AN TAISCE
THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR IRELAND

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

OUR VISION IS A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL.

AN TAISCE IS A MEMBERSHIP BASED **CHARITY** THAT WORKS TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT IRELAND'S **NATURAL** AND **BUILT** HERITAGE. WE ARE AN **INDEPENDENT** VOICE FOR THE **ENVIRONMENT** AND FOR **HERITAGE** ISSUES.

EDUCATION

Our Environmental Education Unit is responsible for developing and operating some of Ireland's most popular and successful environmental programmes and campaigns.

PROPERTIES

We own a range of heritage properties in trust, including historic buildings and nature reserves.

ADVOCACY

Our Advocacy Unit is dedicated to promoting the conservation of Ireland's nature and biodiversity as well as its built heritage.

2015 IN NUMBERS

1,110
NEW GREEN SCHOOLS FLAGS

81
PRESS RELEASES

75%
SUCCESS RATE WITH AN BORD PLEANÁLA APPEALS

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

2 CHAIR'S REPORT
John Harnett

3 HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT
James Leahy

3 TREASURER'S REPORT
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

4 ADMINISTRATION REPORT
Eoin Heaney

5 BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE
Doireann Ní Cheallaigh and Ian Lumley

7 BUILT ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Brian Rickwood

10 CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
Alannah Ní Cheallaigh – Mhuirí

12 NATIONAL CYCLING COORDINATOR
Damien Ó Tuama

13 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION UNIT
Michael John O'Mahony

15 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OFFICE
Fintan Kelly

17 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Dr. Declan Murphy

18 PROPERTIES COMMITTEE
Alex Hollingsworth

19 MONUMENTS AND ANTIQUITIES
Dr. Mark Clinton

LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORTS

19 CLARE
Anny Wise

23 CORK
Colm Desmond

23 DONEGAL
Noel Foley

24 DUN LAOGHAIRE
Mairead Mehigan

24 GALWAY/KERRY
Derrick Hambleton/Catherine McMullin

25 KILKENNY
Mary T. Brennan

26 LIMERICK/MEATH
Brian Leddin/Jean V. Carr

27 NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION/DUBLIN SOUTH
Michael Kirby / Norman Campion, Valerie Bond, Andrew Parkes

28 WESTMEATH/WEXFORD
Jack O'Sullivan/Brian Rickwood

29 WHO WE ARE

EDITED BY Eoin Heaney
DESIGNED BY Ashville Media Group
COPYRIGHT An Taisce 2016
COVER: Trim Castle, Co. Meath. Photo: Tony Pleavin/ Fáilte Ireland
INFORGRAPHICS: Flaticon.com

All rights reserved. Every care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate. The publishers cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Reproduction by any means in whole or in part without the permission of the publisher is prohibited. © Ashville Media Group 2016. Published April 2016.



CHAIR'S REPORT

BY JOHN HARNETT

The overriding principle now is Climate Change and how we use or don't use the resources of the planet to limit the catastrophe that will occur for huge swathes of mankind. Everything is connected; water quality, biodiversity, farming practice, transport, economic growth, energy, and consumption of resources. Ireland though small in global terms must play its part and if possible lead by example – everything is connected.

We have continued the fight in 2015 to stop the destruction of our great carbon sinks - the bogs of Ireland. Though they continue to be plundered ruthlessly with even the destruction of a 3000 year old trackway at Mayne in Co. Westmeath not being a restraint. We have had some success with the Edenderry ruling by the High Court that in extending planning permission An Board Pleanála must consider the environmental implications of all aspects of the project including the destruction of bogs to feed the power plant. The Environmental Impact Statement on the planning extension must cover all aspects of the operation of the plant. The government however seems set to try and allow their continued destruction into the future irrespective of climate change implications.

Like all great fights to protect something it needs its champions to keep the work going. Sadly in this regard we have to note the death of a great champion for the environment and An Tasice for 40 years in Donegal - May McClintock RIP.

IRELAND THOUGH SMALL IN GLOBAL TERMS MUST PLAY ITS PART AND IF POSSIBLE LEAD BY EXAMPLE – EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED.

Photo above: Greening Communities Awards Custom House Group Picture; bottom right: Students celebrate at Green-Scools Awards in Cork
Below: John Harnett



There is a constant sense and action of renewal in An Taisce. Tailors' Hall is going through a second restoration in 2015/2016, after being saved in the mid 1980s by a dedicated team made up individuals From An Tasice, the Irish Georgian Society and other groups and individuals. Other ongoing projects include the Boyne Navigation and Gort Weigh House. A project with us and still very much alive is Howth Court House which was also saved in the 80's by a dedicated team of An Taisce volunteers from Howth and surrounding areas, a special note of thanks must be made to Rosalie Andrews who held the fort in the last few years.

We are always looking at doing things better internally and thanks to our treasurer in 2015, Paula Maguire, we commenced a plan to streamline financial reporting to the Board and the Education Committee.

An Taisce Green Schools celebrated 20 years in early 2016 with Expo 2016 at which President Michael D. Higgins gave the keynote address, pointing out clearly in his speech the need to get to grips with Climate Change.

And so must we all face up to this challenge. To our members, thank you once again for your support and concern for our environment and the planet that our children and grandchildren will inherit tomorrow.



HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

BY JAMES LEAHY



REVIEW OF ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Most of my time in 2015 was spent assisting Council develop a new draft Constitution for An Taisce. This addresses recent changes to the Companies Acts and Charities Acts and it supports An Taisce's journey to adopting the Governance Code at www.governancecode.ie as a Type C organisation. The Governance Code is a best practice Code of Governance for Community and Voluntary Organisations in Ireland. Type C organisations are ones that are constituted as companies and have significant numbers of employees. There is a flyer attached with information on how Council will bring the Constitution to a General Meeting of the Members of An Taisce, and how Members can engage with this process.

MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

For the past few years the membership systems have been administered mainly by volunteers. I am happy to confirm that the number of members in good standing is increasing by a few percent each year. The main sources are our attendance at the Bloom festival, Local Association events, and people who simply signup on www.antaisce.org/membership. Nevertheless, the potential to grow the membership is much greater than this, and planned projects have been delayed by the need to focus on day-to-day administration. We have therefore recruited a part-time Membership Officer, Lawrence Hemmings. This will allow us to administer the membership in a more efficient and timely way, leaving time to develop these projects:

- A more comprehensive programme of events at www.antaisce.org/events
- Completion of the online membership database system.
- A concessions list for members.

SPECIAL THANKS

A special thanks must go to David Ryan the volunteer who helps to process membership correspondence, as well as the volunteers Judy Osborne and Phil Kearney; all the staff and interns in Tailors' Hall and Swifts Alley, as well as the people who help with membership in the Local Associations.

TREASURER'S REPORT

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

As of March 2016 the position of Treasurer is vacant and the Board are recruiting a new Treasurer. The Board would like to thank Paula Maguire for the work she did as Treasurer from January 2015 to February 2016. A short report on financial issues follows from the Board.

An Audit Committee was established in 2015 and Terms of Reference have been approved. See www.antaisce.org/governance. It met in November 2015 and February 2016. This is an important step on our journey to adopt the Governance Code for Community and Voluntary Organisations in Ireland. Thanks to the members of the Audit committee for their time, experience and oversight.

The other big change in the past year has been a reorganisation of the bookkeeping arrangements in An Taisce. Moore Stephens Accountants have been appointed as management accountants for An Taisce. This is a separate role to that of company auditors which is fulfilled by Russell Brennan Keane Accountants. Moore Stephens will be providing bookkeeping services to the Head Office, Properties and Advocacy Units; and financial advice to Board, Council and all the units of An Taisce.

As part of this reorganisation the books of An Taisce will be split into the four units of An Taisce

- Head Office
- Properties Unit
- Advocacy Unit
- Education Unit.

Previously they were only split in two, with the Education Unit separate, and Head Office, Properties and Advocacy combined.

This will lead to the following advantages:

- It will allow An Taisce to get a better picture of the income and expenses in the Advocacy and Properties Units enabling us to strengthen these units.
- It will give a clearer picture of the membership and governance costs of An Taisce within Head Office.
- It will demonstrate the independence of the finances of the different units. In particular it will show how Head Office interacts with the other three units and how the three sub-units are independent of each other.

Thanks should go to Ronan Murnaghan, Head Office bookkeeper (until early 2015); and Dawn Parkinson, Education Unit Business Administration Manager).

TO SEE THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR AN TAISCE SEE THE LINK:WWW.ANTAISCE.ORG/2015ACCOUNTS.

OR CALL: +353 1 454 1786 IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO POST YOU A COPY.

HEAD OFFICE ADMINISTRATION REPORT

BY EOIN HEANEY



2015 marked a period of continuity amidst change at An Taisce's Tailors' Hall headquarters. We were sad to see the departure of some colleagues but also welcomed fresh new faces, while the output and impact of the organisation continued apace.

Many thanks are due to both Andrew Jackson and Tomás Bradley whose stalwart efforts over the years in the legal advocacy and planning fields respectively served to markedly increase An Taisce's profile. We wish them the very best in their new endeavours. Their replacements, Fintan Kelly as Natural Environment Officer and Doireann Ní Cheallaigh as Planning Officer have already hit the ground running.

Our Maintenance Officer, Louis McGee has applied his expertise to painstakingly restoring the hall's six round-topped windows, arguably the most significant architectural feature of the building. His ability to engineer a solution to just about any issue that arises in the 310 year old Guild Hall is to be commended.

Recently we also welcomed aboard Lawrence Hemmings, our new Membership Administration Officer who is already having a positive impact on the capacity of the team here. Special thanks are also due to Alannah Ní Cheallaigh-Mhuirí for her dedication and hard work in the voluntary position of Climate and Energy Assistant. We would simply not be able to maintain our level of submissions, and breadth of research without the support of Alannah and the other volunteers that drive the various committees.

For a full list of An Taisce's public policy consultations, please see www.antaisce.org/submissions. In tandem, the great work done by Charles Stanley-Smith, our voluntary Communications Officer to promote what we do can be seen throughout the media and is available online at www.antaisce.org/press as well.

FUNDRAISING

Despite the upturn in the economy, raising funds continued to be a significant challenge in 2015 as traditional lines of support for NGOs are being wound down across the board. Thus, much of the focus throughout the year has been on diversifying our income stream by opening up new opportunities, whether through grant giving bodies or the nascent field of corporate social responsibility. We are particularly grateful to the World Resources Institute, The Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, The Ireland Funds, Symantec, The Irish Georgian Society and Dublin City Council for their support pledged in the last year.

Our strategy going forward is to further develop our membership base which has stabilised and is growing steadily under the stewardship of Hon. Secretary James Leahy. Our valued members not only afford us greater legitimacy as an advocacy organisation, but a healthy member base allows for an unrestricted source of income, enabling An Taisce to remain a truly independent voice.

PROJECTS

One of the most significant conservation projects undertaken by An Taisce in recent times began in late 2015 and is currently nearing completion – the emergency structural intervention at Tailors' Hall. Led by Architect James Kelly and Conservation Engineer Lisa Edden, with work done by Oldstone contractors, the work has seen iron trusses and supports inserted into the building to ensure its stability long into the future. Advantage was taken of the opportunity to repoint the entire southern facade, the results of which I can promise will be striking. Focus on this as a priority meant that the Dubline garden project had to be postponed, but we hope to reengage this in the summer months.



Restored arch, Tailors Hall

2015 IN NUMBERS

17,000 PETITION SIGNATORIES

81 PRESS RELEASES

40% INCREASE IN FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

24 PUBLIC POLICY CONSULTATIONS

1 NEW LOCAL ASSOCIATION IN LIMERICK CITY



BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

DOIREANN NÍ CHEALLAIGH
AND
IAN LUMLEY

KEY ROLES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

The Built Environment Office of An Taisce is passionate about protecting Ireland's natural and built environment and creating sustainable space that can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

With Ireland's construction sector expanding and traffic volumes in areas above 'boom-time' levels, it is vital that there is a clear and coordinated evidence-based, plan led, strategic approach to planning and development in Ireland where policy-making objectives focus on current global challenges and creating a sustainable future for Ireland.

Energy decarbonisation and climate change is the biggest and defining challenge of our time. It is imperative that Ireland works towards a major reduction in carbon emissions and reaches targets that have been set under EU2020 and EU2030. With Ireland's three main sources of emissions stemming from agriculture, transport and energy, the office has focused on how best to reduce these emissions through our participation in policy consultation and development management throughout 2015.

Ian Lumley,
Doireann Ní Cheallaigh





Photo: Peat Extraction Machinery, credit: Friends of the Irish Environment

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Throughout 2015, An Taisce has been concerned with development proposals that depart from policies aiming to achieve a low carbon, climate resilient, energy efficient Ireland. There seems to be a lack of correlation between spatial planning and energy consumption and efficiency. Whilst Ireland has a plethora of policies and guidelines pertaining to issues on smarter travel and land use planning, An Taisce considers that there is a serious lack of implementation of such policies at a local level decision-making stage. Over the course of 2015, the built environment office received over 1,000 development management cases for review, assessment and comment. Our aim is to emphasise the role of planning as an important factor in determining location suitability for development proposals, energy efficiency, the creation of compact

settlement patterns, influencing and guiding the transition to more efficient sustainable transport and policy implementation.

APPEALS

Certain development proposals have required the Built Environment Office to submit an appeal to An Bord Pleanála when it is felt that a proposal may contravene policies and objectives laid out at national, regional and local level. At appeal stage, issues raised in An Bord Pleanála appeals during 2015 ranged widely. The most significant was the second application for Edenderry peat co-fire biomass power station, which was lodged parallel to the An Taisce Judicial Review on the first application.

Out-of-town retail development, undermining urban centres and encouraging private transport as a primary means of access was the subject of three appeals, two in Cork and one in Ardee, Co. Louth. Resisting out-of-town locations for such development would contribute to the promotion of city/town centre vitality and encourage a shift towards sustainable access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking, in accordance with Smarter Travel policy.

One-off rural housing was the subject of several appeals that An Taisce made to An Bord Pleanála over the course of 2015. The current dispersal of settlement has created an environment in which over 90% of all trips are made by private car. Scattered settlement impedes the effective provision of public transportation and sustainable rural housing settlement.

Out of all appeals made in 2015 to An Bord Pleanála that have been decided upon, the Built Environment Office was successful in overturning 75% of local authority decisions on unsustainable development grounds.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE 2015 OUTPUT

475
SUBMISSIONS
to Local Authorities Regarding Development Proposals

35
SUBMISSIONS
on Forward Planning / Policy Consultations

37
QUERIES AND REQUESTS
to councils on enforcement matters

FORWARD PLANNING

The prescribed functions of An Taisce also encompass the forward planning process. The Built Environment Office aims to achieve a shift in policies, plans and strategies at national, regional and local level to provide evidence based, plan led strategies that recognise a strong correlation between spatial planning and energy consumption, efficiency and climate change.

A major issue that the office has been involved with is renewable energy sources. Wind Energy development has been a central focal point in the ongoing work of the office and it is apparent that such development has caused increased conflict with the local communities affected. Proper national strategic consideration is urgently needed to identify the most appropriate locations for further turbine development to meet the 2020 40% national renewable target, and how further post 2020 wind energy development is to be linked to the national requirement to achieve decarbonisation by 2050.

In addition, An Taisce reviewed some 40 County Development Plans (CDPs) and Local Area Plans (LAP) at differing consultation stages, from Pre-Draft Development Plan stage to proposed amendments and variations on existing plans. Our aim in reviewing and commenting is to ensure that each CDP and LAP contains strong policies, objectives and land-use zonings that are in line with EU, National and Regional frameworks, policies and guidelines.

BUILDINGS AT RISK

Buildings at Risk remained an important heritage issue in 2015. An Taisce have continued to pursue developers, their financial institutions and local authorities to maintain important buildings that have continued to deteriorate. Among main cases pursued during the year were Aldborough House and the Iveagh Markets in Dublin, Belline Temple, Co. Killkenny and Carrigglas Manor, Co. Longford.


Wind Turbines, Credit: Harrygep

FOR AN OPEN AND FULL LIST OF AN TAISCE'S PUBLIC POLICY CONSULTATIONS PLEASE VISIT WWW.ANTAISCE.ORG/SUBMISSIONS

BUILT ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

BY BRIAN RICKWOOD

We are aware that the membership has expressed the view that there should be a policy on energy and that there have been a number of attempts to write a policy in the past. However the complexities of the subject have left these policies in draft form only and they were never approved by the Council.

Our meetings in 2015 have focused on the delivery of an energy policy for An Taisce. We have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a number of alternative energies and sought opinions from the Climate Change Committee when we moved beyond the brief of the Built Environment Committee. The Climate Change Committee asked us to consider nuclear power as a possible solution in the future but there appeared to be little enthusiasm for nuclear power at this stage and we have shelved this idea for the moment. Another example of the types of questions we examined is illustrated by the idea of using biodiesel which appeared to be a good idea until the use of arable land to grow biofuels is considered with the result that less food will be grown. There are also questions over certain wind turbines which are located too close to peoples' homes and may cause the destruction of fragile environments especially in the construction phase.

We agreed that we need to be much smarter in our production of energy and have to move away from the use of old technologies. We also feel that An Taisce should therefore become an advocate for the transition to a low carbon society to mitigate the significant risks associated with climate change and rising energy costs in the future.

We expect to finalise the energy policy and submit it to Council for approval in 2016 and we have also made a start on a review of the National Spatial Strategy.

IRELAND'S ENERGY

89%
Ireland's energy is imported, costing us...

6.5 BILLION
every year

47%
The energy demand oil represents

Source: Green Schools, An Taisce



"OUR MEETINGS IN 2015 HAVE FOCUSED ON THE DELIVERY OF AN ENERGY POLICY FOR AN TAISCE. "

BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE CONSULTATIONS 2015

- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Renewable Heat Energy Consultation
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Consultation
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Increased Biofuel Obligation Rate Consultation
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Toward Affordable Energy Strategy for Ireland Consultation
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Renewable Electricity Support Scheme Consultation



Unfinished House, credit: Friends of the Irish Environment

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

BY
ALANNAH NÍ CHEALLAIGH–MHUIRÍ

ATCC has had an eventful and, we believe, impactful year, surpassing even our own expectations. Our actions demonstrate our dedication to achieving our strategic aims for 2015.

All ATCC submissions to consultations in 2015 framed the issues within the context of a cumulative carbon budget, thus promoting the concept and illustrating its implications for Irish policy. Our 7 submissions included substantive commentary and suggestions for the National Mitigation Plan (NMP), the Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping for the NMP, the reform of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, Food Wise 2025, Agri-Emissions, Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (a joint effort between the Natural Environment Office and Colin Doyle in particular) and the Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Plan.

ATCC were involved in at least 6 bi-lateral **meetings with influencers** including members of the Oireachtas, Government departments and statutory bodies **with a view proactively to influencing climate-related policy.** John Gibbons and John Sweeney have also successfully engaged with school text publishers Folens and received their written agreement to amend a misleading chapter on Climate Change in their Geography Book for 6th class students.

Members of ATCC have given over 30 public presentations in 2015 which tie in with promoting the economic and societal benefits of climate action and developing a positive climate action communications strategy.

In 2015 ATCC contributed to 39 press releases, many of these promoting economic and societal benefits of climate action. Accordingly, we have had considerable interaction with and impact on Irish media. Prof John Sweeney, John Gibbons and Prof Barry Mc Mullin have made multiple appearances on national television and radio and local radio through the year. John Gibbons wrote an article for the Examiner (2nd December) and Prof John Sweeney wrote an article for the Irish Independent (26th December). ATCC also made an official complaint to RTÉ regarding their Prime Time coverage of climate change. We await a formal resolution.





L-R: The People's Climate March, ATCC members in the People's Climate March

AN TAISCE CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE IN NUMBERS 2015

39 PRESS RELEASES

30 PRESENTATIONS TO THE PUBLIC

11 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

7 COMPREHENSIVE POLICY SUBMISSIONS





L-R: Heads in the Sand, Credit: Michael Holly, An Taisce Banner, The People's Climate March

In 2015 ATCC became signatories of the Community Energy Proclamation. We continue to support the work of the People's Energy Charter and Environmental Pillar through representation by Theresa O'Donohoe and Charles Stanley Smith. ATCC contributed to their influential submissions in the Energy White Paper consultations resulting in the commitment to a new "National Energy Forum", as well as strengthened community consultation and involvement in the "low carbon" energy transition.

Much of the work of ATCC this year has centred on preparing policy makers and the public for CoP21 and the implications of the resulting Paris Agreement for Ireland. Three ATCC members were part of the official Irish delegation - Paul Price, John Sweeney and Ian Lumley. Paul wrote daily reports from the CoP negotiations supplemented by John & Ian.

Phil Kearney, Alannah ní Cheallaigh-Mhuirí, Eric Conroy and Paul Price represent ATCC in ongoing Stop Climate Chaos meetings, reviews, policy group and actions, again focusing primarily on the CoP this year. Through Alannah, ATCC took part in the 'Heads in the Sand' photo stunt in July and the organisation of the largest ever People's Climate March in Ireland (attended by ~5000 people). Phil Kearney, Eric Conroy, and Barry Mc Mullin were amongst the'Cherbourg 35', the group of activists that travelled by ferry and bus to attend the public demonstrations in Paris during CoP21.

In the latter part of 2015 and the first weeks of 2016 we focused our attention on the preparation for the General Election 2016 and the serious lack of climate change consideration shown by candidates. Members of ATCC initiated three individual campaigns which were wholeheartedly supported by ATCC. Professor Barry Mc Mullin led 29 academics in writing an open letter calling for a 'Citizens' Convention for a Post-Carbon Ireland' and created an online petition to support it (http://tinyurl.com/hzw8tfu), which was covered by the Irish Times (12th February). Alannah Ní Cheallaigh-Mhuirí created 'My Doorstep Issue', a campaign for members of the public to make climate change an issue on their own doorstep in the lead up to the election; an article was written for greennews.ie (http://tinyurl.com/jzbuk56) and the campaign was noted in the Irish Times (18th and 24th of February). Phil Kearney and Nils Sundermann of People's Climate Ireland fasted outside Dáil Éireann for 5 days preceding the election, mobilising support for climate recognition in the election under the banner 'Hungry for Climate Action' (see Facebook, @fast_climate on Twitter and the journal.ie of Feb 25th).

MUCH OF THE WORK OF ATCC THIS YEAR HAS CENTRED ON PREPARING POLICY MAKERS AND THE PUBLIC FOR COP21 AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTING PARIS AGREEMENT FOR IRELAND.

All members of ATCC have been active on Facebook and Twitter throughout the year, strongly promoting our concerns about climate change, its implications and mobilising Government and communities to take action.

ATCC meets monthly, generally on the second Tuesday of the month at 5.30pm In Tailors Hall and is open to new members. Please contact climatechair@antaisce.org if you would like to be involved in this important work.



The Cherbourg 35, Credit Eoin Campbell

NATIONAL CYCLING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

BY DAMIEN Ó TUAMA

For the third year in succession An Taisce continued its strategic partnership with Cyclist.ie – The Irish Cycling Advocacy Network (www.cyclist.ie) with the aim of bringing the bicycle in from the margins of transport policy. Funding for the (part-time) role of National Cycling Coordinator (NCC) was provided by the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) (www.ecf.com).

As part of the process of developing cycling advocacy, I took part in the ECF's training workshops in Ljubljana in Slovenia in November 2015. Other national organisations participating in the 'Leadership Programme' were those from Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Spain and Italy. It was very useful to build up stronger relationships with colleagues conducting very similar work throughout Europe.

The NCC's work focused on two strands: firstly, national level political lobbying; secondly, drafting local level submissions regarding cycling / transport schemes.

POLITICAL LOBBYING AND NATIONAL LEVEL DEVELOPMENTS

As reported last year, the implementation of the 2009 National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) is advancing, but on a slow and unsystematic basis. To recreate a strong cycling culture will require the coordinated implementation of its many objectives and actions. A further major disappointment in 2015 was the publication of the government's plan entitled Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021 (published in Sept 2015) in which just €100 million (out of €10 billion allocated to transport) was committed to "smarter travel and carbon reduction measures including Greenways". **Lack of committed funding for cycle schemes is perhaps the greatest barrier facing cycling advocates.**

Over the course of the year, we met regularly with the National Transport Authority, the National Trails Advisory Committee, and other agencies and Local Authorities.

PLANNING SUBMISSIONS

The NCC prepared a myriad of submissions – and supported the drafting of others led by colleagues in / members of Cyclist.ie and An Taisce. These included:

- Greater Dublin Area draft Transport Strategy 2016 – 2035 (National Transport Authority)
- Point Roundabout Improvement Scheme (Dublin City)
- Garrycastle to Athlone Cycleway/Footway Part 8 (Westmeath Co Co)
- Dublin City Centre Transport Study
- Walking/Cycling Route, Westport to Bertra, County Mayo - Part 8
- Royal Canal Greenway (Dublin City)
- Arthurs Way Part 8 (Kildare Co Co)
- Shannon Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing, EIA Scoping (Westmeath Co Co)
- Maynooth Town North - South Corridor - Part 8 (Kildare Co Co)
- Cycle / pedestrian track, Royal Canal Cloonsheerin to Westmeath border Part 8 (Longford Co Co)
- Naas - Dublin Road Corridor. (Kildare Co Co)

CONCLUSION

Overall, the development of high quality cycle schemes by planning authorities is moving along slowly – the lack of haste can be largely explained by the lack of funds (and shortage of political commitment). This is particularly the case in Dublin City. One area of concern in 2015 was that the Liffey Cycle Route – aimed at providing a safe cycle link between the Phoenix Park and the Docklands – did not advance very much. I sincerely hope this changes in 2016.

Finally, funding from the ECF for the role of NCC will finish up in mid 2016. Therefore the next few months will be critical in raising funds to support the role on a more permanent basis. Both An Taisce and Cyclist.ie are keen to see the continuation of the role and the strong links established between organisations – and new links created with bodies such as Cycling Ireland.

You can contact Damien directly at damien.otuama@antaisce.org

DUBLIN BIKES: A CYCLING SUCCESS STORY 2015 FIGURES

14 MINUTES
AVERAGE JOURNEY TIME

OVER 13.1M
RENTALS SINCE LAUNCH

OVER 3.7M
JOURNEYS IN 2015

17,222 RENTALS
ON 8TH OCTOBER 2015 BUSIEST USAGE DAY SO FAR



Morten, Damien, Saskia and Guilia at the ECF workshop,credit: Damien Ó Tuama

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION UNIT REPORT

BY MICHAEL JOHN O'MAHONY, EEU DIRECTOR


National Spring Clean

It has been a challenging, rewarding and sad year for the Environmental Education Unit (EEU) team. As always the team developed and delivered the programmes to the highest professional standards and the programmes continued to grow and thrive. It was also a very sad year as we lost one of the team. Brídín Mulhall died on 28th January 2016 after a year long battle with cancer. Brídín had worked in the EEU for over 5 years as the Greening Communities Manager and was well known and respected by all the communities she worked with. Brídín was not just a colleague she was a good friend and in many ways, for all of us in the EEU, the full impact of her death will take some time to fully sink in.

Our thoughts are with Brídín's family at this very sad and difficult time. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam. Due to Brídín's love of walking and hiking the EEU will be undertaking a commemorative hiking event during 2016.

Currently, the EEU employs 57 staff and operates 9 programmes. Outlined below is a brief overview of all the work ongoing within the EEU over the last 12 months and some insights into what will be happening in the next 12 months.

BLUE FLAG & GREEN COAST AWARDS 2015

(WWW.BLUEFLAG.GLOBAL; WWW.CLEANCOASTS.ORG)

In 2015, 4,136 beaches and marinas were awarded the Blue Flag in 48 countries around the world. In 2015, 81 beaches and 5 marinas in Ireland achieved the award. The Green Coast Award is an award for beaches that meet the excellent standard for water quality as set out in the Bathing Water Directive but may not have the necessary built infrastructure to achieve Blue Flag status. An important element of this award is that these beaches have a beach management plan in place and that the local community is engaged in this process. In 2015, 58 beaches were awarded the Green Coast Award.

In 2015, the Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards were held on Ballinskelligs Beach in County Kerry. Two Cork beaches, Redbarn and Garretstown regained Blue Flag status and Ballinesker in Wexford, was awarded the Blue Flag for the first time. Five beaches that lost Blue Flags in 2014 because of storm damage: Bertra and Mulranny in Mayo, Rossbeigh in Kerry and Miltown Malbay and Spanish Point in Clare regained Blue Flag status in 2015. Brittas Bay North in Wicklow, Enniscrone in Sligo and Skerries in Fingal lost their Blue Flags in 2015 due to water quality. In 2015, Blue Flags were awarded to Marinas in Kilmore Quay and New Ross in Wexford; Royal Cork and Kinsale Yacht Clubs in Cork and Killinure Point Marina in Westmeath.


Michael John O'Mahony

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN

(WWW.NATIONALSPRINGCLEAN.ORG)

The aim of the National Spring Clean Campaign is to engage the public at a local community level and it encourages all sectors of society to do their bit for the environment by holding litter clean ups in their own area during the month of April. The campaign is operated in partnership with Local Authorities. In 2015 5,199 events took place nationwide. This equates to around 400,000 volunteers taking part in National Spring Clean 2015.

Currently, there are over 6,550 followers on the National Spring Clean Facebook page and the programme is becoming active on Twitter and Instagram.

GREEN HOME

(WWW.GREENHOME.IE)

The Green Home Programme works by offering advice and support to homeowners on how to improve their environmental behaviour and decrease their environmental footprint. To date around 32,000 households have engaged with the programme through various hubs and mentorship points. These include Green-Schools, Green Communities, National Spring Clean and other networks such as Tidy Towns. To date over 250 Tidy Towns Groups have engaged with the programme and promoted it in their local communities. A typical household that fully engages with the programme saves on average €350 per annum.

In May 2015, 13 schools across Ireland were awarded

their Green Home Flag. Green Home is active on social media with around 800 followers on Facebook and over 1,100 followers on Twitter. The Green Home Programme is currently in the process of upgrading and updating its website (www.greenhome.ie). Such work is necessary as the site needs to be upgraded and made more mobile and social media centric.

M.Sc. research was conducted on the Green Home Programme in 2015 found that the greater the level of environmental education and support given to householders, the greater the positive changes in their behaviour and attitudes.

CLEAN COASTS PROGRAMME (WWW.CLEANCOASTS.ORG)

The main focus of the Clean Coasts programme is to engage with communities in the protection of Ireland's beaches, seas and marine life. 454 Groups were registered throughout Ireland in 2015, with an estimated 14,500 volunteers participated in clean ups.

THE CLEAN COASTS PROGRAMME ALSO INCLUDES A WIDE NUMBER OF INITIATIVES, EVENTS AND CALLS TO ACTION. THESE INCLUDE;

1 "THINK BEFORE YOU FLUSH" This initiative is partnered with Irish Water, and was launched in June 2015. The TBYF Campaign aims to raise awareness of sewage related litter and appropriately change behaviour (www.thinkbeforeyouflush.org).

2 "THE #2MINUTEBEACHCLEAN" This is a very simple initiative, initiated in the UK, asking all beach users to do a 2 minute beach clean when they visit a beach. They can then share a picture of their 2 minute clean up on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) with the hash tag #2minutebeachclean.

3 "BEAT THE MICROBEAD" Many personal care products contain small plastic beads, these pass through water treatment plants and into our oceans, where they absorb toxins and are eaten by plankton and fish. Clean Coasts promotes this initiative, aiming to get people to avoid using products with microbeads.

4 COCA-COLA CLEAN COAST WEEK In May 2015 Clean Coasts held 144 coastal celebration events as part of Coca-Cola Clean Coasts Week.

5 "BIG BEACH CLEAN" Clean Coasts Big Beach Clean weekend took place on the 18-20th September 2015, with over 80 clean ups being carried out on Irish Beaches.

6 CLEAN COASTS ROADSHOW This is a series of talks for coastal communities which take place all around the coast of Ireland. In 2015 we held more than 20 roadshows throughout Ireland.

7 OCEAN TALKS Clean Coasts hosted the world's first Ocean Talks event to celebrate World Oceans Day 2015, on June 8th 2015. The speakers were invited to speak about the link between their work and our blue planet and was it was streamed live online.

8 LOVE YOUR COAST PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION & AWARDS Over 1,000 photographers submitting entries. The awards were held in Waterways Ireland Visitor Centre, Docklands on the 14th October 2015.

9 OCEAN HERO AWARDS AND CLEAN COASTS SYMPOSIUM This was held on the 18th November 2015. The themes for 2015 was coastal protection in relation to eco–tourism and well-being. The Clean Coasts Ocean Hero Awards were held after the Clean Coast Symposium.

NEAT STREETS (WWW.NEATSTREETS.ORG)

The 2014-15 academic year proved a huge success for the Neat Streets programme. 23 secondary schools successfully implemented the programme and achieved the Neat Streets award. Overall results indicated that participating schools, reduced littering by 20% among students and reduced litter levels in their schools and the communities.

The first ever Neat Streets photo competition was run through Instagram social media platform in January 2015. The competition was a great success. The annual Neat Streets conference took place in Dublin and hosted over 60 students and teachers from participating schools. The Neat Streets Awards and Celebration event took place on the 6th May 2015 in Croke Park with 23 schools awarded.

GREEN-SCHOOLS (WWW.GREENSCHOOLSIRELAND.ORG)

Currently (March 2016) there are 3,925 schools in Ireland registered for the programme and 3,127 schools in Ireland have been awarded the Green Flag. A further 130+ schools will be awarded in May 2016. Following 18 months of planning and preparation the first ever Green-Schools EXPO took place in the RDS on the 25th February 2016. 4,000 students, teachers, exhibitors and members of the public attended the event which featured Green Flag schools displaying their work, interactive workshop areas, environmentally themed exhibitor stands and an Eco-Talks area. President Michael D Higgins opened the EXPO.

2105-2016 has also seen the start of the new Green-Schools Water Ambassador Programme for secondary school students which took place during Engineers Week. Four workshops were held in Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Cork. The Great Plant Hunt, an international project of FEE, which is sponsored by Toyota, was recently launched with a number of Irish Green Flag Biodiversity Schools taking part.

The Green-Schools programme continues to be recognised as "best practice" internationally with the highest percentage of awarded Green Flags flying anywhere in the world found here in Ireland. In the last academic year 4,700 tonnes of waste was diverted from landfill, 15.6 million units of electricity and 370 million litres of potable water were saved by participating schools along with 1.5 million litres of transport fuel. This equates to a saving to participating schools of approximately €8million.

GREEN- SCHOOLS TRAVEL

The travel theme of Green-Schools has been operating nationally since 2008 and 2015 was another busy year for the theme. This theme of Green-schools is the largest component of the EEU. Green-Schools Travel staff undertook over 2,800 school visits during the last academic year. The following Green-Schools Travel events also took place around the country during the year:

- National Scoot to School Week – Almost 4,000 students scooted to school on National Scoot to School Day in March 2015.
- National Walk to School Week - Over 40,000 children walking to school on the National Walk on Wednesday (WOW) day in May 2015 and Green-Schools promoted walking for the week.
- Bike Week – Over 8,000 students cycled to school on National Cycle of Wednesday (COW) day. Green-Schools Travel supports National Bike Week and promotes cycling activities.
- BIG Travel Challenge – The challenge asked schools to promote one active travel mode to school for 15 days during the month of February. The challenge was a great success and the winners were awarded at an event in Dublin.
- Pedestrian and Cycling Audits – Green-Schools undertook 218 walkability audits and 65 cycleability audits during the 2014-2015 academic year. These audits submitted to local authorities for action.
- Training – Green-Schools allocated cycle training funds to 81 schools throughout the country. 3,826 children take part in a cycle safety and training course.
- Infrastructure – Green-Schools allocated cycle parking grants to 23 schools nationwide which equates to 440 bike parking spaces.

GREEN CAMPUS
(WWW.GREENCAMPUISIRELAND.ORG)

The Green Campus Programme experienced a period of growth and development in 2015 with new registrations from Kinsale College of Further Education and 2 newly awarded colleges (Pearse College and University of Limerick). Cork University Hospital, became the world's first teaching hospital to be awarded a Green Flag in April 2015. The Green Campus programme has 19 registered third level sites in Ireland. 9 of these are awarded Green-Campus status. Other elements to the programme in 2015 were

- The development of the Green Campus Partner Programme with HEAnet
- The 2nd Intervarsity BioBlitz in September 2015
- Involvement in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan with the National Biodiversity Data Centre
- The Green Campus Network Meeting in January 2015
- The Green Campus at the Green Schools EXPO

LITTER LESS AND FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (FEE) IMPACT MEASUREMENT & RESEARCH

The EEU has been working with the Wrigley Foundation and FEE over the last 18 months to undertake impact measurement research on their various programmes. In 2015 the focus was very much on the measurement of the impact of the Litter Less Programme. This work involved undertaking a longitudinal study on littering and recycling behaviour with over 3,500 students in over 30 countries.

GREEN COMMUNITIES
(WWW.GREENCOMMUNITIESPROJECT.ORG)

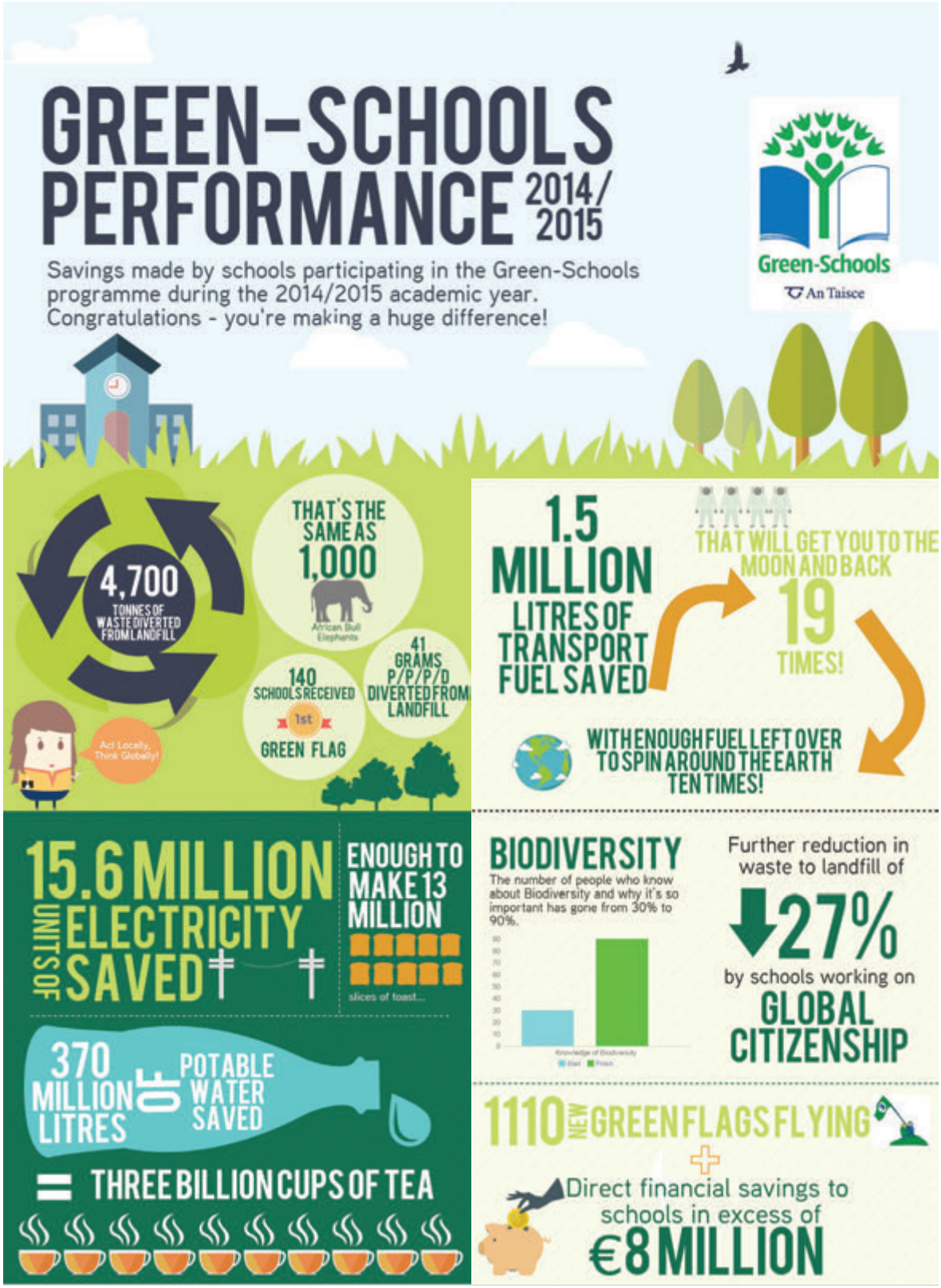
The Green Communities Programme & Network works to enhance local biodiversity and sustainability, supporting community groups by providing information, training and guidance across different areas of environmental management. Currently, there are around 25-30 Groups involved in the Green Communities Network.

During 2015, over 12 Green Communities training events took place. These were often undertaken at the Bridgefoot Street Community Garden. Green Communities has been working with Dublin City Council to develop the site as a training site over the last number of years. Events included Beekeeping Training, Biodiversity Workshops, Resource Management Training and Composting.

GREEN-FLAG FOR PARKS PROGRAMME

The Green Flag Award for Parks Programme acknowledges and accredits best practice in the sustainable management of parks and green spaces. The programme already supports best practice management of parks and green spaces across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. In 2014, 1,476 parks and green spaces received the Award.

In 2015, 6 pilot parks in Ireland received the award. These were: Bushy Park (Dublin City Council), Poppintree Park (Dublin City Council), Millennium Park (Fingal County Council), Malahide Demesne (Fingal County Council), St. Stephen's Green (OPW), Grangegorman Military Cemetery (OPW).


GREEN-SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE 2014/2015
Savings made by schools participating in the Green-Schools programme during the 2014/2015 academic year.
Congratulations - you're making a huge difference!
Green-Schools
An Taisce
4,700 TONNES OF WASTE DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL
THAT'S THE SAME AS 1,000 African Bull Elephants
140 SCHOOLS RECEIVED 1st GREEN FLAG
41 GRAMS P/P/P/D DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL
Act Locally, Think Globally!
1.5 MILLION LITRES OF TRANSPORT FUEL SAVED
THAT WILL GET YOU TO THE MOON AND BACK 19 TIMES!
WITH ENOUGH FUEL LEFT OVER TO SPIN AROUND THE EARTH TEN TIMES!
15.6 MILLION UNITS OF ELECTRICITY SAVED
ENOUGH TO MAKE 13 MILLION slices of toast...
370 MILLION LITRES OF POTABLE WATER SAVED
= THREE BILLION CUPS OF TEA
BIODIVERSITY
The number of people who know about Biodiversity and why it's so important has gone from 30% to 90%.
Further reduction in waste to landfill of
27%
by schools working on
GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
1110 NEW GREEN FLAGS FLYING
Direct financial savings to schools in excess of
€8 MILLION

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

BY FINTAN KELLY



NATURE ALERT 2015

SIGNED BY 500,000 CITIZENS ACROSS THE EU

120 ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

IRELAND HAD THE 6TH HIGHEST PER CAPITA RESPONSE RATE

1,000 SPECIES & 27,000 NATURAL SITES ACROSS EUROPE PROTECTED.



Fintan Kelly

Photo: Curlew by Olicanae

As I gaze out of the window in Tailors' Hall and flick through the disordered scrap book of memories that is 2015 I can't help but be distracted by the chorus of chiming bells marking the centenary of 1916 and the spring shoots on the birch trees outside. It seems appropriate that at this time of remembrance and renewal that we reflect on some of the Natural Environment Offices highlights in 2015.

After years of diligently fighting to protect Ireland's wildlife, outgoing Natural Environment Officer Andrew Jackson has embarked on a new chapter in his life, taking up a lecturing position in UCD. Andrew has left a lasting legacy within our organisation, through his work and through the impression he has made on those of us who had the pleasure of working with him. Both Doireann Ní Cheallaigh and I have made the step up from our positions within the Natural Environmental Office to Planning and Natural Environmental Officer respectively. I am excited by the prospect of building on the fine work laid down in 2015 and I hope to meet and work with many of you to achieve our shared vision.

The most significant tool we have to safeguard Ireland's wildlife is the protection afforded by the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. These two pillars of the EU's Biodiversity strategy came under direct attack in 2015 as a new EU Commission cajoled by big business set out to undermine these vital pieces of legislation. An Taisce in coordination with eNGO partners in Europe and Ireland mobilised and launched the Nature Alert campaign to raise awareness and call Irish and EU citizens to arms. In





Photos l-r: Eriophorum Angustifolium (Bog Cotton) by Chris Booth, Otter by Henning Leweke

Ireland the Nature Alert campaign was coordinated by the Natural Environment Office through a working group of Irish NGOs. The main thrust of the campaign focused on a substantial submission to the Commission and an EU wide online public consultation. The consultation resulted in over half a million responses – by far the highest response rate the Commission has ever received.

The review revealed an unprecedented level of interest in the EUs biodiversity strategy and made it clear that there was no mandate to weaken protections. Of the 28 EU member states Ireland contributed the sixth highest response rate to the campaign on a per capita basis, delivering a clear message of how dearly we cherish our natural heritage. We still await the final Commission response but the signs are good with many governments and MEPs coming out in strong support of the Directives.

As an organisation we pride ourselves on asking difficult questions and taking on controversial issues and **there is no environmental issue more controversial then the ongoing loss of Irelands bogs.** The crisis in management of the Irelands 'protected' active raised bogs and the ongoing destruction of Ireland's bogs by commercial interests are issues we have been heavily involved in for years. From our engagement with the Peatlands Council we can report that things are looking much more positive post 2015 with more turf cutters accepting compensation. We seem to be entering a new stage in the struggle to save Ireland's bogs and this was typified by the announcement that **€5.4 million in funding will be spent on the restoration of six Raised Bogs, including An Taisce's Mongan Bog,** Co. Offaly. We are delighted to be involved in a project that will improve the status of this globally threatened habitat and hope that this is only the beginning of ongoing programme of conservation and restoration.

Any discussion on bogs or our work would not be complete without mentioning our victory in the High Court in our long-running legal action involving Edenderry power station, which burns about 1.2 million tonnes of peat a year. An Taisce's case before the High Court was that, contrary to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, the environmental effects of extracting the peat fuel to be burned at Edenderry were not assessed before An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission to allow the plant burn peat up to 2023. The case was a real David versus Goliath story as we successfully took on three State parties - An Bord Pleanála, Bord na Móna and the Attorney General - each supported by large legal teams.

The ruling reasserts that both the direct and indirect environmental impacts of a project must be considered to fully assess its environmental footprint. This ruling will have far reaching consequences and will hopefully mean that environmental and health impacts that have been ignored in the past will be given full consideration. The ruling further underlines the crucial role An Taisce plays in the planning system. All of this would not have come to pass was it not for the herculean efforts of Andrew Jackson and barristers John Kenny BL and James Devlin SC and the Natural Environment Office staff.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

BY DR. DECLAN MURPHY

The Natural Environment Committee (NEC) met on six occasions in 2015. We have 18 members, of whom six are, in effect, email members. The Natural Environment Officer attends where practical. Former officer Andrew Jackson resigned in mid-year to take up an academic position, and following a rigorous recruitment process Fintan Kelly was appointed as his replacement.

INTERACTION WITH AN TAISCE'S PROPERTIES

Fintan hit the ground running as he had previously worked in the office as an intern. He has made An Taisce properties a priority, and intends to draw up management plans for all. This will involve local associations and local communities participating in their conservation, thereby creating a sense of ownership. A 'Conservation Action Day' by volunteers was held in the Morehampton Grove property in Dublin, ongoing biodiversity enhancement work is planned for the coming year involving the planting of native flora and the erection of bat boxes.

Veronica Heywood and her colleagues in South Dublin oversee Booterstown Nature Reserve. It was threatened with an invasion of Japanese knotweed from the adjacent site bought by a property developer. Fortunately good communication by Veronica and the local association resulted in a satisfactory job of clearance by contractors for the developer. The adjacent railway line needs urgent repair work due to subsidence at the DART station. There was extensive communications with Irish Rail regarding the concerns of possible adverse impacts to the unique habitat and wildlife. The outcome was an agreed methodology for the works that took account of these issues.

NEC member Anny Wise and the Clare association are with others in the creation of a walking trail on the An Taisce-owned Gortileka limestone-pavement property in the Burren. We will continue to try to secure funding for the rehabilitation of the 200 year old Killaha West (near Kenmare) unique vernacular farmhouse bequeathed to An Taisce. It is a protected reserve and maternity roost for lesser horseshoe bats and therefore of international importance.

POLICY AND ACTIVISM

In conjunction with the Natural Environment office we made a robust submission to the Coillte stakeholder consultation on its strategic plan 2016-20. We also collaborated with Andrew Jackson in the environmental NGOs response to the EU 'fitness check' to the Birds and Habitats directives.

The role of agriculture in producing well over 30% of Ireland's carbon emissions is causing increasing public dismay. NEC member Professor John Sweeney is a frequent contributor to public debates on climate change in the media, and is an expert on the implications for agriculture.

This spring An Taisce in collaboration with BirdWatch Ireland, the Irish Wildlife Trust and the Hedge Laying Association of Ireland launched a campaign in response to the government proposal to extend the period for hedge cutting and to relax restrictions on burning of scrub. However the proposed measure fell with the recent dissolution of the government. The campaign is ongoing with the petition receiving over 16,000 signatures to date.

The NEC is made up of enthusiasts and a few experts, and we would welcome new members with an interest in helping to conserve Ireland's natural environment via naturalenvionment@antaisce.org.



THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN PRODUCING WELL OVER 30% OF IRELAND'S CARBON EMISSIONS IS CAUSING INCREASING PUBLIC DISMAY.



The Burren, credit: Marcella Bona

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT

BY ALEX HOLLINGSWORTH

OVERVIEW

The Properties Committee meets six times a year, on the first Friday of every other month, and currently consists of thirteen committee members, supported by An Taisce staff. Our aim as a committee is to be a beneficial custodian of Ireland's built and natural heritage, for the benefit of current and future generations. We achieve this through ownership and management of specific historical sites and nature reserves, which might otherwise be at risk. Our current interests stretch to seventeen properties across Ireland, of which we own eleven, either on a freehold or leasehold basis, we lease a further three properties, and have a special interest in the remaining three (i.e. we have a nominated board director). These properties range from Tailors' Hall in Dublin, where we hold our meetings, to the remote and beautiful Gull Islands.

The number of properties in which we have an interest, and the level of management and engagement with these properties, has been stable for a number of years. We believe that there is more that our Committee could do to provide members with value for their membership fee, and to increase our sphere of influence as custodians. The properties can serve as natural gathering points for Local Associations, and we would like to see them being visited more by members. We would also like to broaden the gifts and legacies that we receive from the Irish people. However, to be financially prudent, this only works when accompanied with a management plan, for example an endowment providing maintenance monies.

Our focus in 2015 has been getting our house in order, starting with the creation of Terms of Reference, which have been adopted by the Committee. We elected our new Secretary, Tim Ryan, and I was elected as Chair in March. We have developed a new approach to the management of the properties; whereby each member has one or more assigned properties, ensuring all members are active, and all properties have a point of contact.

ACTIVITY WITH EXISTING PROPERTIES

The property which has seen most activity over 2015 is Gort Weigh House, and we are very grateful to Peter and Annie Wise, and Derrickk Hambleton, for ensuring vital repairs were carried out to this interesting and locally important building. In addition there have been advances at the Boyne Navigation, led by Geoff Clarke, with the replacement of Lock gates and on-going renovation, with the aim of making the whole canal system navigable for visitors. Renovations at Tailors' Hall continue apace, ahead of its new lease of life as a venue and café, and as part of the Dubline regeneration programme. We have a number of properties where the lease falls due in the next few years, including Booterstown Nature Reserve and Howth Courthouse, and negotiations regarding these properties has been part of our broader effort to understand our position, influence and future strategy with each An Taisce property.



AN TAISCE IS INVOLVED IN **17** PROPERTIES ACROSS **10 COUNTIES** IN IRELAND

OUR HEADQUARTERS, TAILORS' HALL IS **310 YEARS** OLD

WE LOOK AFTER **6,890 ACRES** OF NATURE RESERVE.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

The acquisitions of the Quaker graveyard and Killaha West, which were started in 2014, completed during the course of 2015, and my thanks to all those involved.

IN APPRECIATION

Firstly our thanks to Mairead Meaghan, who stood down as chair of the Properties Committee during 2015. Mairead continues to be a valued and valuable member of the committee, and my particular thanks to Mairead in helping me get up to speed in the role. Thank you to our excellent secretary, Tim Ryan, and to all our committee members. Many of you travel across the country to attend meetings, and my thanks for your dedication, knowledge and for welcoming me as the incoming Chair.

OUTLOOK FOR 2016

We have recently completed a new strategic planning process for 2016, giving us renewed direction and cohesion across the committee.

OUR FIVE GUIDING PRIORITIES FOR 2016 ARE:

1. FUNDING: Agree a funding plan, funding sources and principles for 2016 and future years
2. OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE: Review titles and ownership status for all AT properties, and make necessary changes
3. MARKETING: Increase visibility of AT properties to members and the public, with increased material for press releases, and encouraging visits to properties
4. RISK: Clarify risk, insurance, and public access for all properties, making changes where necessary
5. COMMITTEE VISITS: Aim to visit all properties where possible once a year

These priorities reflect our ambition for the Properties Committee to extend its remit, and become more active in managing our current assets. Sitting behind these priorities is a plan on a property-by-property basis, and I think we are all feeling inspired to achieve and deliver more through 2016.

MONUMENTS & ANTIQUITIES

BY DR. MARK CLINTON

The past year has witnessed a distinct sea change in the attitude of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Heritage towards the preservation-in-situ of monuments. Indeed the new regime has been very proactive in the protection of monuments under threat. A change of personnel and subsequently of policy has to be welcomed.

A proposed commercial development at Kilgrovan in County Waterford was to be sited in the immediate environs of an early church site. The confirmed presence of a large ditch (part of a bivallate enclosure), 7 Ogham stones, 5 kilns, a cresset stone lamp and Early Medieval pottery attests to the importance of the foundation.

A detailed analysis of the site compiled by the Monuments Committee was sent to Minister Humphreys in June. This analysis was enclosed in a submission to An Bord Pleanála by An Taisce member John Corcoran. The National Monuments Service subsequently lodged an objection with ABP and in late November the building application was rejected by the Bord.

Souterrains are subterranean monuments of 1st Millennium A.D. date. They are found in Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and Brittany. The largest known drystone-built beehive-shaped chamber in all of these territories is located at Loughcrew in County Meath. This complex souterrain would have been very costly to construct. The associated house site can therefore only have been the abode of a person of rank.

The presence of other related monument types in the immediate environs strengthens this analysis. Royal sites invariably have a church site in close proximity. There is a church site to the SE of the souterrain site. A few hundred metres to the N/NE there is a ringfort. This would have constituted the dwelling of an individual of a lower social rank. The presence of an Angevin (Norman) motte and bailey to the immediate S/SE is another significant indication of the importance of the site. It was a standard practice of the Angevin colonists in the late 12th and early 13th centuries to establish military bases at the seats of the local petty kings. Thus one may state with conviction that the settlement cluster at Loughcrew was an important political centre in Early Medieval Mide (Meath). It may well have been one of the principal 'seats' of the Caílle Follamain, the ruling Úi Neill dynasty in western modern Meath.

The proposal to build a sizable dairy complex to the immediate N/NW of the souterrain is thus highly alarming. A slated slurry tank, a soiled water and parlour washing tank, and a geomembrane lined slurry tank are all part of the development. The potential for spillage or leakage from the elevated site would be enormous. The effect on a subterranean dry-stone built structure over a thousand years old would be disastrous. An objection was lodged with Meath County Council in July. A decision has yet to be reached.



THE CAMPAIGN TO RESCUE A SECTION OF THE BRONZE AGE PLANK-BUILT ROAD IN THE BOG AT MAYNE HAS CONTINUED... AN TAISCE HAVE LODGED A COMPLAINT WITH EUROPE REGARDING A BREACH OF EIA DEMOLITION CONDITIONS.

On a positive note a new souterrain was discovered to the south of Naas in County Kildare. This was a major discovery given that, to date, there are only 9 known souterrains in the Early Medieval Kingdom of Leinster. What was more striking was that the only known parallels for the monument are in the Ulaid sub-kingdom of Conaille Muirtheimne in north Louth. The building material was determined to be Dolorite by expert Dr. Susan Hegarty. The nearest quarry site was thus nearly 10km away. This souterrain at Piper's Hill is a perfect template for the definition of these monuments as combined storage/refuge structures. It features convenient easily accessible outer storage chambers and hidden, difficult to access inner refuge chambers. It was imperative that this monument be preserved-in-situ.

Representations were accordingly made in tandem with a detailed analysis of the monument. It was thus with great delight that it was learned that the National Monuments Service readily agreed with this argument and would be insisting on physical preservation. The monument was subsequently saved by a relocation of the building scheme.

The campaign to rescue a section of the Bronze Age plank-built road in the bog at Mayne in County Westmeath has continued throughout the year. Committee member Aidan Walsh attended a meeting held between the Westmeath Planning Department and the National Monuments Service. Acting Chief-Archaeologist Ann Lynch and her team are now actively pursuing a policy of rolling spot excavation and the preservation of a section of the roadway. It is imperative that this objective is achieved. An Taisce have lodged a complaint with Europe regarding a breach of EIA demolition conditions.

The failure of the Government to present the draft of the new National Monuments bill to Parliament as promised was the big disappointment of the year. Its non-appearance continues to expose the ancient Heritage of the country to casual destruction. The present Act is in short useless.



LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORTS

FIND NEWS AND EVENTS FOR YOUR LOCAL AREA AT WWW.ANTAISCE.ORG/LOCALASSOCIATIONS

CLARE ASSOCIATION

REPORT BY **ANNY WISE**

We have had a very busy year doing things that we have written and talked about in the past and which have now been actioned. The support has been great and perhaps some of it is due to having new blood in the Association.

The formation of the Public Participation Network (PPN) was taken up by the County Council after the Community Forum was released from the task. An Taisce is only allowed one member and that member has to be in the Municipal District in which its "office" exists. That is Anny Wise from Shannon who was elected as the member by the EGM. She is on two Clare Committees representing the Environment having been nominated by the Environmental Pillar and elected by the PPN environmental members. The fact is that several other members of An Taisce, who also happen to be members of other NGOs approved by the Pillar, have been elected on to SPCs and two of those are on to the PPN secretariat. The Clare Environmental Network which was set up by the Pillar prior to the formation of the PPN has been enlarged to include other local Clare NGOs. During last biodiversity week, we had our first public meeting in Ennis. Not many members of the public attended, but we all met up together for the first time and agreed to work together and try to enlarge and include more groups. We plan to meet again in Shannon for Earth Day.

Photos above l-r: The beehive tomb of Mr Cooke, where our members are exploring the tomb; A photograph from our botanical exploration, with Dr Declan Dooge, of the shoreline of Lough Derravaragh; Fred Walker eyeing an owl Opposite l-r: A photograph from our visit to the extraordinary gate lodge at Bracklyn; Birds on their perches, A photograph from our botanical exploration, with Dr Declan Dooge, of the shoreline of Lough.

The Planning Committee has been much busier since September, being a sign of the economic recovery.

We had our normal Annual Bat Meeting during Heritage Week which is always crowded. However, we now have to pay for the facilities and so the event can no longer be considered a fundraising event.

To assist with our increased costs and the loss of the fundraising event, we started a "Bee Pack" with Irish wild seeds and we sold out of these packs last year. We are to prepare 20 more Bee Garden Packs in time for our April events (Earth Day and AGM) to raise more funds.

The Burren Committee has been busy planning, marking, GPS surveying and cutting hazel scrub for the planned looped walk to and from our small lake/turlough. An extension to that is being considered around the lake. Though we have cut a basic path through the scrub for this extension, this route would be not just longer, but far more difficult to walk, cost far more to make safe and may have a slightly higher environmental impact. If those additional environmental impacts would indicate an appropriate assessment during scoping, then opening the extension to the public will probably be left until later. Much is due to the energy of new committee members (Colin Doyle and Robert Bennett, existing committee members Harry Jeuken and Peter Wise as well as helpful input from Fintan Kelly (An Taisce's Natural Environment Officer).







REPORT BY **COLM DESMOND**

CORK ASSOCIATION REPORT

During 2015, An Taisce Corcaigh continued to monitor planning applications in Cork City. A significant development on the Capitol Cinema site was approved by An Bord Pleanála in December located on a strategic triangular site with new buildings fronting onto St Patrick's Street and the Grand Parade, the two principal streets of the City. In our submission we welcomed the proposal to rejuvenate this site and the overall architectural approach to replace the derelict Capital Cinema.

However, we made strong representations to remove a floor and reduce the excessive height of the building. We also argued against the demolition of a number of NIAH listed 19th century buildings. Our concerns included the impact on the streetscape and the broader cityscape due to the excessive height and scale of the development as well as the impact on the adjacent RPS-listed entrance to the English Market. A number of early 19th century buildings were proposed for demolition on St. Patrick's Street, along with similar buildings on the Grand Parade. The RPS-listed Oyster Tavern behind the site is to be restored as part of the development.

Council planners and the Conservation Officer requested adjustments to the proposal which reflected their analysis of the relevant Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021 provisions, which were also in line with An Taisce's views on height, scale, massing and the impact of the development on adjoining buildings. The Conservation officer recommended retention of two distinctive deep-plan Georgian houses behind the facade of the former Central Shoe Stores. Nevertheless, the Council granted permission for the development largely as submitted, which An Taisce and another party then appealed to An Bord Pleanála. The board's inspector also recommended refusal on range of grounds similar to previous ABP decisions for this site, reflecting An Taisce's concerns. However, ABP approved the development, with minor revisions at roof level.

This outcome reflects a reversal of previous determinations for this site which required lower heights and retention of certain NIAH-listed buildings. The Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021 appears to have significantly reduced protections for the city streetscape and NIAH-listed buildings, and restrictions on height, compared to previous plans, in favour of commercial and developmental objectives. We are likely to see continued pressure for unsuitably scaled developments in the historic City Centre core. Various submissions and reports in this case highlight the continuing failure of the City Council to add NIAH-listed buildings in the city centre to the Record of Protected Structures.

Meanwhile, on the Marina, the ongoing redevelopment of Páirc Uí Chaoimh by the GAA has led to the demolition of stands and terraces not encompassed by the grant of planning. An Taisce Corcaigh was vocal in opposing the questionable re-zoning of lands around the stadium as it will diminish the amenity value of the new public park, which forms part of the overall development.

Finally, the Cork branch organised another successful birds of prey display, held in Ballincollig Regional Park in July, which was well attended by adults and children alike.


Start of the Guided Walk in Duntally Wood Nature Reserve. Credit Tyrconnell Tribune

DONEGAL ASSOCIATION

REPORT BY **NOEL FOLEY**

We held our AGM on May 26th 2015. We had 10 Committee meetings during the year. Discussion at these meetings included a wide variety of topics such as planning, invasive alien species (with particular focus on Japanese knotweed), awareness raising and publicity, buildings and natural heritage under threat, guided nature and historical walks, sponsorships, liaison with other groups, Green Schools, County Donegal Heritage Committee, National Monuments, An Taisce properties at Crocknafarragh and in Mulroy Bay, increasing our membership and contacting recently lapsed members etc.

AN TAISCE CALENDAR: "TREASURES OF DONEGAL"

We launched our calendar "Treasures of Donegal 2016" with a print run of 1,000 calendars. The primary focus of these calendars is to raise awareness of the built and natural treasures of Co. Donegal. The 2 page spread for each month features a photo of a Donegal landscape and a photo and description of a species of note – the focus this year is butterflies.

ANNUAL CRAFT SALE

We held our fifteenth Annual Craft Sale on November 17th. 2015. We had 73 exhibitors and an estimated attendance of 500 people. This is our main fund raising event.

GRANT FROM DONEGAL COUNCIL

We were awarded a grant of €3,630 from Donegal County Council under its LA 21 Environment Partnership Fund. This funded 4 guided woodland walks and 1 guided bogland walk for 162 National School pupils. It also funded 10 guided walks attended by 329 members of the public. These latter walks covered seaweed foraging, native woodlands, bat identification and behaviour, learning bird song, hedgerow foraging, Sheskinmore SAC and SPA, heritage walk around Ramelton. All the walks were led by experts in their field (ecologists and local historians). A copy of the final report is available on request from tnoelfoley@eircom.net

SPONSORSHIP

We sponsored Letterkenny Tidy Towns for the erection of 5 Swift nest boxes and the prizes in the Biodiversity Garden Competition and sponsored the creation of a students' garden in Loreto Community College, Milford.

We were among the sponsors of "The Butterflies of Donegal" by Bob Aldwell and Frank Smyth and of the stage production of "Environment the Musical" at An Grianan Theatre, Letterkenny. We commissioned and had erected a stone memorial seat to the late Neil Doherty (a former committee member) in Kilmacrenan.

ROUGH ISLAND

We visited Rough Island, the larger island of the An Taisce properties in Mulroy Bay, Co. Donegal to inspect former planting and regeneration of native tree species and to weed out some of the naturally regenerating Sitka spruce. We confirmed reports of 5 sheep and/or goats which we speculate were released on the island. We do not have a current plan to get rid of these animals and are keeping the matter under review.

AN TAISCE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Maintenance of our Butterfly Garden continued throughout the year.

LETTERKENNY – THE WINNER OF IRELAND'S TIDY TOWNS COMPETITION

We are delighted to congratulate the Letterkenny Tidy Towns committee and its other volunteers, commercial interests, state and NGO agencies associated with Letterkenny being crowned the winner of Ireland's Tidiest Town.


An Taisce Donegal Craft Fair November 29th 2015, credit: Anne McGowan



MAY MCCLINTOCK (1931-2016)

It is with profound sadness and loss that the Donegal Branch of An Taisce marks the death of its chairman, May McClintock. May passed away peacefully on March 11th 2016. She had been a committee member of our association since the early 1970s and was our chairman for the past 23 years. Her long, dedicated and effective contribution was recognised by a Lifetime Award in 2013.

May's interests and activities encompassed a broad range of cultural and political interests. These made her a unique ambassador for our Association. Her charisma, integrity and enthusiasm earned a widespread respect for our activities.

May was a dedicated national school teacher, a long standing secretary of the local branch of the Irish Farmers Association, a founder member of Letterkenny Tidy Towns Association in the mid 1970s and was the first woman to be appointed Chair of Letterkenny Urban District Council. She was a valued member of the Donegal Historical Society and a pioneering historian, particularly on the subjects of the Derryveagh evictions and the cultures of the Lagan Valley of east Donegal. Her environmental interests and knowledge encompassed all elements of the natural and built environment. Her particular environmental passion was for trees. Her legacy includes the many trees that were planted in Letterkenny and its environs as well as older trees of distinction she saved from the chain saw. She was a particular champion of the Green School movement.

May, as chairman of our Association, was both the instigator and an enthusiastic facilitator of many initiatives. These included a survey of the gate lodges and of the walled gardens of County Donegal, our annual craft fair and our calendar "Treasures of Donegal". A notable trait of her chairmanship was to ensure that every member of the committee had a meaningful and active role on the committee.

May's contribution to the Donegal Association of An Taisce and to the wider organisation was valuable and will last for many a long day. She will be missed and will be remembered with pride and with fondness. We extend our sympathies to her many friends and to her adult children, Stephanie, Dearn, Ginny (Virginia) and Jonny.

DÚN LAOGHAIRE ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Dun Laoghaire Association have an active voluntary group of committed members. We have three committees: i) Trees, Events, and Environment ii) Booterstown Nature Reserve iii) Planning.

EVENTS 2015

- **MARCH:** An illustrated talk on Belgrave Square, "Monkstown's Victorian Gardens", given by Rebecca Jeffares.
  National Tree week celebrated with St Kevin's
- **APRIL:** Booterstown Nature Reserve was the setting for National Spring clean week
- **MAY:** Dr Danielle Senga Green spoke on her research into the environmental effects of plastics in the reserve at our AGM. Providing an insight into richness and diversity of life beneath its dark waters.
- **JUNE:** We visited Slane Castle, Mellifont Abbey and Oldbridge House.
- **AUGUST:** Heritage Sunday. Supporters listend to Bird and Railway talks from Sean Hogan and Bill Garrioch.
- **SEPTEMBER:** Carole Cullen and Seamas Cannon spoke about their book "Monkstown - A Victorian Village".eir book "Monkstown - A Victorian Village".
- **OCTOBER:** 11 volunteers came to our 2nd clean-up at Booterstown Nature Reserve.
- **DECEMBER:** Christmas outing to the Joyce tower, followed by lunch, was led by Jo Callanan.

An Taisce Dun Laoghaire Association was a winner in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Chamber EnviroCom awards 2014.

NEW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016 – 2022

Our Association engaged the Public Consultation regarding the new Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown (DLR) County Development Plan. During the public consultation period the Council proactively raised awareness of the Draft Development Plan among the citizens of the County, and other stakeholders, which encouraged a greater degree of public participation in the overall process.

The Draft County Development Plan 2016-2022, due to come into force in March 2016, the Draft Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report were made available to An Taisce. We were pleased with the level of engagement and the outcome of the process and wish to acknowledge the councils efforts in this regard.

BLUE FLAG - CONCERN

DLR County Council monitors the water quality along the coast and following results from January 6 samples the Council took precautionary steps and advised against swimming at Seapoint due to high levels of E. Coi and Enterococci.

REPORT BY **MAIREAD MEHIGAN**

An Taisce are concerned that the cause is unknown and we will continue to monitor this and liaise with the council.

PROTECTED STRUCTURES - ARCHIVE

The Planning Committee have completed a review and inventory of all Protected Structure files referred to us for the period 2010-2016. These files contain drawings and historical notes. We have donated these files, maps and drawing to the National Architectural Archive for safety and future reference and research.

The sympathetic restoration works carried out to architecturally valuable buildings within our county, particularly on Royal Terrace and Clarinda Park are welcomed. An appreciation of these buildings has resulted in their return to residential dwellings that contribute to the elegance of the period squares and terraces.

An Bord Pleanála held an oral hearing in October about the proposed accommodation of cruise liners in Dún Laoghaire Harbour, their report will be available in April 2016. Thank you to all who sit on committees and those in the background.

GALWAY ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **DERRICK HAMBLETON**

An Taisce Galway Association awaits the result of our submission on the strategic infrastructure application for the extension of Galway harbour into Galway Bay's SAC. This proposed development was subject of an oral hearing in January 2015 with a final decision expected soon. Residents of the Claddagh, were concerned about flooding issues should this massive pier get the go ahead. Environmental concerns include the loss of natural spawning grounds for prawns in Galway Bays SAC and the potential for the loss of 26 inshore fishermen's jobs, as well as the traffic impacts expected when additional HGVs try to access the new port (which is still to be at the heart of the city). This critical IROPI project may yet be heading off to be decided in the European Courts.

Meanwhile, there is anxiety over plans to seek permission for another Galway City By-pass, with the current plan that will see the destruction of 41 family homes likely. Many other houses would also be negatively affected. As well as An Taisce, there is a strong community opposition building up through the city and there is much talk of the need for a modern alternative public transport solution, perhaps in the form of a new Light Rail Tram system.

The growth in motorway access from Dublin and Limerick, with the M7 –M18 leading onto the M17 will see Galway City being bypassed anyway with most new jobs growth being diverted into a designated County 'Economic Corridor' between Oranmore and Athenry. Apple are currently building their new data centre in Athenry (50 jobs) while Zimmer Orthopaedics have already opened their new facility in Oranmore (250 jobs). Galway City is beginning to lose out on jobs because of its failure to deal with its historic difficulties in being able to handle its problems with car traffic and the lack of affordable housing, as house prices continue to rise.

An Taisce's final issue concerns the scourge of plasticisation of shop fronts and new signage in Galway's medieval shopping streets. With Galway City looking to be cast as a 'European City of Culture' perhaps our local planners might make more of an effort to refuse more of the applications for retention of bad design than they do.

Galway Associations planning committee has been rejuvenated and are now working ever harder to protect our city's natural environments and preservation of its historic built heritage.

KERRY ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **CATHERINE MCMULLIN**

Our main centre of activity continues to be monitoring planning applications and public works projects referred to us by Kerry County Council (KCC). Unauthorised developments are a problem and enforcement takes a considerable time to complete. Applications for new wind farms are now rare, probably because all the best sites have been developed and public resistance to them is increasing. An Taisce's action against upgrading of the N86 Camp to Dingle road caused considerable controversy. We believe it will cause unnecessary damage to the landscape on some sections and our thanks to An Taisce's legal team, which battled so valiantly to make the necessary changes.

We represent the Environmental sector on a number of Committees, including the new Local Community Development Committee, the Secretariat and the Economic Planning & Development SPC. Other committees include the Lough Leane Working Group (monitoring water quality in L. Leane) and the Kerry LIFE Stakeholders Group (protection of Pearl Mussel).

Our representative on the Killarney National Park Liaison Committee reports the good news that the newly restored gardens of Killarney House will be opening at weekends during the summer months. Unfortunately, the Park is being starved of finance to maintain roads, piers etc. and some essential works are not being carried out. There is pressure from local tourism interests to develop more 'attractions' in the Park. Permission was granted for a 'Food and Music' Festival last year but, to the relief of local environmental organisations, it did not go ahead because of low ticket sales.

Since then, other threats have surfaced, not only to the national park but also to other sensitive sites. A proposed 'Loop Walk' around L. Leane, would go through a remote, unspoilt part of the Park, of high ecological value, and full plans for it have not been made public. Similarly the recent use of the Skelligs for filming 'Star Wars' was done in an extremely secretive manner and the same applies to preparations for the next episode, on Sybil Head. The area is a designated SPA and the preparatory work at Sybil Head involved constructing a road and bringing two huge cranes to the top of the cliff.

We hold our meetings on the first Thursday of the month at Maeve O'Donnell's House, 16 Denny St., Tralee at 8.00 p.m. All members are invited to attend and help us with the many environmental problems arising in the county.



KILKENNY ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **MARY T. BRENNAN**

Our committee met monthly with an average attendance of 4-6 members and we actively and positively assessed, consulted and made recommendations on planning developments. We engaged the public by inviting them to participate in events concerning the built and natural environment.

In March we had a talk by Patrick Lydon of Camphill Community in Callan entitled 'Heritage in Progress' which covered the challenges of making a heritage building, the Workhouse in Callan, relevant to modern use while respecting its history, and the proposed development of the Westcourt Demesne for housing including the provision of the Moat Fields Nature & Heritage Trail.

We enjoyed a guided tour of Mount Congreve Gardens - a large woodland garden on the banks of the River Suir and a walled garden. In April, the rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias had a splendid display of flowers.

In May we held a bluebell walk in Jenkinstown Woods, North Kilkenny to look at the diversity of early summer flowers and reflect on the management of the former Bryan-Bellew estate by Coillte.

We walked the River Nore trail from Bennetsbridge to Kilkenny in June, discussing along the way the diversity of its habitats and wildlife and the industrial heritage of the mills along the route.

We got actively involved in the Public Participation Networks representing the Environmental Pillar. We had representation on two Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs): SPC3 – Heritage, Culture and Planning, and SPC4 – Housing; and also on the LCDC secretariat.

The most exciting ongoing planning development in Kilkenny is the redevelopment of the Brewery site formerly owned by Diageo, a large brownfield site in the heart of the city which contains a national monument - St Francis Abbey, and other protected structures namely part of the city walls, a mill, two teahouses and a well. Kilkenny County Council put three Part 8 proposals to public consultation in 2015: the Mayfair building at one entrance to the site; the Brewhouse, an industrial, Bauhaus-like building; and a Riverside Garden along the western bank of the River Nore. We submitted comments and recommendations on the first two developments and will make a submission on the garden in 2016.

Our AGM in December coincided with the UN COP 21 meeting in Paris so we hosted a lively discussion on climate change in which everyone participated. It covered topics such as the background science, sources of greenhouse gases, impacts, climate sensitivity and carbon budgets, climate justice and mitigation actions. We ended the social calendar for 2015 with a Christmas lunch.

The membership of our local association fell by 14% leaving us with 55 members by the end of 2015. We failed to raise any funding last year, partly because we found ourselves in competition with organisations that owned properties and had good in-house expertise. Organising events involves the expense of renting venues and engaging expertise thus making us less competitive. I expect we are not unique in facing this challenge.



Photos: Kilkenny Events, credit: Mary T. Brennan

LIMERICK ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **BRIAN LEDDIN**

In April 2015 some members of An Taisce in Limerick felt that the organisation in the city was weak and this was a regrettable given the rich heritage of the city and the likelihood that this would be threatened in the coming years. Following a meeting with John Harnett, Ian Lumley and Eoin Heaney in Dublin we undertook to develop a more Limerick focussed association. The intention is to build a local organisation into a strong, credible and respected influence on matters of heritage and planning in the city.

The initial task was to work to increase the local membership and profile through holding lectures and events. While we have not yet organised these we have managed to significantly increase the profile of the organisation through the use of social media (www.facebook.com/AnTaisceLimerick & www.twitter.com/AnTaisce_Limk) and a blog (https://antaiscelimerick.wordpress.com) this has attracted some good attention and new members have become actively involved. We will proceed with organising lectures in 2016.

While developing the profile of the local organisation, we also made a number of submissions on important developments in Limerick. While we don't agree that the new road to Foynes is necessary we advocated that if one must be built under the T-TEN framework then the route following the old rail line was significantly preferable to the route that would run parallel to the N69 along the southern shore of the Shannon Estuary. We made a submission on the proposed 'public realm' works on Parnell Street and Davis Street, and pointed out that this was primarily designed to facilitate vehicular traffic flows, and was poor in the area of public realm enhancement as it ignored many of the guidelines set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.

More recently we made a strong submission against Limerick Institute of Technology's plans to develop a campus on the edge of the city. This will exacerbate the decline of the city centre and will greater undermine efforts to bring about a shift from car dependence to the 'smarter travel' modes of transport, i.e. cycling, walking and public transport.

An Taisce Limerick has also played a key role in organising a coherent opposition to a deeply unpopular and ill thought out project, led by the local authority, to construct an 'iconic' footbridge across the most sensitive historical and archaeological sites of the city. We intend to fight this every step of the way.

We are working to have an important role in the development of the city centre. Funding has been secured by the local authority for a revamp of approximately 800 metres of O'Connell Street. This will impact on the Georgian part of Limerick and it is important that there is a strong voice for the heritage and sensible development of the city at the table at an early stage.

Our task in 2016, as we see it, is to formalise the structure of the local organisation by putting together a committee with key roles for the active members. This will develop submissions to the local authority, work to increase the active membership, organise a lecture series, develop a local 'buildings at risk' database to feed into An Taisce's national database, and generally strengthen the organisation locally.


Shannonside, credit: Brian Leddin

MEATH ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **JEAN V. CARR**

Our April AGM was held in Bellinter House, designed by Richard Castle in 1730. In May we visited Kilmacurragh arboretum, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow, famous for its conifers and calcifuges, planted during the 19th century by Thomas Acton in conjunction with the Moores, curators of the botanical gardens. We then toured Ballymurrin Quaker farmstead (1688), Kilbride, Co. Wicklow, followed by afternoon tea courtesy of Philip Geoghegan.

June saw the Waterloo Bicentenary Concert at the beautifully restored Dangan Obelisk. Our thanks to Christopher Gray for organising this event. In July Michael Gunn gave a beach walk at Mornington and we learned about aspects of coastal dynamics/sand movement. During August we visited the restored Turner Conservatory (1858) at Rokeby Hall, Dunleer, County Louth, courtesy of Jean and Jeff Young, and the restored atmospheric Collon House, County Louth, thanks to Michael McMahon and John Bentley. This house was built by the father of John 'Speaker' Foster towards the end of the 18th century. Rokeby Hall was built in 1785, in the neo-classical style as designed by Francis Johnson. We also visited Beauforts Church of Ireland, Collon.

The IWAI-Boyne Navigation group of volunteers made great progress throughout 2015. Reconstruction of the Sea Lock meant visitors were able to make short trips along the canal on the Boyne Navigation Open Day August 23rd. In October IWAI-Boyne Navigation were recipients of a grant of €86k, from Failte Ireland, for the restoration of the 1.5 km section of Canal between Staleen Lock and the footbridge at Brú na Boinne. The planning application was lodged in March 2016, which involved environmental assessment studies as this section is within the Brú na Boinne World Heritage Site and the River Boyne SPA. At the Slane section, provision of new sluice gates at Morgan's Lock and dredging work increased water levels enhancing the towpath walk eastwards from Slane Bridge.

August 29th saw a huge turnout for our visits to Whitewood House, courtesy of David and Mary Horgan and Newcastle House, courtesy of Peter and Margaret Brittain in north Meath. Whitewood House was designed c1735 as a hunting lodge for the 10th Viscount of Gormanston and is attributed to Richard Castle. It is thought that the magnificent broad approach was designed to provide a 'deer course' with the house being of a prime viewpoint for this sport. Professor John Olley, architectural historian gave an interesting talk on the subject. Later that afternoon George Williams, well known antique restorer spoke on 'Fortune and Possessions of the Great Houses in Louth in the 18th Century' at Newcastle House. The day ended here with tea and a wander in the gardens by the side of Whitewood Lake.

Brian Keeley, bat conservationist gave us a suitably spooky bat walk in the woods of Townley Hall, mid-September. Four species graced the evening, 3 types of Pipistrelle and Leislers. The Ellison Award presentations were on display in Ashbourne and Drogheda Library and in early October, Kevin Mulligan gave a most interesting talk on 'The Buildings of South Ulster', in Drogheda library.

The birdwatching event led by Declan Collins of BirdWatch Ireland on the Boyne estuary at Mornington was the last of our biodiversity events, funded through the LA 21 scheme of Meath County Council. Our year ended with the Christmas lunch at Headfort House, where we enjoyed another talk on 18th century life by George Williams.

REPORT BY
MICHAEL KIRBY

NORTHWEST LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORT

The profile of the North West Local Association, representing members in Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon, continued to grow in 2015 with members participating and engaging with their local PPNs and LCDCs. Representing An Taisce North West, Chairperson Alan Moran continued his active involvement with the Roscommon Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) as did Secretary Michael Kirby who sits on the Sligo PPN Secretariat and Sligo LCDC, also representing An Taisce.

In Sligo, the Local Association made formal submissions to the County Sligo Heritage Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), resulting in significant additions to the LECP. In September, the Local Association assisted local member Gillian Ní Chaiside in organising Sligo's first PARKing Day event which, thanks to her effort and imagination, was a great success and well received by the public, businesses and the County Council.

In late November, several Sligo-based members travelled to Dublin to walk behind the An Taisce banner in the Climate Change march. For 2016 the Association is working closely with Sligo County Council's Heritage Officer, the owners of historic Elsinore House and others to see that a conservation report is carried out on this structure which has strong associations with the Yeats family (older and more recent photos of Elsinore attached).

The Local Association prepared a Heritage Council grant application for funding for a report and this has recently been submitted by the owners. New members are most welcome to contribute to the activities of the Association and for more information please contact Michael Kirby at 087 997 3558, or visit our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AnTaisceNorthWest

REPORT BY
NORMAN CAMPION, VALERIE BOND, ANDREW PARKES

DUBLIN SOUTH ASSOCIATION REPORT

2015 was another busy year in which we continued our planning, environmental, educational, social and fundraising activities.

PLANNING:

Our Planning Committee continued to receive and make observations on planning applications notified to us by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council "(DLRCC") and South Dublin County Council ("SDCC"), and to consider other matters not notified to us but of interest to An Taisce. In relation to DLRCC we deal with applications in the area between the N11 Stillorgan Road and the River Dodder. In the SDCC area we concentrate on developments potentially affecting the Dublin Mountain Area as well as Protected Structures in other parts of the County.

We made observations on drafts of new Development Plans for both DLRCC and SDCC. We welcomed DLRCC's proposal to prepare a Masterplan to develop Fernhill Gardens in Sandyford as a Park and we were pleased to have the opportunity to visit Fernhill, to discuss the options for conserving the gardens while developing the lands as a major park, and to make suggestions for future uses of the house.

We also welcomed DLRCC's draft Carrickmines Castle Conservation Plan 2015-2025. Our Association provided constructive input to the consultation and negotiation process regarding the M50 in 2002. We now met with the official responsible for the draft Conservation Plan and made comments on various points in a list of Policies and Activities.

SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & FUNDRAISING:

Thanks to events organisers Veronica Rowe, Sue Pedlow, Sylvia Dockeray and Eileen Collins and their helpers, our programme included:

- A visit to Howth Castle and the National Transport Museum.
- Summer outing to Meath and Louth, visiting Slane Castle, Collon, Mellifont Abbey and the Battle of the Boyne Centre at Oldbridge House.
- A garden party at Firmount, Kilternan, by kind permission of Una and Philip O'Connor.
- An exhibition of Signs and Symbols displayed in various ways in public places and their interpretation.
- A guided tour of the new Dún Laoghaire Lexicon Library.
- Participation in South Dublin County ECO week, providing the "Birds of Prey" animal magic day, and two evening Bat walks in Corkagh Park.
- Our Spring Lecture programme with illustrated talks on Irish Women Artists (Dr.Eimear O'Connor); Whales and Dolphins (Paul Kiernan); Frank Aiken – His Windmill and other Inventions (Rob Goodbody), UCD and the Establishment of the Belfield Campus (Ruth Ferguson). Professor John Sweeney came to our A.G.M. to give us a most comprehensive talk on climate change.
- Thanks to David Rowe we continued publication of six-monthly newsletters for Association members.

The Association is represented on the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown PPN.

We greatly regretted the retirement at our A.G.M. of our long-serving, energetic and highly efficient Chairwoman, Sylvia Dockeray, but are glad that she will continue to keep in touch. We were pleased to welcome new committee members Sinead Finegan, Mavis Johnson, Daphne Owens and Gerald Tomkin.

OFFICERS FOR 2015/2016:

Chairman: Norman Campion
Hon.Secretary: Mavis Johnson
Hon.Treasurer: Jim Cleary
Delegate to Council: Máire MhicGióbuin.

REPORT BY
JACK O'SULLIVAN

WESTMEATH ASSOCIATION

During 2015, our work and activities included three campaigns and an attempt to protect roadside trees as well as organising three successful events.

RESTORATION OF CASTLEPOLLARD MARKET HOUSE

A campaign to protect the old Market House in Castlepollard, which had also served as a town hall and a courthouse, had been initiated in 2006, after it had been reported that Westmeath County Council was considering demolition of this historic building.

BRONZE AGE TIMBER TRACKWAY ON MAYNE BOG

The second major campaign in which the Westmeath Association has been involved is aimed at securing protection for the remnants of a bronze age timber trackway on Mayne Bog, near Coole. The campaign was begun in April 2014 by Westmeath Association member and archaeologist Aidan Walsh, who used local, national and social media in parallel with An Taisce's efforts. His work, and that of other An Taisce members, led to Westmeath County Council issuing enforcement notices against the companies and their directors responsible for the continued unauthorised peat extraction.

LARGE-SCALE WIND FARMS

Our third campaign has been to support the public opposition to plans for large-scale wind farms across the midlands of Ireland, especially where such plans involve export to Britain of the electrical power generated. We emphasised that An Taisce is not against wind power, per se, as we accept that it is a renewable resource, but we considered that the best use of wind energy would be by means of small-scale locally-owned wind turbines, in locations acceptable to the community, and where there is community benefit and local support.

WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION OF ROADSIDE TREES

In 2015 members of the Westmeath Association observed with horror the cutting and destruction of many old and beautiful trees along roadsides in County Westmeath as a result of a circular letter to landowners by an area engineer employed by the Council.

Our Chairman, Thomas Pakenham, wrote to Westmeath County Council to express the Association's shock "at the appalling desecration of our countryside precipitated by an ill-judged letter earlier this year from the area engineer. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report (March 2016), we have seen further extensive cutting of roadside trees in parts of County Westmeath, including trees more than 2 metres from the carriageway.

EXCURSIONS FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

On 16 May, members participated in a lively and interesting botanical excursion along the shore of Lough Derravarragh at Coolure. On 11 July, members visited the Beehive Tomb of Mr Cooke, in the grounds of St. John the Baptist Church, near Delvin.

Our third event was held in the grounds of Tullynally Castle on 29 August, during Heritage Week. Wildlife expert Rosie Campbell demonstrated and explained about birds of prey in Ireland, we were able to see a variety of these birds, including kestrels and eagles.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

During 2015, we submitted to Westmeath County Council a successful application for funding for a Local Agenda 21 project; we suggested four educational and awareness raising events, and we received preliminary funding for one of them, to be organised in April 2016.

On 16 November, two of our committee members attended a very interesting seminar on Westmeath's protected structures, organised by Westmeath County Council's Conservation Architect, Ms Bernadette Solon.

The Westmeath Association is represented on the Westmeath Heritage Forum by our Chairman, Thomas Pakenham (member of the Architectural Working Group) and by Jack O'Sullivan (member of the Biodiversity Working Group).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Westmeath Association wishes to record its thanks to Thomas Pakenham who chairs our meetings; to Thomas and Valerie Pakenham for inviting us to hold our meetings in Tullynally Castle; to John Harnett and Úna Fitzgibbon for hosting several meetings in their house at Coolure, to Dalia Smelstoriute for hosting a meeting at the home of herself and Jack O'Sullivan in Ballymanus, and to John Harnett for organising the events in 2015. For a more detailed report, please visit www.antaisce.org/westmeath2015

REPORT BY
BRIAN RICKWOOD

WEXFORD LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORT

Wexford Local Association held a very successful annual dinner on 13th March 2015 and were very pleased that John Gibbons was able to speak on climate change at this event. We visited Bargy Castle and Butlerstown Castle in June and our thanks go to the Davidson and the Skrine family for making this possible as the visits proved to be very successful and enjoyable.

We have made more progress at Corlican Quaker burial ground as the invasive laurel and briars have been removed and the graveyard gate has been repaired. Work has also been started on the wording for the information panel and we are in contact with the local Quaker families to ensure that the information is correct.

We continue to monitor planning applications but unfortunately have not yet managed to place environmental representatives on the Strategic Policy Committees under the new local government regulations. We still have a small number of committee members but we can call on the wider membership for projects and our thanks go to all these volunteers especially for their work on the Corlican site.

WHO ARE AN TAISCE?

COUNCIL OF AN TAISCE

PRESIDENT
To Be Filled

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
John Sweeney

LOCAL ASSOCIATION DELEGATES
Rachel Grimes, *Westmeath*
Mairead Mehigan, *Dun Laoghaire*
Maire Mhic Giobuin, *Dublin South (R. Dodder to Stillorgan Rd.)*
Margaret Monaghan, *Meath*
TBC, *Northwest*
Alan Price, *Carlow*
Brian Rickwood, *Wexford*
Kathleen Vandenberghe, *Tipperary*
Anny Wise, *Clare*
Ann Gibbons, *Kilkenny*
Derrick Hambleton, *Galway*
Catherine McMullin, *Kerry*
Kevin Hurley, *Cork*
Anne McGowan, *Donegal*

DEPUTY DELEGATES
Jean Carr, *Meath*
Mary Brennan, *Kilkenny*
Tim Ryan, *Wexford*
Damon Matthew Wise Âû, *Clare*
Tadhg Hanifin, *Kerry*
Jack O'Sullivan, *Westmeath*

ELECTED DELEGATES 2011
Justin Byrne, *Dublin West (R. Dodder to R. Liffey)*

ELECTED DELEGATES 2013
Eamonn Moore, *Carlow*
Declan Murphy, *Kilkenny*
Attracta Uí Bhroin, *Dublin West (R. Dodder to R. Liffey)*

ELECTED DELEGATES 2014
Eileen Collins, *Dublin South (R. Dodder to Stillorgan Rd.)*

ELECTED DELEGATES 2015
Eric Conroy, *Dublin City*
Claire Gogarty, *Dublin City*
Alex Hollingsworth, *Dublin City*
Phil Kearney, *Dublin City*
James Leahy, *Dublin City*
Paula Maguire, *Dublin West (R. Dodder to R. Liffey)*
Emma Gilleece, *Limerick*
Charles Stanley-Smith, *Tipperary*
John Harnett, *Westmeath*
Judy Osborne, *Wicklow*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Harnett, Chairperson, *Joined Board in 2013*
Attracta Uí Bhroin, *Vice Chairperson, Joined Board in 2011*
Paula Maguire, *Treasurer, Joined Board in 2015, Resigned February 2016*
James Leahy, *Secretary, Joined Board in 2011*
Brian Rickwood (UK), *Built Environment Committee Chair, Joined Board in 2011*
Barry McMullin, *Climate Change Committee Chair, Joined Board in 2014*
Charles Stanley Smith (UK), *Education Committee Chair, Joined Board in 2003*
Declan Murphy, *Natural Environment Committee Chair, Joined Board in 2011*
Mairead Mehigan, *Joined Board in 2009*
Gerry Conroy, *Joined Board in 2014, Resigned March 2016*
Jeanne Meldon, *Education Unit Committee Member, Joined Board in 2014. Resigned 2015.*

KEY EMPLOYEES

AN TAISCE HEAD OFFICE
Programmes and Administration Officer: Eoin Heaney
Membership Officer: Lawrence Hemmings

AN TAISCE ADVOCACY
Built Environment & Heritage Officer: Ian Lumley
Planning & Environmental Policy Officer: Doireann Ní Cheallaigh
Natural Environment Officer: Fintan Kelly
National Cycling Coordinator: Damien Ó Tuama

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION UNIT OF AN TAISCE
Education Unit Director: Michael John O'Mahony
Development Manager: Anthony Purcell
Business Administration Manager: Dawn Parkinson
Anti-litter League & National Spring Clean Programme Manager: Emlyn Cullen
Coastal Awards (Blue Flag & Green Coasts) Coastal Awards Manager: Ian Diamond
Coastal Communities Programmes Coastal Communities Manager: Sinead McCoy
Green Schools National Green-Schools Manager: Cathy Baxter
Green Schools National Green-Schools Travel Manager: Jane Hackett
Green Communities & Green Flag for Parks Programme Officer: Robert Moss
Green Home Programme Officer: Susan Vickers
Neat Streets Programme Officer: Eoin Morton

REPRESENTATIVES OF AN TAISCE

Dr. Mark Clinton, *Monuments & Antiquities Contact*
Attracta Uí Bhroin, *European Environmental Bureau*
Eoin Heaney, *International National Trusts Organisation*
Eoin Heaney, *Europa Nostra*
Ian Lumley and Malcolm Robertson, *Wexford Monument Trust*
James Leahy, *Inland Waterways Association of Ireland Boyne Navigation Branch Committee*
Geoff Clarke, *Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Committee*
Geoff Clarke, *Meath Heritage Forum*
Ian Lumley, *Alfred Beit Foundation, An Taisce Nominee to Board of Directors*

COMMITTEES

For members with an interest in specific aspects of our work, we have six committees, which meet regularly and help to guide our work. See www.antaisce.org/publications/who-are-an-taisce

POLICY COMMITTEES

Built Environment Committee
Climate Change Committee
Natural Environment Committee

ORGANISATION COMMITTEES

Education Committee
Audit Committee
Properties Committee

An Taisce

The National Trust for Ireland



A GIFT IN YOUR WILL HELPS AN TAISCE PLAN AHEAD FOR THE FUTURE AND SECURE IRELAND'S NATURAL AND BUILT HERITAGE FOR EVERYONE, FOR EVER.

For an information pack,
please contact info@antaisce.org
or call (01) 454 1786.

© 2016 An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland, The Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin D08 X2A3
Tel. +353 1 454 1786 / Email: info@antaisce.org
Charity No. CHY 4741 / Charities Regulatory Authority No. 20006358 / Company No. 12469
www.antaisce.org