can move collectively to live within ecological parameters - rather than according to our desires.

Ralf Fücks pushes back against the criticism of growth. He says such critiques are "schizophrenic", and notes that Greens in Germany have criticised Angela Merkel for the way austerity policies fail to "open up the prospect of sustainable growth". Were 'Old Europe' to retire to a state of "frugal tranquillity", then Spain and Greece are its template, says Fücks.

A key message from Fücks is a caution against a "preachy Europe". Saying it is right and proper to eat less meat, cycle more and not buy products for which people have been oppressed, or rain forests cut down, "but without a revolution in production efficiency and a swift move to renewable energy, we will not win the climate change battle". While old Europe may stumble or stutter, "billions of people in rapidly industrialising countries will continue working to acquire the attributes of modern life that we have long taken for granted".

The solution here, according to Fücks, is for Europe to become a trailblazer in green technology, a new departure that lays "the foundation for the kind of sustainable growth that can offer younger generations a brighter future".

Florent Marcellesi is more circumspect, noting that a central feature of a society that anchors its development on technology and science is its entrapment by that technology. Political options are narrowed or eliminated where everything that is technically possible is taken to be acceptable.

At the same time Marcellesi does contemplate a certain level of technological advancement and its deployment, but he only wants it to take place if it pays "sufficient attention to the rebound effect". He argues "self limitation" is needed to stay within ecological boundaries "The global management of demand is a priority, not only in more widely accepted matters such as water or energy, but also in all aspects of mass consumption: the consumption of meat and fish, CO_2 emissions, the use of natural resources (renewable or otherwise), available land space, [ethically] acceptable material and economic extravagances".

The conversation Marcellesi is seeking to start is essentially about how humanity needs to, and how it can, set boundaries to limit its own march. For Benoît Lechat it is less about the debate between technophiles and what we might call "plain-lifers", and more about the work that both camps have to do. Plain-lifers must win the case "for a modest mode of life worldwide", while technophiles must garner support for the green taxes that are necessary to counter the rebound effect that results from improved resource efficiency.

Lechat highlights that we must improve the energy performance of our buildings, move towards 100% renewable energy and begin the transition to agro-ecology. A prerequisite to this journey "is planting the seeds of hope for a better life".

Some Europeans waver between a green consumerism versus "the quest for a different life, less centred on consumption and more dedicated to social participation", something the concluding section observes. However, it is counter-productive, according to the editors, to highlight these perspectives as opposing. Instead, what are needed are practical steps to further social and culture change across Europe.

Here, Nuala Ahern, former Irish MEP, offers insight. Drawing attention to the need for a more effective and open public space for pan-European debate, Ahern says the EU "should not aim to create EU media outlets operating from Brussels such as Euronews, but it could try to enhance outlets operating in individual Member States: by sponsoring websites offering translating of leading articles, subsidising the exchange of radio and TV documentaries, or backing a journalistic equivalent of the Erasmus programme". It is on such practical suggestions that progress across the EU relies.



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An Taisce Green Home:

A tool to guide behaviour change through our 'Perfect Storm'?

by Dr. Dorothy Stewart,
Green Home Programme Manager

At 7.3 billion in 2014, the world's population increased fourfold in the last century. In the same time our use of freshwater increased nine-fold, our climate emissions rose seventeen-fold and our overfishing of the seas grew by a multiple of 35. We can live well as 10 billion people on this earth, but not if we do so while using the resources of 30 or 40 billion.

In 2012 the former UK Scientific Advisor Sir John Beddington warned of a 'Perfect Storm' citing climate change, a growing global population and damaging production and consumption patterns as the key factors driving change. Buenstor and Cordes (2008)* state that contemporary economies pose severe and potentially disastrous challenges to the natural environment. In the 250 years since the Industrial Revolution, mankind has emitted half a trillion tonnes of carbon by burning fossil fuels, a process that has caused atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to rise by 40 per cent. We are on track to release another half trillion tonnes in the next few decades, and this would result in a major jump in global temperatures (Sweeney, 2013).

The 21st century is characterised by the need for more resource consciousness, dematerialisation and in the words of Heinberg (2011) the need for a 'New Normal' where growth is defined as the need to grow less quantitatively and more qualitatively. As a small open export-led economy Ireland in 2014 is faced with a number of socio-economic, environmental and cultural challenges. A 'Not-To-Be-Missed' opportunity now exists for initiatives that harness the capacity of social capital more extensively to facilitate Ireland's transition to a more sustainable future.

The An Taisce Green Home programme, an action based environmental education programme represents a fundamental element in delivering this vision. The programme promotes and facilitates positive sustainable action within the home and the wider community. Through awareness raising and the provision of advice, practical tips and activity based challenges on the themes of waste, energy, water and transport the An Taisce Green Home Programme empowers individuals to take action in their own homes. By carrying out these actions, participants can reduce daily waste production, use energy and water more prudently and learn about sustainable transport options. The Green Home programme is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the National Waste Prevention Programme.

The EPA emphasises a number of deadlines which Ireland has to meet in the coming decade, to include: *inter alia*, EU National Emissions Ceiling Directive, the Water Framework Directive and the Landfill Directive (EPA, 2006). Ireland's 2012 State of the Environment Report stresses that likely future developments across all sectors of the economy in Ireland will place pressure on environmental quality over the next two decades (EPA, 2012). Allied to this are Ireland's commitments under the Energy Efficiency Directive entered into force on 4 December 2012. This Directive establishes a common framework of measures for the promotion of energy efficiency within the Union in order to ensure the achievement of the Union's 2020 20 % headline target on energy efficiency and to pave the way for further energy efficiency improvements beyond that date. Most of the Energy Efficiency Directive provisions will have to be implemented by the Member States by 5 June 2014.

Waste generation and resource use in Ireland remain at unsustainably high levels. A European Environment Agency (EEA) analysis of nine EU Member States found that the majority of key environmental pressures caused by total national consumption can be allocated to eating and drinking, housing and infrastructure, and mobility (EEA, 2010). These contributed approximately two-thirds of the consumption-related material use, greenhouse gas emissions and other air polluting emissions.

The rationale for the development of the Green Home Programme is directly linked to the success of the An Taisce Green Schools initiative in Ireland. Green-Schools/Eco Schools was developed in 1994 by the Foundation for Environmental Education on the basis of the need for involving young people in finding solutions to environmental and sustainable development challenges at the local level, as identified at the UN Conference on Environment and Development of 1992. Green Schools, an international environmental education programme, environmental management system and award scheme promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole school action for the environment. Over 90% (3,200 schools) of all schools in Ireland are currently participating in the Green-Schools programme.

There are two interrelated strands to the Green Home Programme: the Revision Strand and the Outreach Strand. Green Home schools revise previous Green-Schools themes that the school has been awarded a flag for, to include waste, energy, water and for some schools, transport. The Revision Strand is particularly useful for newer pupils to the school who will hear afresh the core messages of the Green-Schools programme. Revision of previous work completed on the different themes also helps to reinforce the Green Home message and introduces the participants old and new to up to date knowledge and information on the individual themes.

The Outreach Strand of the programme actively encourages pupils' families to review energy and water usage in the home alongside their waste generation and their current modes of transport. This is done through surveys (hardcopy/online) that provide the household with baseline data scores on the themes of waste, energy, water and transport.
The participants take part in simple homework challenges/activities, to include: 'Slim Your Bin' waste reduction challenge; 'Energy Vampire' energy reduction challenge; 'Water Wise' water conservation challenge and 'Travel Green from Home to School' sustainable travel challenge. Householders are encouraged, to avail of the Green Home website www.greenhome.ie as a source of information on how to participate in the programme and as a resource to provide up to date information on environmental issues. The website also contains a series of Action Plans on the four themes of Waste, Energy, Water and Transport that once adopted deliver immediate benefits for the householder. This represents a strength of the programme as a means to initiate behavioural change as participants immediately discover ways to save money on their household bills and have the added 'feel good factor' of knowing that their actions have a positive impact on the environment.

To date, 108 primary schools with approximately 30,000 associated households throughout Ireland have participated in the Green Home programme. There are 7,600 thousand online members and this includes over 200 Tidy Towns groups. The Green Home programme team are currently working with schools, community groups and businesses in several counties throughout Ireland. The Green Home programme was designated as a 'Preferred Action' in 2012 under the 'Sustainable Waste and Resource Management' element of the National Tidy Towns competition. The programme was also awarded a diploma from the European Commission in 2012 for the 'Green Home Harvest Project' under the European Week for Waste Reduction. In 2013, St. Mary's, a Green Home school in Trim was awarded the accolade of Green-School/College in the National Green Awards. By its nature and design, the Green Home programme is broad in its scope and appeal and this is evident in the diversity of the programme participants from schools, community groups, businesses, banks and 2013 Rose of Tralee contestants.



As part of its Greener Festivals commitment, this year the Rose of Tralee Festival took part in An Taisce's Green Home programme.

Finding ways to save money by making small changes in behaviour is an attractive incentive and most especially during recent times of economic austerity.

Behaviour change is at the heart of the Green Home programme. There is growing research and debate about models of behavioural change with considerable attention now focused on understanding theories and models of behaviour change within groups, organisations and whole communities in transition toward a more sustainable society. Participation and involvement in groups and social networks can have positive outcomes for both the individual and the community in general. The positive outcomes that accrue from this interaction are generally termed social capital (Osés-Erasoy & Viladrich-Grau, 2007). A strong civil society is dependent on the existence of an abundance of social capital. This in turn forms a corner stone of a modern liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1999). Social capital is not something that can be taken for granted but instead must be constructed through deliberate actions that foster social bonds that can be tapped into as a source of other benefits (Portes, 1998). The Green Home programme presents an excellent opportunity to foster, develop and renew such social bonds contributing to the social capital that is essential in a functioning democracy (Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Social capital in tandem with human, physical and natural capital represents the types of interdependent capital that drive social and economic progress.

Social capital is advanced through the process of self efficacy. Self efficacy is seen by Bandura (1986) as perhaps the single most important factor in promoting changes in behaviour. The Green Home Programme is designed to build upon participants' confidence in their ability to take action and persist in action. Self-efficacy can be increased in a number of ways, among them by providing clear instructions, providing the opportunity for skill development or training and modelling the designed behaviour. To be effective, models must evoke trust, admiration, and respect from the observer; models must not, however, appear to represent a level of behaviour that the observer is unable to visualise. All Green Home activities are achievable and this increases the chance of success in implementation. Green Home participants are rewarded for the activities that they participate in on the programme. This measure is deemed as being extremely important to maintain the behavioural change in the medium to long-term horizon.

The Green Home programme is an effective and innovative tool to increase social engagement as a means to bring about a change in attitude. Allied to this is the insight that the programme delivers on behaviour change within the context of the value/action, attitude/behaviour gap. Social engagement also enables a greater understanding of the concept of sustainable development and how this relates to everyday living in Ireland in a resource conscious 21st Century.

Based on Green Home research findings, an estimated potential saving of around €320 per annum is possible for households that fully engage with the Green Home programme. Research has found that one third of the food we buy gets thrown away with a potential cost of up to €1,000 per household. This figure when added to potential Green Home savings represents potential savings for Green Home participants of up to €1,320.

Notwithstanding the success that has accrued in the area of behaviour change for sustainable development there continues to be a 'Value-Action/ Attitude-Behaviour' gap. Trinity College Dublin Consensus Research Project on sustainable consumptions patterns found that although 73 per cent of Irish respondents stated that they would be willing to install insulation in their homes for environmental reasons, only 23 per cent of respondents had actually done so in the past five years (Lavelle et al. 2012, cited in NESC, 2012).

During the latter half of the 20th century, evidence emerged to suggest that human behaviour is often irrational. To address this, economics integrated insights from psychology with economic theory, resulting in a new sub-discipline called 'behavioural economics', which implies why decisions may not be rational. Simon (1955 cited in European Commission 2012) introduced the notion of 'bounded rationality', which proposes that rational decision-making is often limited by the availability of time, or in some cases, too much choice which leads to procrastination (Swartz, 2004). This 'paradox' of choice can be heightened by the complexity of green behaviour, for example, it is difficult for consumers to decide whether non-organically locally-produced food is more sustainable than organic food that has been transported long distances (Soderholm, 2010 cited in European Commission 2012).

King et al., (2009) advocate that people need to know the relative benefits of specific actions and to be convinced of the benefits to themselves and to the environment. Cox et al., (2012: 6 cited in NESC (2012) conclude that 'a combination of educational activities, changes in organisational policies and investments in infrastructure can foster new organisational values'. It added that 'addressing individual, social and material factors jointly in a coherent and holistic programme is essential to foster lasting change'.

Green behaviour is the shared responsibility of individual citizens, public authorities and industry (Sonigo et al 2012 cited in European Commission 2012). NESC (2012) cites projects, such as the Green Schools Initiative and others underway in local authorities and in companies as a powerful means of illustrating to people how they might change their behaviour (and reduce emissions and, in many instances, save money). Facilitating behaviour change that sees economy, environment and society in harmony is a core principle of the Green Home programme.

As the programme has grown and evolved new media have become 'cost effective' tools to disseminate the Green Home message and to extend the main message of the programme to a wider audience. Facebook, Twitter and Flickr have been used to reach potential new members, to engage with new members and existing members in discussions and debates, and also to keep people informed about Green Home related news and events. New media have undoubtedly expanded the programme's network of members by creating virtual connections, while also supporting and supplementing the day to day activities of the programme. Heinberg (2011) discusses visibility of initiatives that facilitate the transition to more sustainable living. New media enhances visibility, enables two way communications and provides feedback mechanisms from the wider community that are fundamental to future development of the Green Home programme.

Much debate surrounds new media with empirical evidence supporting both the sceptical and optimistic theories on the social effects of new media (Levinson, 2004). Although there are pros (Norris, 2002) and cons (Putnam, 1995, 2000) associated with new media, it is contended that new media represents a potential factor in facilitating social change and participatory democracy. As suggested by Levinson, new media provides a new conduit for social interaction that can "transform existing traditions, habits and practices of information and communication" (Levinson, 2004: 2).

In conclusion and in the words of An Taisce's esteemed President Professor John Sweeney in 2013, 'Our current depressed economic state presents a chance to rebuild in a more sustainable way. We are a small, nimble country that can react quickly, take advantage of opportunities and position ourselves to make sure we're not a big loser because of climate change. We have the talent and the potential to become leaders in a new, low-carbon industrial revolution'.

The An Taisce Green Home programme represents one tool to guide behaviour change towards more sustainable development by harnessing the capacity of social capital in mitigating socio-economic and environmental challenges and facilitating Ireland's transition to a more sustainable future and local resilience.

Green Home as an action based initiative is an effective and innovative tool to increase social engagement as a means to bring about a change in attitudes. Current and future success of the Green Home Programme is entirely dependent upon people working together in partnership and on people's willingness to give their time and energy to help to make a difference in their community.

The application of the An Taisce Green Home programme is independent of economic circumstances and at the heart of the programme are the words of Benjamin Franklin (1750), "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn".

For more information about Green Home, please visit: www.greenhome.ie

** To view detailed references for this article, please see the online version at:* www.antaisce.org/Green_Home_Article

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National Walk to School Week supports Cara's Dream to Walk

by Ciara Norton, Research and Communications Officer, Green-Schools Travel

This year Green-Schools National Walk to School Week takes place from Monday, May 12th to Friday, May 16th. During this week students from across the country will come together to show their support for a greener, healthier environment by encouraging pupils, parents and teachers to walk to school wherever possible. On May 14th, National WOW Day (Walk On Wednesdays/Weekdays), Green-Schools will hope to pass their target of 20,000 students walking to school.

As part of National Walk to School Week schools are encouraged to host events such as sponsored walks, in order to involve as much of the school and wider community as possible in their efforts and this year Green-Schools is asking schools to consider supporting Cara Tighe, their WOW Girl 2014, and her Dream to Walk by holding sponsored walks and events during National Walk to School Week.

Cara, a first class student at Ardkeeran NS, Co. Sligo, has cerebral palsy and is determined to walk to school alongside her classmates. To help her achieve this Cara is attending twice weekly physiotherapy sessions, which aim to allow her to walk to school unaided. She currently needs assistance when walking and also cycles a purpose-built bicycle to school.

Ardkeeran NS began working on the Green-Schools Travel Theme in 2012. They launched their 'We ♥ to Walk' days in February 2013 by asking families to walk all or part of the way to school. The school, under the guidance of their Green-Schools Travel Officer Imelda Ryan-Jones and School Coordinator Joanne McHugh have worked hard to encourage families and the local community to reap the rewards of sustainable and active travel. Ardkeeran NS will be awarded their fourth Green Flag for Travel in May 2014.

Cara and her family have also taken the sustainable travel message to heart and it is Cara's determination to partake fully in the school's walking events that inspired Green-Schools to name her our WOW Girl 2014. In May 2013 Cara helped her school achieve a 100% participation rate in the Cross Border Walking Challenge; on the morning of the challenge she walked with her mother from her grandparents' house one kilometre away from the school. This was a turning point for Cara, whose family now regularly Park 'n' Stride to school.



Green-Schools Travel WOW Girl 2014 pictured with Fionn the Foot and Green-Schools Travel Officer Imelda Ryan-Jones.

"When it isn't raining Cara will ask through her Lámh sign language to walk the rest of the way as we approach her grandparents' house and even though sometimes I'm in a rush, like lots of parents, I stop and we continue to school on foot. It gives her so much pleasure, the feeling that she is one of the gang; the effort is so worth it", explains Majella Tighe, Cara's mother.

Cara's teacher and Green-Schools Coordinator Joanne McHugh says she has seen a huge improvement in Cara's mobility since her physiotherapy sessions began. "Cara inspires everyone around her. She gets to put a green leaf on the Travel Tree because she now walks part of the way to school and she loves doing that", adds Joanne.

Green-Schools Travel Manager Jane Hackett is enthusiastic about Green-Schools involvement with Cara's Dream to Walk: "We are really looking forward to seeing schools embrace Cara's story during National Walk to School Week. While we are never short of good news stories the fact that our programme has encouraged Cara to pursue her dream of walking is beyond anything we ever thought we would see. We're very grateful to Cara and her parents Damian and Majella for allowing us to name Cara our WOW Girl 2014 and to share her story".

All funds raised by schools as part of National Walk to School Week and National WOW Day will go towards the ongoing cost of Cara's physiotherapy sessions, which cost €300 per week.

Green-Schools
An Taisce



'Newtown Cove', photograph by Thomas Quilty
'Love Your Coast, Clean Coasts annual photography competition'



'The Sunbeam', photograph by Paul Flynn
'Love Your Coast, Clean Coasts annual photography competition'

Heritage tourism. An oxymoron?

Travelling in South East Asia is still other-worldly despite increasing globalisation.

by Judy Osborne

So near and yet so far, the culture in South East Asia has emerged from a very different world view and shaped each peoples in distinctive ways. This is what I understand to be heritage. It is what defines a nation and newly emerging nation states are not slow to use this to their advantage.

The definition of heritage is at the mercy of politics

Defining that heritage and determining what will be conserved is at the mercy of politics and in both the countries that I have experienced in my recent travels, Thailand and Laos. There the governments have chosen to primarily protect the architecture of the ruling elites. In Thailand, palaces and other haunts of royalty receive the most attention, in Laos it is the Buddhist temples and the colonial architecture that predominate so that everywhere the culture is experienced primarily through its architecture.

Heritage must include intangibles and herein lies the conflict

However the study of heritage moves on and contemporary exponents of the discipline are now placing much more emphasis on cultural heritage, not just the architecture of ruling elites but intangibles, authentic lifestyles, customs and rituals... and herein lies the conflict. Too often the protection of heritage for the economic benefits that tourism then brings actually destroys the very culture it claims to defend.

For example, 70 years ago a temple at Phnom Rung in Thailand was dilapidated amid local forests. The local people instead still worshipped spirits at a nearby tree, even making an annual pilgrimage there on foot. The local people had long ago incorporated these sites into their own cultural landscape.

However the government decided to restore the ruined temple as a national monument and forcibly relocated the forest monastery causing endless conflict. The government also turned the pilgrimage from a religious event into a tourist experience which recreated the original Hindu rituals. Instead of a local site it became a national site. Villagers were forbidden to use the land and water as before. They could not use candle wax, incense, gold leaf anymore and following vandalism, there were even more restrictions on locals.

The conflict is also very clear in Luang Prabang in Laos. This small town, just a bit bigger than Bray in County Wicklow, received UNESCO heritage status in 1995 at a time when the Government was struggling to shift the country out of desperate poverty. Despite massive corruption and disappearing millions of European money, which led to the expulsion of the French officials, the designation has been reasonably successful in providing the stimulus to renovate and conserve many of the remaining 34 temples in the town.

Whilst not always strictly enforced (which I am led to believe depends on who you know) there is now a local heritage plan which identifies all the properties to be protected and different zones which set out a range of regulations regarding the style and materials that can be used to renovate or rebuild. The planning guidelines, produced by a team of mainly French architects, are clear and strong, much like Irish guidelines, and the outcome is utterly charming giving the town the feel of French colonial which fits well with the relaxed lifestyle of the country.

They say your heartbeat slows down in Laos and I can well believe it. There are no supermarkets or neon signs here though it is probably more the small scale of the place that keeps Tesco out of the region.



But is it authentic... or a Buddhist Disneyland, which is how I have heard long time residents describe Luang Prabang? The conservation has been entirely for economic reasons and in the past 20 years the number of tourist businesses has increased from 87 to 363 in 2009. It is undoubtedly even more today. It seems that almost every property is a guesthouse, restaurant or travel agency and many local people have sold out, often to foreigners, who enjoy the climate and the expat lifestyle - and used the proceeds to buy new properties in a line of ribbon development following the electricity lines on all the approach roads to the town.

Exposure to tourism is deeply affecting local people

Obviously this exposure to tourism is deeply affecting local people, not least because with less local people actually living in the town there are less people to give alms each morning to the monks who are not allowed to handle money or grow or store their own food. In the tourist season there are plenty of people, often with no interest in religion of any description who want to take part in this spectacle but for 8 months of the year there may not be enough offerings and monks may even go hungry.

Once the capital of Laos, the town has been patronised by the royal family since earliest times and since the 16th century has been a centre for Buddhists. There were originally 65 temples and

there are still hundreds of young boys who come into the town to become novice monks. Buddhist philosophy revolves around the idea of making merit that will bring credit in the cycle of rebirth that will ultimately bring them to nirvana, so many families will find a way to support at least one son to bring credit to the family. (Much as happened in Ireland in earlier times) However these days many Lao boys have few spiritual aspirations and are far more interested in learning English so that they can become waiters or tour guides.

So not only may we question the authenticity of some of the architectural renovations but we may also question the presentation of Laos as a Buddhist state. Is this also a false representation offered up as a tourist ploy? Whilst 40 % of the people claim to be Buddhist, many observers would claim that this is in fact a thin veneer across society. Animism, the belief that spirits reign over both land and people, is far more pervasive. Everywhere are spirit houses to be seen and daily offerings made to please the good spirits and placate the mischievous.

Having failed to stamp out religion after the revolution, the authoritarian structure of Buddhism and its marketability make it a more attractive philosophy than unpredictable animism for the communist government to protect and promote, but is it for real or a construct?

Heritage tourism in Ireland

The issues do have parallels in Ireland. Whilst An Taisce may itself have used economic arguments from time to time to plead for heritage protection, the tensions created by the protection of heritage so that it can be exploited for economic gain is not lost. Numerous tourist projects in the past decades have had a devastating impact on the sites they were built to service. Do you remember those photos of the hotel beside Trim castle! What about the dreadful development of Carton House? What do you think of the Cliffs of Moher these days? Can you imagine the impact if a cruise liner dumped 5000 passengers in Wicklow harbour to see the quaint Irish Victorian town? (Once a semi serious proposal!)

It is very difficult to protect heritage in the face of a booming economy and the Siam Society, Thailand's National Trust have done some excellent work in recent years outlining the problems. I suspect many An Taisce members would recognise the issues that are presented at length in their latest scholarly annual journal. Quite apart from the expansion of development in Thailand there is a very poor legal framework, a lack of professionalism and proper data, deficient government, corrupt politicians and official neglect. Without expanding at length the problems in Ireland, it is worth noting that despite the database of protected structures in each development plan, there is still no clear assessment of which sites are at risk and need urgent attention.

So what is to be done? Clearly far more academic work is always required both in South East Asia and Ireland, so that authoritative submissions can be presented and wise decisions taken by officials in the face of glossy environmental impact statements prepared on behalf of developers. The government needs a clear policy and coordination between departments (a big problem in Thailand and Laos where empire building is rampant and a not insignificant problem in Ireland where poor communication can lead to conflicting objectives). It goes without saying that good monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure policy is effective.

But above all, the key to good policy is always strong involvement from local people. Without this nothing will really work. If local people don't value their own heritage then it will always be easy for development to take advantage of the vacuum and use common assets for personal gain.

One interesting project that I read of in Thailand was the cultural mapping of Phong Rung that I described earlier. The level of conflict over the forest site became so intense that something had to be done. By involving the locals in a project of "cultural mapping" to elicit their own personal experiences of the site a new confidence emerged amongst the people and resolution was found.

What can organisations like the Siam Society and An Taisce do?

Well the Siam Society has recently spent time agreeing that it will focus on analysis and a programme to improve knowledge, advocacy and awareness. Do we also need such a discipline to guide us?

We must all be stewards of our own heritage

Certainly we must all be stewards of our own heritage and this is surely where An Taisce can and does make an important contribution. Like the Siam Society in Bangkok, An Taisce aims to promote knowledge, to advocate and to raise awareness. If we look after our own heritage for its own sake, then the economic benefits of tourism will surely follow in a more organic fashion. Local Associations can provide a locus for this involvement! Whether that is to care for a particular structure or to provide a programme to educate ourselves, I would urge people to get involved.







References. *I drew inspiration for this piece from my own experience travelling but took other examples from articles in the Siam Society's journal which anyone can borrow from me if they wish. I also found useful facts in "linkages between heritage policy, tourism and business", by Suntikul Wantaree, available on the internet.*

An Taisce

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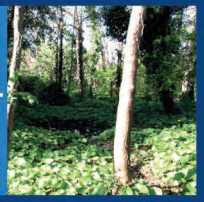
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An example is the partnership with Inland Waterways Association of Ireland to restore the Boyne Navigation. See the recently-restored sea-lock below.

To donate to the Boyne Navigation or your local property, post a cheque made payable to An Taisce to Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, D8, Ireland



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Photograph: 'The Guardian of Achill's Ashleam Bay' by Ronan Bree Love Your Coast, Clean Coasts annual photography competition'



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