AN TAISCE
THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR IRELAND



ANNUAL REPORT 2014

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

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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.

2014 IN NUMBERS



5,112

The number of groups involved in An Taisce's National Spring Clean



6,890

The acreage of nature reserve we hold in trust.



2,035

The number of submissions and consultations made by our advocacy team.

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An Taisce

The National Trust for Ireland

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EDITED BY Eoin Heaney
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CHAIR'S REPORT

BY JOHN HARNETT

I am inspired at the end of 2014 with Eoin Heaney our Programmes and Administration Officer telling me that we made over 2,000 comments, submissions and responses to consultations in the last 12 months, (antaisce.org/submissions). We have our team meeting every Monday morning so everybody knows what is happening for the next week and what was achieved in the previous week. But as issue follows issue each week, keeping a mental count of what is done proves difficult. Our appraisals of policy and response to apparent statements of fact by others must be based on a strictly scientific, legal and qualitative basis. For we are in a battle for the hearts and minds of the people and their future. In this regard the addition of the Climate Change Committee along with Natural Environment and Built Environment has resulted in detailed, and we believe challenging submissions to Government.

We have had some big cases this year namely Hinkley Point which saw An Tasice appearing in the UK High Court and Court of Appeal. The case concerned the right of the Irish people to be consulted on trans boundary infrastructural projects. Unfortunately after strong argument by our brilliant legal team led by David Wofle of Matrix Chambers we were refused leave to appear before the UK Supreme Court. Judicial Reviews can take on occasion quite a while to come to fruition and we will have several in 2015 that were initiated in 2014; let's just say that 2015 will be very busy in this regard.

A PROJECT DESIGNED TO BRING MORE TRAFFIC INTO THE CENTRE OF A MEDIEVAL CITY IS TOO BIZARRE TO COMMENT FURTHER ON.

ABOVE:
Kilkeny Castle
BELOW:
John Harnett



I am very mindful of the benefits that the EU has brought to us as a nation environmentally and otherwise; one only has to think of the removal of the civil service marriage ban once we joined the EU in 1973. The apparent desire of the UK and certain other countries to weaken some areas of EU environmental policy is wrong and will only create an accelerated loss in biodiversity and water quality across the EU.

But there are tragedies that we are unable to prevent or sometimes unaware are occurring. In 2014 I think specially of the Kilkenny central access road scheme that is proceeding. A project designed to bring more traffic into the centre of a medieval city is too bizarre to comment further on. We also became aware during the year of a Bronze Age track in Mayne in Westmeath, circa 1200-800 BC which has been systematically destroyed over the last 9 years with the knowledge of the National Monuments Service. In this latter case we fight on to save a remnant of this 3 km track with other local activists.

Increasingly it is local knowledge of destruction and threats to our heritage which leads to our involvement and we can sometimes help to point a path along what seems at the start for an individual an impossible bureaucratic task.

Our jewel in the crown the Education Unit has continued its excellent work during the year across all of its nine programmes.

I am optimistic that we face into 2015 stronger but nevertheless needing your continued financial and intellectual support.

Taking inspiration from Charles Handy - we are always on the second curve.

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HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

BY JAMES LEAHY

REVIEW OF ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Most of my time in 2014 went into a review of An Taisce's Articles of Association. It is hoped to agree revisions to these with Board and Council, and bring them to an extraordinary general meeting of An Taisce in January 2016. This general review will ensure compliance with the new Charities and Companies Acts and support An Taisce's adoption of the Governance Code at www.governancecode.ie. The aim is to clarify the respective roles of the Board and Council of An Taisce; with the Council having a strategic, watchdog and consultative role; while allowing the Board to function efficiently to modern standards of governance.

Comments and suggestions are welcome via your local association or directly to secretary@antaice.org.

ONLINE PRESENCE

In 2013 we launched a new www.antaisce.org website and this started to bear fruit in 2014. We integrated the ezine email newsletter system to the website, where thanks to Charles Stanley Smith, we have been sending out ezines showing the often forgotten breadth of work that An Taisce does: www.antaisce.org/ezinearchive. We also made an effort, led by Brian Rickwood to populate www.antaisce.org/govenance where we have pulled together our policies and procedures in one place. This greatly assists in ensuring compliance with An Taisce's various corporate social responsibilities; and showing to funders and stakeholders that An Taisce is a professional organisation that deserves support.

MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

We have made progress on the new membership system, which will use www.CiviCRM.org. A test version has been created and the system will be finished later in 2015. Having done this we will have a system to support future growth in membership. The next project will be a re-launched properties concessions list for members.

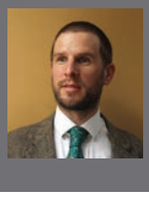
SPECIAL THANKS

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



COULD YOU HELP CONTRIBUTE TO WWW.ANTAISCE.ORG?

We are looking for An Taisce members to help create news and events on www.antaisce.org. You don't need to be based in Dublin and can put in as much or as little time as you wish. Basic internet skills are required and we will provide training. Please contact secretary@antaisce.org.



IN 2014 WE SENT OUT MONTHLY EZINES COMMUNICATING THE BREADTH OF WORK THAT AN TAISCE DOES

ADMINISTRATION REPORT

BY EOIN HEANEY



2014 was an incredibly productive year at An Taisce's Advocacy and Properties Unit in which over 2,000 submissions, consultations and observations on all that impacts our environment and quality of life, from the plight of our peatlands to Budget 2015 were produced. This led to media coverage, engagement with government departments and a raising of awareness of key issues.

Throughout the year my focus has been on administration, fundraising, project management and policy coordination, drawing inspiration from the vision, skills and dedication of our staff and volunteers who consistently achieve above and beyond what is expected of them given the resources to hand.

The extent to which we were able to engage and communicate our message on a national and local level was made possible through the fantastic work of our Director James Nix who I am sad to say left these shores at the end of the year to take up a new position in Brussels as the director of Green Budget Europe. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to James for his tireless dedication to An Taisce over many years and wish him the very best of luck in the new role.

WHAT YOU TOLD US IN 2014:

Some Feedback from our Supporters' Survey:

- "Environmental Education for those in politics, commerce, agriculture and industry."
- "Educating public on importance of good planning with examples of good and bad."
- "The importance of biodiversity and habitats"
- "Embedding attitudes taught through Green Schools outside of the classroom environment."

SUPPORTERS SURVEY



Tailors' Hall, An Taisce's flagship property saw much activity throughout the year. Having successfully secured funding through Fáilte Ireland, we selected a winning design for the Dubline garden project which is currently at planning and procurement stage. I hope to report back to you next year with images of a vibrant biodiverse garden taking pride of place on High Street, which will further raise the profile of both the Tailors' Hall and An Taisce itself on one of the capital's busiest tourist routes.

I would also like to thank those of you who filled out and returned An Taisce's supporters' survey in your hundreds last year. Your valued feedback is continuing to inform us as to where to direct our limited resources and areas in which we can further develop capacity. Expanding our membership base and Local Association network is one area in particular we are progressing in 2015. For those of you who have not had a chance to respond, there is still an opportunity to do so online via this link: http://www.antaisce.org/2014survey

Volunteers are the backbone of An Taisce, without whom the organisation would falter and I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank everyone who donated their time and skills over the course of the year. Special thanks must be accorded to Charles Stanley-Smith for his work in editing last year's magazine and in producing the ever popular monthly ezine; Louis McGee whose skills in restoration and maintenance have been invaluable at Tailors' Hall, and James Leahy whose work on the website and membership database in particular has paid great dividends.

We are always on the lookout for volunteers to help with our properties across the country, administration and lending a hand at events. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch with me directly via info@antaisce.org.



Computer mock up of Dubline garden Tailors' Hall by Hayley Farrell

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TREASURER'S REPORT

BY PAULA MAGUIRE

An Taisce was without a treasurer for a significant part of 2014. As newly appointed Treasurer (December 2014) there has been a steep learning curve for me as I get to grips with the challenges and issues that face the organisation.

What has struck me since I've taken on the role is the unwavering loyalty, dedication and amazing work ethic of all staff members, interns, contractors and volunteers of An Taisce. There is a high level of awareness of the importance of the work and the need to be cost efficient while delivering a quality service to the members who support our work and the government agencies and sponsors who provide funding.

2014 has been a busy year for An Taisce with an increasing number of activities and initiatives undertaken in all areas including advocacy, properties, the natural and built environment and the Environmental Education Unit (EEU). All programmes and initiatives were delivered within budget and I'm happy to report that the advocacy unit came in under the budgeted loss for 2014 at -€14,951 while the education unit will be reporting a small surplus for the year of €1,470, despite the continued squeeze on funding (these figures are subject to audit).

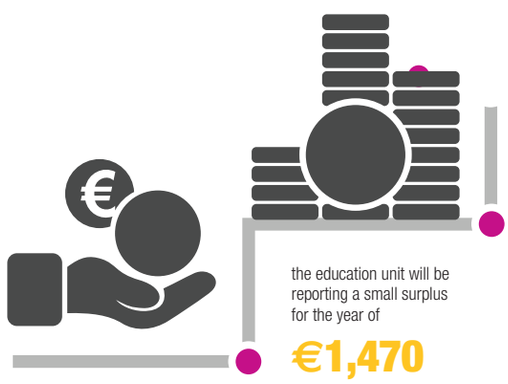
Whilst the organisation has a very clear mission and vision, it has proven extremely difficult to plan ahead beyond a six month period primarily due to the continued reluctance of government departments and local authorities to commit to funding programmes for longer than a 12 month period. In addition, getting funds released once agreed has resulted in delays in large payments of several months. This has caused some problems, particularly for the EEU. Happily, they have managed this issue exceptionally well.

The Head Office, Advocacy and Properties side of the organisation continues to rely heavily on membership fees and donations for which we are extremely grateful. It is fair to say that without the support of the members, private and corporate donors we would not be able to continue this work. We do need a degree of financial flexibility to allow us to respond quickly to unforeseen issues as they arise. To this end I would appeal to the wider membership to assist with fund raising, recruiting new members or passing on contacts of individuals or corporations who may like to donate or offer pro bono services.

The long-time auditors of An Taisce, Williams Merrigan, stepped down in 2014 and I would like to thank them for their service over the years. For any organisation it is considered healthy and best practice to rotate auditors every five years as a minimum, to provide reassurance to the members and funding agencies. As one of my first roles, I will be involved in the selection of a new auditor in 2015.

I look forward to the coming year and hopefully meeting many more of you.

The 2014 audited accounts will be available to read or download from mid-May, in advance of the AGM, on our website www.antaisce.org/2014accounts. Any member who would prefer to receive a hard copy by post may contact the office at (01) 454 1786.



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€1,470

the advocacy unit came in under the budgeted loss for 2014 at

- €14,951



2014 HAS BEEN A BUSY YEAR FOR AN TAISCE WITH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN ALL AREAS.



Morriscastle Wind Farm, Co Wexford. Credit: Steve Valasek

BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

BY IAN LUMLEY AND TOMÁS BRADLEY

The year 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the planning system in Ireland. On the 1st of October 1964 the first planning Act came into being and has grown much since then. As Irish planning muddles through middle age the Built Environment Office continues to confront it and its uncomfortable mid-life crisis with very obvious questions – what is it doing, where is it going, whose needs does it serve and does what it do actually work?

Every challenge which presents itself is taken as an opportunity to promote a positive vision for healthy and resilient rural and urban communities, which must be increasingly informed by positive action on climate, enhancement of biodiversity and reduction of resource consumption. This enthusiasm of the office over the year was carried, to a large extent, by the interest of our voluntary interns, namely: Franziska Dettner and David Ferguson; whose commitment was unrivalled, on trustworthiness and professionalism. The work of the Built Environment Office by and large expanded throughout the year, with some tremors of an upswing in the economy. Like other years several issues came to the fore nationally as we follow the plans and policies of government and industry. This required a focused approach. While it became functional to segment issues, the cross over between them is evident in the day-to-day operations.

The areas of focus at present stem to:

- Development Management
- Forward Planning
- Energy and Climate Change
- Heritage (Buildings at Risk)
- Smarter Travel (Cycling)





(Left) Ian Lumley, Heritage Officer (Right) Tomás Bradley Planning and Environmental Policy Officer

On a daily basis the team carry out the prescribed functions of the organisation as has been the case since the introduction of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act in 1963. An Taisce has been carrying out its prescribed planning functions for fifty years now – it is a remarkable achievement for an organisation with such limited resources and something we need to commend ourselves for. Over the year the office administered, reviewed, assessed, consulted and made recommendations on some 1,000 development management cases. Some of the cases which fostered discussion in the office included: National Technology Park in Limerick, Kilkenny Northern Ring Road, the M7 Motorway Expansion, Emlagh Windfarm in North Meath; plus many more items which were as minor as alterations to protected structures to a distillery in the Burren.

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ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Energy and Climate have been the hot topic again in 2014 due to the consultation on a Green Paper for Energy and has consumed significant resources of the unit as the government progress plans for increased capacity on our electrical grid and harness wind energy. The office has stood firm on the view that the state should be focusing on energy conservation firstly and see what capacity that can return. Our role as an advocate for energy efficiency, energy decarbonisation and community based energy has increased. We are actively participating in the consultation process on the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) publication of the Energy Green Paper in 2014. We are concerned that the paper is aiming for a trying to please everyone catchall strategy, which is a non strategy. The basic premise of the Green paper by which sustainability is one of three pillars with equal status is of concern. The impetus given to competitiveness and security raises concern that short term economics, a scattergun approach and too much deference to vested interests will prevail. The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, is itself lacking in horizontal integration with different sections promoting oil and gas drilling and sustainable energy at the same time. An Taisce is advocating strongly for a strategy to be put in place to achieve a high level of household insulation retrofitting and efficiency and the switch from coal and peat to low carbon heat sources that are needed to meet EU 2020 targets and the much deeper emission cuts needed beyond.



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Throughout 2014, An Taisce has been largely disappointed with development proposals which do not seem to be informed by international best practice on the building of resilient socially connected low carbon communities. It seems that the opposite is still being pursued and endorsed by so many in the planning, architectural and engineering professions. In April 2014, Ian Lumley addressed the Irish Planning Institute Planning Conference raising several of the issues facing the profession. The proposals for expansion of the three State owned ports in Dublin, Cork and Galway were the most significant strategic infrastructure applications to be heard in Ireland in 2014. Ireland's transboundary impact in import of fuel, feedstuffs and consumer goods and export of milk powder, peat and waste is exacerbating climate change, biodiversity loss and ocean acidification. All three port companies advanced development proposals to increase shipping tonnage, based on longer term growth projections which are hugely problematic in climate emission and ecological footprint. Galway Harbour Company, which is one of the five regional ports lodged a proposal in 2014 lacking entirely in strategic justification given its scale and impact affecting Galway Bay SAC and SPA. An Taisce actively participated in the planning process for all of these projects. The prescribed functions of the organisation also stretch to the forward planning functions. To this end An Taisce has been the most accelerative organisation in the state in trying to change the position of our policies, plans and strategies to provide rational, evidence based and plan-led strategy for the future spatial development of the state and to address critical emerging global challenges, most importantly energy scarcity and climate change, and is grounded in the principles of sustainable development. Some of the key consultations during the year included: *(Continued on next page)*

BUILDINGS AT RISK

Buildings at Risk (BAR) remained the unit's key heritage issues in 2014 with the publication of Most Significant Buildings at Risk in Ireland which included one hundred of the most urgent cases. The topic, while attracting significant debate on social media sites, is continually ignored by developers and their financial institutions that have chosen to sit on properties and allow them to deteriorate. An Taisce continued to pursue developers, their financial institutions and the local authorities to maintain these buildings. The lead cases pursued during the year were 3 Henrietta St, Aldborough House and the Iveagh Market in Dublin, Belcamp in Fingal, Bellamont Co. Cavan and the St Senan's Mental Hospital in Enniscorthy. The collapse of the timber columned Belline Temple in Co. Kilkenny was a particularly regrettable loss. In 2014 the historic contents of Bantry House were put up for sale. While the auction was suspended because of a licence issue, the future of a collection intrinsic to one of the country's prime heritage tourism attractions is unresolved. An Taisce campaigned for the acquisition of the contents by the state



Bellcamp House

KEY CONSULTATIONS

- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Initial Assessment (Articles 19.2a & b Report)
- European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment)(Planning and Development) Regulations
- Report on Tyres & Waste Tyres in the Producer Responsibility Initiative sector in Ireland
- Report on End of Life Vehicles (ELVs) in the Producer Responsibility Initiative sector in Ireland
- Regulation of Household Waste Collection
- 2050 Low Carbon Roadmap
- -Transport Sector
- Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
- Wind Energy Guidelines Focused Review
- Bus Rapid Transit Options
- Review of Development Management Guidelines 2007
- 2050 Low Carbon Roadmap - Built Environment Sector; National Risk Assessment 2014
- Investment Protection and Investor-to-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP)
- Green Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland; Draft National Tourism Policy for Ireland
- National Landscape Strategy
- Access to Justice & Implementation of Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention; Budget 2015 Submission
- Forestry Programme 2014-2020
- Strategic Framework


Howth Harbour

for Investment in Land Transport; plus many county and city development plans and submissions on heritage plans, corporate plans and local economic and community plans. The detail of many of these submissions is significant and was brought to the attention of wider audiences throughout the year where both national and local media identified the Built Environment Unit as reliable and advanced on concepts such as climate change and infrastructure development.

A policy issue which came to the fore in 2014 was Ireland's marine jurisdiction. It is nearly ten times the land area. During 2014 An Taisce has inputted into the monitoring process on the implementation the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The protection of ocean eco-system, a requirement of the MSFD, is being undermined by commercial fishing interests. Only a fraction of the marine area is designated under the Habitats Directive. There is no impetus to put in place one of the key provisions of the Directive to introduce large scale Marine Conservation Zones.

TRANSPORT AND SMARTER TRAVEL

The final facet of the unit to take roots this year was Smarter Travel, where continued efforts were exerted to advocate most efficient use of investment resources in provision and promotion of cycle and bus use. Applications for new or extended schools were a significant trend during the year. An Taisce made an extensive submission on implementation of timetabled and targeted school travel plans to reduce car dependency. The case of a major school project over 1km outside Croom Co. Limerick shows that Department of Education location standards are not being applied nationally in new-build site selection. In 2014 An Bord Pleanála made one of its most technically inept decisions in accommodating extra lanes on 15kms of the M7 between Naas and Newbridge without considering the induced or extra traffic that would be funnelled from the wider catchment beyond and then into the M50 via the Red Cow interchange. This follows a range of other decisions on car based; motorway orientated retail development in the Greater Dublin Area, as well as extended parking in Dublin Airport.



THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OFFICE complemented and built on the work of other offices in the organisation and would like to thank the Board, Council, Built Environment Committee and other colleagues for their support and guidance throughout 2014.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

BY BRIAN RICKWOOD

After a slow start and a change of Chairman the Built Environment Committee adopted new terms of reference and began to examine the draft policy for Sustainable Rural Settlement in more detail. A number of meetings took place and it was eventually agreed that there should be a change of direction. The Committee members felt that they should be setting matters of principle and the staff Officers should take responsibility for implementing the principles. Policies should be short in length and take the form of working documents which could be amended as Society changes.

The Committee therefore decided that there should be only five core principles for the policy. The final policy for Sustainable Rural Settlement was adopted by the Council in December 2014 as the policy for An Taisce. The Committee would also like to see a review of the Sustainable Rural Guidelines 2005 because they believe that some applicants for one-off houses are taking advantage of the guidelines. This should be investigated. Committee members have continued to examine the cost of one-off housing and this work is ongoing. They would also like to link with other like minded organisations to discuss the implementation of the new building regulations. They have continued to support the Smarter Travel Policy.

The Committee has concerns over the following; the proposed export of energy, wind turbines, the link between planning and public health, and the new National Spatial Strategy. The Officers have had a very successful year in 2014 and their planning and public consultation submissions have been excellent. We were very pleased with the database of Buildings at Risk which the Officers prepared and launched in 2014 . We congratulate them for all their work.

In conclusion the members of the Built Environment Committee will continue to promote a vision for Ireland which tackles climate change and creates resilient communities for the future. If you have an interest in the Built Environment and wish to become involved in our discussions you are invited to join our Committee.

Contact details: builtenvironmentchair@antaisce.org





AN TAISCE'S FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES FOR RURAL SETTLEMENT

1. A strong network of thriving towns and villages is fundamental for rural development.
2. Scattered housing in unserviced locations should be restricted and instead directed to rural towns and villages.
3. Implement a 'Serviced Sites Initiative' in rural towns and villages as an alternative to scattered housing.
4. Rural Ireland is a critical resource for a post-carbon world.
5. Manage the economic, social and environmental legacy of scattered housing.

The full document is available on our website: www.antaisce.org/heritage/what-we-do

NATIONAL CYCLING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

BY DAMIEN Ó TUAMA

An Taisce continued its strategic partnership with Cyclist.ie – The Irish Cycling Advocacy Network with the aim of bringing the bicycle in from the margins of transport policy. For a further year, the National Cycling Coordinator (NCC) (part-time) role was funded through the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) (www.ecf.com). Other national organisations funded were those from Finland, Sweden, Austria, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Greece and the Czech Republic. All met in Sofia in October (as pictured) for a 3-day training course. Meanwhile at home, the array of organisations connected into the Cyclist.ie network now includes Great Southern Trail (Limerick/Kerry) and Dingle Greenways, with other bodies such as Derry to Inishowen Greenways and Staying Alive at 1.5 adding their weight to the wider cycling and walking movement. The NCC's work focused on two strands: firstly, national level political lobbying; secondly, drafting local level submissions regarding cycling / transport schemes.





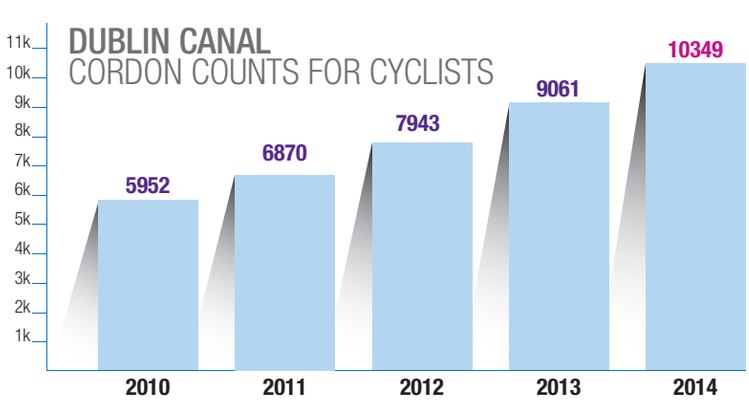


POLITICAL LOBBYING AND NATIONAL LEVEL DEVELOPMENTS

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 many objectives and actions (as shown in recent research http://www.ecf.com/cycling-in-all-policies/national-cycling-policies/). One difficulty in Ireland relates to the increasingly uncertain status of the Smarter Travel unit (and hence sustainable transport thinking) within the Department of Transport Tourism & Sport (DTTAS). The government is in complete denial as regards the need to reduce emissions from the transport sector.

The work of the NCC in 2014 focused on continuously pressing both politicians and officials from DTTAS that the NCPF needs to be given much greater prominence. In April 2014, we used Cyclist.ie's hosting of the ECF Delegate Conference / AGM to apply pressure on the government to create a National Cycling Officer position which would plug directly into an international network of such officers and elevate the importance of bicycle planning at a national level.

We also met regularly with the National Transport Authority, The National Trails Advisory Committee, and other agencies and Local Authorities.



Numbers of cyclists crossing canal cordon (7.00-10.00 - taken in November of each year)

PLANNING SUBMISSIONS

The NCC prepared a myriad of submissions, with the support of Cyclist.ie and AT members, regarding policy issues and planning proposals. These included:

- Draft Northern Ireland Bicycle Strategy
- West Clare Greenway (Ennis to Ballymaquiggan)
- DTTAS Review of National Land Transport System
- Waterford Co Co: Kilmeaden to Bilberry Greenway
- Kerry Co Co: Muckross Road Traffic Calming
- Leitrim Co Co: Shannon Erne Waterway (Ballinamore to Ballyconnell Canal) Walk/ Cycleway
- Mayo Co Co: Killala to Ballina Greenway
- Limerick Smarter Travel (Walk / Cycleway alongside Shannon)

CONCLUSION

The bicycle is finally moving in from the margins of transport policy. However success on the ground (as measured by the numbers cycling for everyday trips to school, work, shopping etc.) is very uneven. There is a strong momentum in particular in the regeneration of a cycling culture in Dublin: bike stands are full, crowds of cyclists gather at junctions at peak travel hours and there is vibrant cycle campaigning culture (based around Cyclist.ie's largest group, Dublin Cycling Campaign – www.dublincycling.ie).

Other successes in 2014 included the launch of public bike schemes in Galway, Limerick and Cork. However, outside of urban areas, everyday "transportation" cycling is an increasingly rare sight. The policy focus in rural areas needs to extend beyond greenways and towards making existing roads safe.

The part time role of the NCC is only guaranteed for a short period, and 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.

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

BY BARRY MC MULLIN



An Taisce Council approved the formation of the Climate Change committee (ATCC) in February 2014 [http://tinyurl.com/nf9xeur]. Its mission is to promote an Irish society-wide response to human-caused climate disruption which is: commensurate with the scale and urgency of this unprecedented global challenge; informed by the best available scientific understanding, and consistent with local and global equity.

The current work plan encompasses the following: Develop positive climate action communications. Promote the benefits of climate action. Disseminate the "cumulative carbon budget" concept as the scientific basis for effective climate policy. This would ensure that the great bulk of remaining fossil fuel "resources" (oil, gas, coal, peat) are now left safely in the ground. Influence key actors in society (politics, media, business, etc.) to support effective climate action. Support grassroots/community responses to the challenge of "post-carbon" living. Promote social and political activism for climate action.

ENGAGEMENT

ATCC has contributed to a number of recent consultations, including: National Risk Assessment [http://tinyurl.com/lpn3en9]; Green Paper on Energy Policy [http://tinyurl.com/lxl5zf6]; Forestry Programme 2014-2020 [http://tinyurl.com/mp6d929]; Low Carbon Roadmap for the Transport Sector [http://tinyurl.com/ny88gdh]

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finalised its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) during 2014. This further strengthened the climate scientists' consensus that climate change is now threatening severe impacts across all societies and sectors of human activity; and that only radical and urgent global emissions reductions, combined with aggressive adaptation measures, can forestall the worst effects. Based on this, ATCC released a substantial report summarising the decisive role of cumulative carbon emissions in climate policy [http://tinyurl.com/oxmsryk].

The proposed expansion of Irish dairy and beef production under the Food Harvest 2020 programme (with its consequent increase of greenhouse emissions) is also a focus of major ongoing concern. ATCC has publicly critiqued the policy, and has also met directly with officials of the Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN 3 NUMBERS

2 °C

The agreed maximum rise in temperature by the end of the century beyond which climate change risk becomes unacceptably high.

565 GIGATONS

The carbon budget we are able to 'spend' while having a reasonable chance of staying below 2°C.

2,795 GIGATONS

The amount of carbon dioxide that would be released if all proven fossil reserves were extracted and used.

Source: The Guardian / Bill McKibben

The (long delayed) Low-Carbon and Climate Action Bill was finally introduced in the Dáil in February 2015. It falls far short of the ambition advocated by An Taisce [http://tinyurl.com/qg8oof5]. We continue to encourage substantial amendments. ATCC supported a day of action (Feb 10th 2015) in relation to the Bill, including a contribution to a private briefing for Oireachtas members, direct lobbying, and participation in a public meeting. These events were organised through the Stop Climate Chaos (SCC) NGO coalition [http://www.stopclimatechaos.ie/].

The most recent UN Conference of the Parties (CoP-20) took place in December in Lima. Prof. John Sweeney (Ireland's leading climate scientist, and past President of An Taisce) attended as an observer. His timely and informative "letters from Lima" [http://tinyurl.com/m2ax2qo] captured the atmosphere of the event, and the disappointing lack of ambition in the outcomes achieved. Attention now focuses on CoP-21, in Paris, during December 2015. All parties have clearly committed themselves to the need achieve an effective, binding agreement at that meeting. There are emerging plans for large scale citizen mobilisation in the build up to this meeting: An Taisce is working actively to maximise participation. The FossilFree divestment campaign promoted by 350.org has been supported by An Taisce through a letter issued to all Irish universities and churches urging them to divest from fossil fuels [http://tinyurl.com/ovlyudu]

ATCC meets monthly (usually on the second Tuesday, in Tailors' Hall, starting at 5.30pm). New volunteers are always welcome. Please email climatechair@antaisce.org if you are interested in becoming involved in this important work.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION UNIT REPORT

BY PATRICIA OLIVER





(Clockwise from top left:) Sarah McGovern, National Spring Clean Ambassador; Walking for Water; Boyle NS at a Cycle on Wednesday Event. (Bottom) Green Schools award in Cork

On 1st December 2014, I gave notice to the Education Committee of my intention to retire at the end of May 2015 and as I write this report that is now just three months away. It will be 22 years since I stepped down as Chairwoman of An Taisce and started the Education Unit. I had, of course, the support of like minded An Taisce members, several of whom are still serving on the Education Committee and fulfilling their commitment to "a long term involvement in the new venture".

It has been a rollercoaster ride beginning as it did without finance or staff and ending up with 64 full-time employees located throughout the country. And so 2014 seemed like a good time to take stock and prepare a strategy using 2015 as a template but looking ahead to what I hope will be at least another 22 years of hard work but great reward.



Patricia Oliver
Director,
Environmental
Education Unit



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to guide An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit areas of business, determine how the Unit will operate to achieve stated aims and objectives and identify how it will measure progress and achievements. It is primarily a goals-based strategy that also highlights opportunities and challenges to be addressed over the period. The plan is influenced by the Unit's Mission which commits it to working with all sectors of society 'to care for the environment and foster a more sustainable future for all; through education, awareness and action based programmes, campaigns and initiatives' and guided by its Vision to achieve a 'healthy and sustainable environment for all'.

CONTEXT

The EEU Strategic Plan should be considered in the context of an uncertain and ever changing financial position characterised by: several different public and private sector income streams across different programmes and campaigns; often short-term (yearly) contracts and commitments; programme and project specific funding; a current common pattern of reduced budgets and funds for particular programmes year on year; and other variables. As a result it is essential that the Strategic Plan is dynamic and adaptable to be able to react to this economic environment.

MONITORING & MEASUREMENT

The Strategic Plan puts in place a process for monitoring and measuring progress. Progress will be measured against specific programme objectives and goals identified in the respective Work Plans and reported to senior

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management on an ongoing basis. Senior management will report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and related developments, issues and achievements to the Education Committee on a quarterly basis. These are just the broad brush strokes, of course, and the document itself contains the detail along with focused work plans, projections and future potential for all programmes. Lest it be thought that this is the work of my own hand, I should add that it was produced with assistance from all programme managers and pulled together by Anthony Purcell our Development Manager. My Assistant, Michael-John O'Mahony and Business Manager Dawn Parkinson deserve the highest praise for their efforts during this and other years and I give it wholeheartedly. The work of all the staff of the Education Unit has been exemplary and this new strategy which reflects the range and breadth of their expertise, gives me a road map which I hope will be useful, to pass on to my successor.

A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

Looking back, 2014 was a challenging year for the Education Unit but the staff rose to the challenge and worked to deliver outstanding results despite continued financial constraints. Their work was strongly supported throughout the year by the Education Committee and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Margaret Sweeney (Vice Chairperson), Valerie Bond, Norman Campion, Bernard Ryan, Kathleen Vandenberghe, Eileen Collins, Jeanne Meldon, John Harnett, John Sweeney and Ronnie Russell under the Chairmanship of Charles Stanley Smith. My thanks also goes to Alison Carter who retired from the Committee during 2014. Their commitment to me personally over the years as well as to the Education Unit has been invaluable and I know that it will be crucial to my successor.

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN
(WWW.NATIONALSPRINGCLEAN.ORG)

The 2014 campaign was very successful despite a squeeze in funding. It required even greater ingenuity in communicating with and encouraging volunteers as the radio advertising campaign had to be curtailed. The effort proved more than worthwhile with more than half a million people taking part; there were 5112 events and an estimated 500 tonnes of litter collected of which more than 35% was recyclable. The campaign dovetailed with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Big Spring Clean so we organised a "Four Corners of Ireland" event half way through the campaign. Minister Fergus O'Dowd TD, along with representatives of our sponsors The Wrigley Company, Repak and the Department of the Environment launched the campaign and model and Clean Coast Ambassador Sarah McGovern travelled to local authorities throughout the country to raise the campaign profile and FTI handled the publicity and social media way beyond what was expected. Well done Emlyn Cullen, National Spring Clean Manager.

Green-Schools
An Taisce

Green-Campus
An Taisce

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN
An Taisce

GREEN-SCHOOLS & GREEN-SCHOOLS TRAVEL
(WWW.GREENSCHOOLSIRELAND.ORG)

Green Schools celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2016 and even in 2014 plans were being laid by Cathy Baxter and her Green Schools team for a big event to showcase its incredible success next year. The results from schools working through themes of Waste, Energy, and Water are truly amazing showing diversion of waste from landfill of over 60% and making hefty savings in energy bills not to mention the millions of gallons of water being saved. The milestone of awarding the 3000th Green Flag happened in 2014 and while over 90% of all Irish schools are in the programme, every day sees a trickle of new registrations so while one never expects 100% of anything it's just possible that Green Schools may actually do it.

GREEN-SCHOOLS TRAVEL

Jane Hackett, Green Schools Travel Programme Manager and her staff have certainly put 100% effort into delivering this serious and challenging programme while making it fun at the same time. Whatever the weather, more students than ever are walking, cycling, scooting, car pooling and taking the bus instead of using the car. It is not easy to change behaviour but parents see the positive results for their children that come from getting exercise on the way to and from school. Schools see the benefit of less congestion at the school gate and the environment benefits from less car journeys. This programme is also generating huge interest in other countries throughout the FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education) network of countries which are operating the Green Schools programme. Green Schools Travel is funded by the Department of Transport through the National Transport Authority.

GREEN CAMPUS & ECO-CENTRES
(WWW.GREENCAMPUISIRELAND.ORG)

Green Campus went from strength to strength in 2014 with the awarding of new first flags to Dublin City University; GMIT Letterfrack (following in the footsteps of their sister campus GMIT Mayo); Cork University Hospital (the first Green Flag for a teaching hospital in the world) and Pearse College who were assessed in 2014 and will be raising their flag shortly. The "BioBlitz" took place in May with five campuses taking part and NUIG winning the competition with the most species recorded The Green Flag has also been adapted for eco-centres and now flies over the Lifetime Lab in Cork; Fota Wildlife Park and Delphi Adventure Centre, Mayo as well as Gortbrack Organic Centre Kerry and Killarney National Park. Praise goes to Yvonne Ryan who managed the Green Campus programme for most of 2014 before leaving to take up a research post in University of Limerick and there was a great welcome for Deirdre O'Carroll who returned to take up the reins after maternity leave.

BLUE FLAG & CLEAN COASTS PROGRAMME
(WWW.BEACHAWARDS.IE; WWW.CLEANCOASTS.ORG)

Annabel FitzGerald, Coastal Programmes Manager and her team were under extreme pressure in 2014 to deal with the Blue Flag and Clean Coast applications after the winter storms which saw the Irish coast battered and infrastructure severely damaged. Local authorities made superhuman efforts to repair the damage in time for the bathing season and last minute work was ongoing right up to the final deadline for the awarding of the International Blue Flag by Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government Phil Hogan at Skerries in Dublin. Clean Coasts continues to expand its activities and plans were afoot in 2014 to design a new website which is about to go live as we go to press. The website reflects the growth of Clean Coasts and includes information about our suite of Clean Coasts community engagement initiatives including; Clean Coasts volunteering, Clean Coasts Week, the Big Beach Clean weekend, Love Your Coast Photography Competition, Clean Coasts Ocean Hero Awards, Clean Coasts Road Show, Beat the Microbead, #2MinuteBeachClean, #2MinuteStreetClean and the Clean Coasts Corporate Volunteering Programme. The Blue Flag and Green Coast Juries are representative of the Department of the Environment; the National Parks and Wildlife Service; Fáilte Ireland; Trinity College Microbiology department; UCD Microbiology department; Irish Water Safety; the Environmental Protection Agency and An Taisce. They bring expertise and huge commitment to the task and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

GREEN-HOME
(WWW.GREENHOME.IE)

Green Home saw the departure of Dorothy Stewart who had managed the programme for many years and who left to take up a post with the Environmental Protection Agency. Susan Vickers took over from her and continued with great enthusiasm to introduce members of the general public to Green Home and also continued its work with schools in getting the message home to parents. They now joined the thousands of households already participating in the programme which was funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

GREEN COMMUNITIES
(WWW.GREENCOMMUNITIESPROJECT.ORG)

The intended purpose of An Taisce Green Communities programme is to deliver monthly action based training events and field trips for community volunteer groups. These were organised by Robert Moss and included Habitat and Wildlife mapping, Invasive Species; Litter Monitoring and Management; Resource Use Management; Bee Keeping Workshops; Bird watching trips, composting workshops, organic gardening, poly tunnel training and Allotment Open Days. In 2014 the Green Communities Programme began work with the Bridgefoot Street Community Garden Project under the auspices of Dublin City Council. This is a new and exciting venture and another highlight of 2014 was the start of a pilot programme called Green Flag for Parks which is an international programme already running in the UK and other European countries.

GREENING COMMUNITIES

The Greening Communities Programme is a national programme that seeks to shine a light on communities that are protecting and enhancing their environment, making it a better place to live and work. A key objective of the programme in 2014 was to finalise a robust accreditation / award system, with built-in flexibility and local application, to establish these communities as "Greening Communities". Five communities were selected to be piloted in 2014, were issued "Greening Communities Challenges" and worked with programme manager Bridin Mulhall throughout 2014 before going before a panel of judges at the end of the year. The judges were hugely impressed with their achievements and 2015 will see the very first Greening Communities Awards being presented.

NEAT STREETS
(WWW.NEATSTREETS.ORG)

Secondary school students from schools throughout the country took part in the Neat Streets programme during 2014. Neat Streets is an anti-litter programme linked to Green-Schools which encourages teenagers to come up with their own solutions to the issue of litter pollution. Guided by Eoin Morton they engage in lively workshops; carry out litter audits of their school and its environs and work out a plan to change the behaviour of students in their school. The programme is designed to facilitate and develop leadership, project management, and citizenship and communications skills among students. An award ceremony in 2014 saw impressive presentations by students from a wide range of secondary schools. The programme is funded by The Wrigley Company Foundation.

OUR PARTNERS

The Environmental Education Unit operates in partnership with a number of Government Departments & Agencies (Department of Transport, Department of Environment, Community & Local Government, Environmental Protection Agency, National Transport Authority, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Irish Water), funding agencies and development companies, commercial sponsors (Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland, The Wrigley Company, Repak), the King Baudouin Foundation and, of course, all Local Authorities. It is a great pleasure to acknowledge their support over many years.

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PATRICIA OLIVER
AN APPRECIATION
FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Pat Oliver is a true Dubliner, born and bred in the Liberties. A publisher and book editor, she was appointed editor of Life and Environment, bi-monthly newsletter of An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland, in 1973. From then on she became closely involved in An Taisce's work, organising fund raising events, chairing fund raising committees, introducing a legacy programme, generating publicity and promoting awareness of environmental issues. She went on to edit Taisce Journal, a quarterly magazine, and its successor, Living Heritage. In later years she was an indispensible member of the team which compiled and published an account of An Taisce's first fifty years.

Elected to the Council of An Taisce, she served as Honorary Secretary from 1983 to 1987. When An Taisce moved to the Tailors' Hall in 1984 she joined the Tailors' Hall Committee, which worked for twenty years to restore and manage the historic building, and raised funds to cover all expenses. Pat was elected Vice-Chairperson in 1987, and National Chairwoman from 1990 to 1994.

During her term as Chairwoman An Taisce was approached by the Department of the Environment and asked to take on the administration of the European Blue Flags for Beaches Awards in Ireland. Pat undertook full responsibility for co-ordinating the scheme in 1993, and this led to her setting up and heading An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit. Since then the Unit has expanded and developed in a way that could never have been envisaged at the start. It now runs six national environmental programmes and employs over sixty people, securing funding from government, commercial and other sponsors to cover all projects.

The Blue Flag Award scheme is a project of the international Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an organisation which now has members all over the world. When Pat, representing An Taisce, became the FEE Irish representative she was quick to see the value of its Eco Schools programme and how beneficial it could be to Ireland. This led to the setting up of the Green Schools programme (as it is known here) where it has been phenomenally successful. Green Flags are awarded at pre-school, primary and secondary level, and the Green Campus Awards scheme has been introduced for third-level institutions. Over 3,000 Green Flags were awarded to schools throughout Ireland by the end of 2014. Pat served on the FEE Executive Board for many years, held the office of Treasurer, and is known and respected internationally. Over the years she has represented An Taisce in many ways and on many occasions, bringing her organisational and public relations skills, practical common sense, charm and humour to confererences, meetings, awards ceremonies and a multiplicity of other events. She has given exceptional service to An Taisce and will be greatly missed. We wish her many happy years of retirement.



(Below) Biodiversity Green Schools in Cork celebrating World Days of Action in 2013.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

BY ANDREW JACKSON



BURNING OUR HERITAGE

Ireland's Peatlands in Numbers

3,000,000
TONNES
... of peat extracted and burned by Bord na Mona annually

900,000
TONNES
... of peat exported every year by the peat industry

40
YEARS
... the amount of peat estimated by Bord Na Mona to be left

10,000
YEARS
... of heritage gone in 4 decades



(Above) Andrew Jackson, Natural Environment Officer

(Both Pages) A selection of photos taken at An Taisce's events across the country in 2014.

This has been as diverse a year as ever in the Natural Environment Office, covering the full range of An Taisce's activities – from advocacy though education and properties, with even a bit of litigation thrown in. Throughout 2014 the Natural Environment Office was assisted by a team of superb interns, with each intern typically spending nine months in the office (with occasional time off during evenings and weekends). A huge thank you must be extended to all those who contributed to the life and work of the Office during 2014, including interns Keri Faloon, Orla Kelleher, Fintan Kelly, Jack McCarthy and Karen Shevlin. If they enjoyed working with the Natural Environment Officer half as much as he enjoyed working with them, then he must have enjoyed the experience twice as much as they did (to paraphrase Billy Connolly)! The Natural Environment Office ran a series of very successful wildlife walks/ talks and film nights in 2014, principally organised and run by interns Karen Shevlin and Fintan Kelly. These included, amongst others: native birds of prey events in Corkagh Park in Dublin, in South Park in Galway city, and in Carton House in Co. Kildare; a trip to see red kites and Glendalough in May; a butterfly nature reserve walk and talk in Co. Kildare; bats walks and talks in Galway city, in Dublin, and in Co. Kildare; a nature walk in Galway's Merlin woods; and a wild mushroom hunt in Donadea Forest Park in Co. Kildare. We will be arranging another series this year, so keep your eyes on An Taisce's website for details.

SCOPE OF WORK

In addition to our prescribed functions, which form the bread and butter work of the office (e.g. commenting on afforestation, aquaculture and planning applications), work highlights in 2014 included:







1 EXPOSING the fact that the Department of Agriculture reallocated more than €400 million from nature conservation areas in Ireland over the period 2007-2013, with serious adverse impacts on farmers and wildlife, including the hen harrier;

2 REVEALING the extent of unregulated peat extraction in Ireland, and applying pressure on Ireland's huge mushroom industry for its role in this;

3 PARTICIPATING as core team member for Europe in a global network of NGOs known as the Access Initiative (http://www.accessinitiative.org/), which works on environmental democracy rights (access to information, public participation and access to justice). Through this work An Taisce has secured a leading role in a major research project aimed at developing indicators to measure, assess and compare countries' progress in meeting their obligations under the UNECE Aarhus Convention;

4 COMMENCING legal action in respect of Edenderry power station in Co. Offaly, which burns over 1 million tonnes of Bord na Móna peat per year. The case is ongoing and will be heard over six days from 30 June 2015 in the Four Courts. All welcome!

5 APPEARING in a documentary, 'Lanugo', about the conservation of the grey seal;

6 PURSUING our legal action regarding Hinkley Point nuclear power station all the way to the Court of Appeal in London, only to be denied the right to appeal to the Supreme Court. We still feel our argument will be vindicated by the Espoo Convention's Implementation Committee – watch this space!

7 FOLLOW-UP work on our 2013 exposé regarding the discharge of Glenamaddy town's sewage into a Special Area of Conservation turlough. As a result of our action the situation has been prioritised for investment and upgrade, but we continue pushing for more urgent action, in Glenamaddy and at another turlough site where a similar thing is going on.

8 PUBLISHING a range of articles, including in the Irish Examiner, in ENDS Europe, and in the Journal of Environmental Law;

9 HELPING to raise An Taisce's profile by participating as invited speakers, at home and abroad, at various conferences, universities and local association events, and by attending national events in a representative capacity, including Bloom in Dublin;

10 PLAYING a central role in managing An Taisce's website and Facebook and Twitter accounts, adding thousands of new followers in the process;

11 RESPONDING to government consultation calls on various important topics, including the new Rural Development Programme, access to justice, hedge cutting and burning, etc.

12 CARRYING out a well-received research project on policy drivers resulting in habitat loss on Irish farms (e.g. so-called 'scrub' clearance, etc.).

13 GEARING UP to defend the EU's Habitats and Birds Directives in 2015 – again, watch this space!

WITH THANKS It was a pleasure working with all An Taisce's volunteers, staff, interns, members, and committees in 2014, and the Natural Environment Office looks forward to seeing and hearing from you in 2015. You can contact us directly via **naturalenvironment@antaisce.org**

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

BY DECLAN MURPHY

The committee has 17 members, and about eight to ten attend our meetings. Four meetings were held during the year, all on Saturday mornings prior to council meetings. Generally the Natural Environment Officer Andrew Jackson or an office intern attended the meetings, which act as a conduit for communications between the office, the council, and the membership.

The An Taisce property at Killaha West, near Kenmare, Co. Kerry is being repaired to make it suitable for the colony of lesser horseshoe bats that has taken over the old vernacular farmhouse, and the work is supported by the NPWS. Booterstown Nature Reserve is supervised by some local members, including one member of our committee. An oil pollution spill and extensive Japanese Knotweed invasion was successfully resolved by the local authority with diligent oversight by our members. The adjacent Ashe Castle site was recently purchased by a developer, and informal meetings with him have been constructive. Informally he has made proposals that seem to be sensitive to the Reserve's wildlife and habitat. We await written confirmation of his proposals to An Taisce HQ.

The Natural Environment Office organised a 'bulk' submission for Agenda 21 funds from local authorities, and seven local associations (LAs) received grants toward environental events. The NE office was unsuccessful in seeking EU LIFE funds towards an ambitious project involving RTE and others in making a series of TV programmes on environmental topics. However two other promising projects are being pursued – one with the USA based World Resources Institute project on Global Forest Watch, and secondly with an umbrella group of European environmental NGOs formed to prevent any diminution of the Wildlife and Habitats directives. Both projects would involve the An Taisce office having a central role with appropriate resourcing.

An Taisce unsuccessfully challenged the UK government's planning methodology to construct a new nuclear power plant at Hinkley. An Taisce has also challenged An Bord Pleanála's permission for the continuation of turf burning at the Edenderry power station until 2025. We continue to oppose the present format of Food Harvest 2020 due to its potentially damaging effects on biodiversity and greenhouse gases.

In December we learnt with great sadness of the untimely death of our former Natural Environment Officer, Caoimhe Muldoon. During her relatively short stay in An Taisce she impressed all with her expertise, her work and her friendly personality. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

I wish to thank the committee members who helped to make our meetings so interesting and relevant, and the natural environment interns who contribute expertise and enthusiasm. Andrew Jackson does a prodigious amount of work in producing environmental responses and reports, in mentoring of interns, and in ensuring the high standard of An Taisce's contributions to the national environmental debate. We are grateful for his guidance and advice to our committee, and in enhancing An Taisce's role as an independent watchdog for our environment.



AN OIL POLLUTION SPILL AND EXTENSIVE JAPANESE KNOTWEED INVASION WAS SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WITH DILIGENT OVERSIGHT BY OUR MEMBERS.



PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT

BY MAIREAD MEHIGAN

The Properties committee meets six times yearly before the An Taisce's Council meetings. For new members, we'd like to reiterate the importance of heritage property ownership, its benefits, and our obligations as the National Trust for Ireland.

An Taisce was founded as the National Trust to hold and manage heritage properties 'for future generations for the benefit of all the people' (Robert Lloyd Praeger, 1948) and it acquired its first property in 1950. Like all national trusts, An Taisce is a charity and is obliged to dedicate itself 'to the promotion of reduction and eventual reversal of the progressive loss of cultural and natural heritage' This is achieved through two main approaches: ownership and management of heritage properties.

Owning and managing heritage properties empowers An Taisce to hold a unique national trust perspective. The properties provide An Taisce with its national headquarters Tailors' Hall. In addition, they provide a focus for our Local Associations as focal points in their respective areas. On a national level, ownership has provided a draw for new membership and has even encouraged the occasional gift or legacy.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Throughout 2014, we have worked with the Society of Friends (the Quakers) who have very generously offered An Taisce an area of land in Co. Wexford with historical significance as both a Quaker graveyard, containing the relatives of those who went on to found the state of Pennsylvania as well as an ancient Celtic burial ground. Work has continued throughout the year in securing the pre-famine cottage at Killaha West near Kenmare, Co. Kerry which is a nesting place for the rare Lesser Horseshoe Bat. We will keep you appraised of developments throughout 2015.



Entranceway to Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8.

Credit, skibbereeneagle.ie

IN APPRECIATION

During the year Ms. Rosalie Andrews retired after many many years at the helm of Howth Court House. Rosalie single-handedly managed and was the custodian of the court house. We wish Rosalie a long healthy and happy retirement. Finally I would like to thank the committee, all of whom are volunteers, who travel far and wide to attend the property meetings. Their commitment, interest and expertise is amazing. I'm so grateful to John Ducie and David Owen (retired) for all their encouragement and knowledge shared over the years. Thanks also to the staff in the Tailors' Hall, always helpful and courteous.

FUNDING

Funding for our properties is vital as there are a number in need of conservation management programmes, basic repair and preventative maintenance including Gort Weigh House, Co. Galway. We are continuing to pursue new avenues of funding, including the use once again of Tailors' Hall as a revenue generating operation.

Help An Taisce restore the historic Boyne Navigation, Co. Meath by donating here: www.antaisce.org/appeals

MONUMENTS & ANTIQUITIES

BY DR. MARK CLINTON

Tens of thousands of new archaeological and historical heritage sites have been uncovered in Ireland over the last 20 years, including many ancient roadways which have largely been obscured or obliterated by modern routes and farming activities. The exception to the rule is where they have been preserved in bogland. In this context they are known as toghers.

Many of these toghers were built by laying planks in a traversal arrangement on supporting runner logs. The planks could be kept in place by wooden pegs. In Ireland the most famous of these monuments was discovered in a bog at Corlea in County Longford. The subsequent excavation conducted by Professor Barry Raftery dated the monument to the Iron Age (148 B.C.). The importance of this monument led to 18m of the structure being fully preserved in-situ and housed in a visitor centre.

In 2005 a togher was discovered in a bog at Mayne in County Westmeath. A subsequent exploratory excavation commissioned by the National Monuments Service in 2006 established that the monument ran for at least 657m but apparently extended further at both ends. It was built of transversely laid oak planks and had an average width of c. 4.4 m. It was carbon dated to 1200-820 B.C., i.e. the Bronze Age.

In stark contrast to the Corlea discovery the monument at Mayne is in imminent danger of being systematically destroyed by ongoing peat-cutting operations. Given that it is of equal importance to and indeed of greater antiquity than Corlea, it is totally unacceptable that the Department of Heritage has to date taken no action to protect and preserve this monument of National importance. The relevant Minister has been made very aware of this travesty by archaeologist Aidan Walsh of An Taisce's Westmeath association (and Monuments committee) and by myself. The lack of remedial action on the Minister's part has now prompted An Taisce to issue a formal legal request to declare the oak-built roadway a National Monument. Hopefully litigation can be avoided if the Monuments Act is enforced.

The present deconstruction of the two houses on Vicar Street represents an unnecessary loss to the established environs of St. Canice's Catherdal in Kilkenny city. These Victorian buildings were originally scheduled to be removed in June 2013 but legal correspondence initiated by An Taisce forestalled the operation. It was our assertion that there was every expectation that Late Medieval structural remains would be discovered within the fabric of these buildings. These assertions were strenuously resisted by the Local Authority on the advice of their consultants.



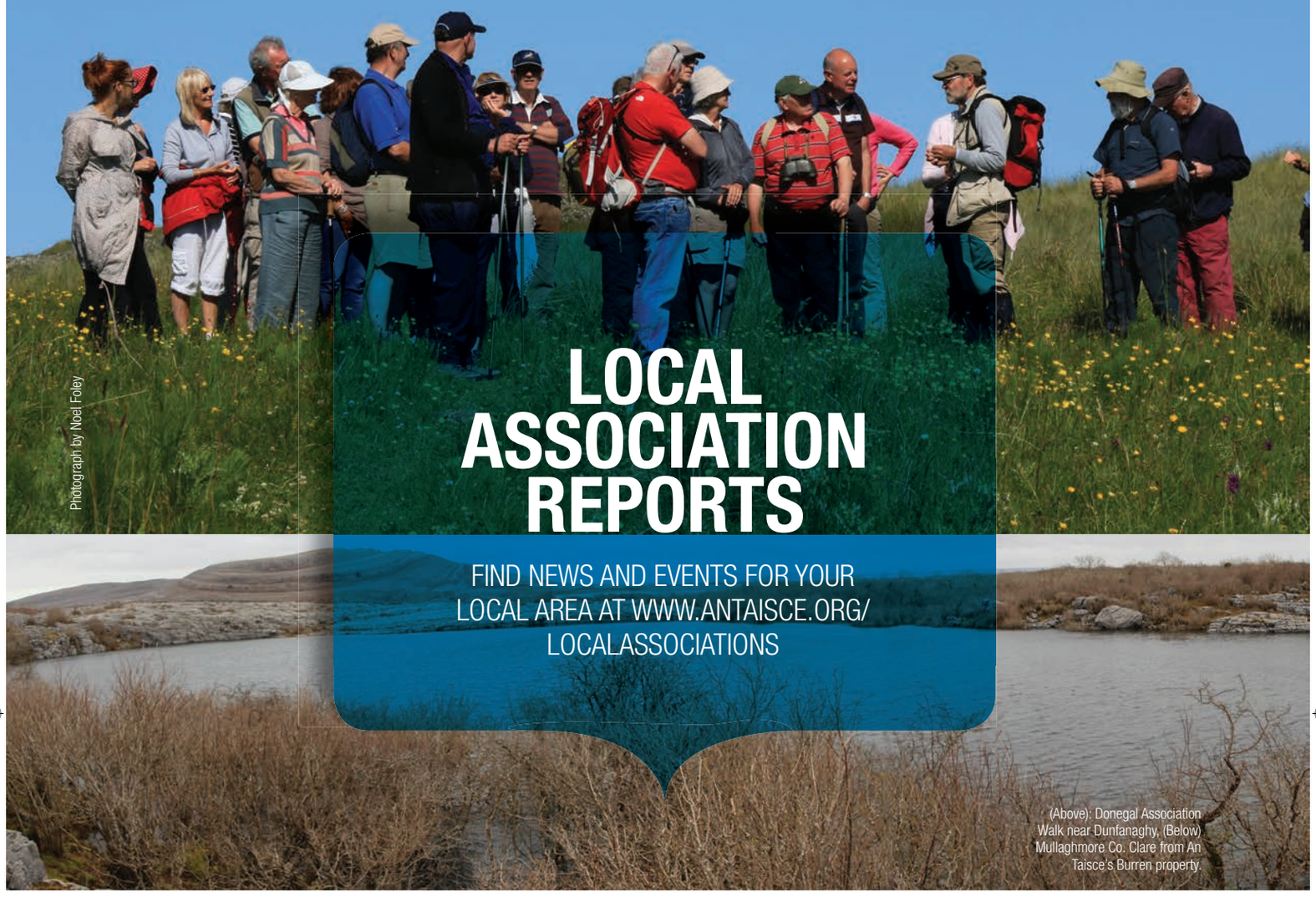
THE MONUMENT AT MAYNE IS IN IMMINENT DANGER OF BEING SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYED BY ONGOING PEAT-CUTTING OPERATIONS.

The subsequent discovery that the south gable of No.22 was of late 1500s/early 1600s date (and had been re-used in Victorian times) vindicated our contention. It became clear, however, that this Late Medieval gable represented the end wall of a building that had extended (or whose foundations do extend) away from the course of the Central Access Scheme. In response to representations by An Taisce, Mr. Joe Crockett, Kilkenny County manager, made a commitment to preserve the Late Medieval wall in-situ. This effectively resolved the prepared legal case as the residual parts of the two Victorian houses are afforded no protection under the National Monuments Act. Our thanks must go to the dedicated legal team and the archaeological and historical experts who contributed vast amounts of time and effort into the preparation of the case. A notable contributor was the late and sadly missed John Bradley of NUI-Maynooth.

Conversely it must also be noted that despite the unequivocal evaluation by Dr. Freddie O'Dwyer (Senior Architectural Adviser, Built Heritage & Architectural Policy Section, The National Monuments Service) that 'It is recommended that the gable be retained as proposed by the local authority and appropriately conserved and structurally supported where necessary' the official formal advice from the National Monuments Service to the Minister was that 'The Department has no view on this'. This was an extremely disappointing attitude to adopt by the very Service tasked with the protection of our built heritage. Fortunately renewed legal confrontation was avoided by the confirmation by Mr. John Mulholland, Acting Chief Executive, Kilkenny County Council, that the commitment given to AT to preserve the Late Medieval wall in-situ stood.

On a happier note the conveyance papers for the transfer of the Corlican site into AT ownership were finally signed in late February. Volunteers have already made a notable start on the clearance of surface debris and overgrowth. Their efforts should be acknowledged. Brian Rickwood of the Wexford association has worked hard and successfully to obtain funding for the preservation of this exceptional site. It is only a matter of time before the present day officials of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania discover the importance of this Quaker burial ground (within a ringfort!) to the history of their forefathers.

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Photograph by Noel Foley

LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORTS

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

(Above): Donegal Association Walk near Dunfanaghy, (Below) Mullaghmore Co. Clare from An Taisce's Burren property.

CLARE ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **ANNY WISE**

We have an annual rhythm each year starting with our Annual General Meeting, which we now hold in March. Although we have had an increase in Clare membership, few of these members have involved themselves in the running of the Association and the same members are still doing most of the work. The annual accounts were not correctly prepared in time for the AGM and then later, when attempting to get funding, we ended up calling an EGM in September to rectify the situation. There was a change in officers and a new treasurer was elected as well as a new secretary and chairman. We have been attempting to get committee members to use electronic communications for the purpose of decision- making but this has not worked out. We publish two or three newsletters a year and these now mostly go out to the members by email. These newsletters give the details of our two annual meetings to attract funding and new members. We hold these meetings during Biodiversity and Heritage Weeks and this year we will be holding our 10th Bat meeting. There has been a lot of time and effort with regard to the setting up of the PPN (Public Participation Network) which is now formed in each municipal district and the secretariat should be formed soon. In the meanwhile we have interim representatives on the Clare Council committees: two of which are An Taisce members. This Association has been functioning for many years with a short break in the late 1990s but, as said earlier, by run by the few. We have three committees (1) the Planning Committee which has been busier of late, (2) The Burren committee which looks after our land in the Burren and (3) KULYANA Communities Combatting Climate Change who are preparing for a busy time ahead now that the planet is accepting something has to be done. However KULYANA has, so far, had no luck getting funding.

CORK ASSOCIATION

REPORT BY **COLM DESMOND**

An Taisce Corcaigh continued to monitor all urban planning applications with indications of an upturn emerging in this area. We have a consistent record of detailed submissions on large developments in the city centre area, with an approach of positive engagement on sustainable proposals which also respect the historic fabric of the city. We were one of three parties who appealed a grant of planning by Cork City Council for a major office complex on Albert Quay, on grounds of height, scale and visual impact. We responded positively, in co-operation with An Taisce HQ, to an approach to engage on a fresh application which addressed many of our concerns and which led to all three appeals being withdrawn. In the event, Cork City Council re-imposed certain height and design conditions which were in line with both our submissions. At our behest, Cork City Council inserted a condition for the conservation and rebuilding of the west wall of an existing 19th century warehouse which is to be reconstructed as part of the development. A detailed submission was also made in November 2014 on a planned reconfiguration of the Merchants Quay Shopping Centre on the corner of Patrick's Street, which dates from the 1980's. While supportive of the overall planned upgrading, we have raised issues in relation to the redesign of the facade and its impact on this prominent location on Patrick's Bridge. The branch also kept up to date during the year with the ongoing drafting of the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021, which is now in its final stage at the City Council. We continued to collaborate with the Save Marina Park campaign to highlight the issues arising from the impact of the granting of permission for the proposed GAA centre of excellence at Páirc Uí Caoimh. However, this project has now commenced, resulting in the regrettable dividing in two of the City Council's original plan for a sub-regional park. In August, Kevin Connolly, An Taisce Corcaigh, organised a most successful Birds of Prey event in Ballincollig Regional Park, County Cork. Animal Magic, a Limerick-based rehabilitation centre, put on a stationary display of magnificent birds of prey, which included falcons, eagles, barn owls and hawks. Setting up as they did adjacent to a picnic area on a busy Saturday, a large crowd of enthralled parents and children congregated and eagerly petted, took photographs, and learned more about these endangered birds from Rosie and her husband. A local photographer was on hand to take some lovely snaps of the event.

DONEGAL ASSOCIATION

REPORT BY **NOEL FOLEY**

We held our AGM on May 6th 2014. We had 10 Committee meetings during the year. Discussion took place on a wide variety of topics such as planning, invasive alien species (with a particular focus on Japanese knotweed), awareness raising and publicity, liaison with other groups, Green Schools, County Donegal Heritage Committee, National Monuments, An Taisce properties at Crocknaferragh and in Mulroy Bay, increasing our membership and contacting recently lapsed members etc. We launched our calendar "Treasures of Donegal 2015" with a print run of 1,000. The primary focus of these calendars is to raise awareness of the landscape and biodiversity of Co. Donegal. Each month features a landscape picture and, on a smaller scale, a photo and description of a species of note. We held our Annual Craft Sale on November 16th. We had 73 exhibitors and an estimated attendance of some 500 people. With the kind permission of the Parish of Conwall and Leck we planted hops adjoining the ruined church at Conwall cemetery. The objective is to reintroduce hops, a plant that once grew in profusion in the immediate locality. We were awarded a grant of €400.00 for an event during National Biodiversity Week. This event was washed out by torrential rain and we pay particular tribute to the five dedicated and hardy souls who attended at dawn on the morning of Sunday May 18th. We were also awarded a grant of €2,500 from Donegal County Council under its LA 21 Environment Partnership Fund. We were blessed with excellent weather for all events. We had a total attendance of 541 people at 16 events (10 events for National Schools – attendance 265 and 6 public events, attendance 276). A copy of the final report is available on request from tnoelfoley@eircom.net .We were most pleased to be in a position to donate €1,000 to the Tailors Hall Restoration Fund. We pay tribute to the Letterkenny Tidy Towns Committee who, with input from some of our committee members, devised a very impressive and popular competition for Wildlife Gardens in the town. We donated €200 as prize money. In October we visited Rough Island, the larger island of the An Taisce properties in Mulroy Bay, Co. Donegal. The former Sitka spruce plantation had been clearfelled from the island in previous years. We planted bluebell bulbs and scattered the seed of bluebells and planted some native trees. We were pleased to note the successful establishment of the birch and the other seeds we scattered there previously but disappointed to note the successful regeneration of Sitka spruce seedlings through impenetrable and extensive bramble growth. Controlling these is a challenge for the future. Maintenance of our Butterfly Garden continued throughout the year.


Plans for ESB Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin.

REPORT BY **MAIREAD MEHIGAN**

REPORT BY **KEVIN DUFF**

DUBLIN CITY ASSOCIATION

An increase in planning application levels has kept the planning committee busy. Of most note was the proposal lodged last year by the ESB to redevelop its offices on Fitzwilliam Street, in the heart of Dublin's south Georgian core and famously incorporating the "Georgian Mile", one of the longest vistas of its kind in the world. There are particular sensitivities here due the demolition of the sixteen Georgian houses by the ESB in the 1960s and replacement with a modern building. The key point of contention concerns the new replacement of the Fitzwilliam Street frontage. The City Development Plan requires that any new building here "respects and enhances the character and composition of the Georgian streetscape in terms of the solid to void ratio, the rhythm of windows and doors, the proportion and scale of the ground floor storey to the upper storeys" and must be built of brick, such that the replacement building would be very close to – if not exactly alike – what was demolished in the 1960s. However the ESB's proposal is unsatisfactory in the design and detail of openings and proportions of the new façade and does not comply with the Development Plan requirement. Also of concern is the major scale and bulk of the new development to the rear of the Georgian streetscape. This will need to be revised to protect the "architectural and civic design character" of the sensitive south Georgian area, as per its conservation zoning objective, and also to protect the setting and special interest of the many Protected Structures in the vicinity. Following the granting of permission of the scheme by Dublin City Council, an appeal was taken by An Taisce in February 2015. The association also took an appeal in relation to a planning application by the Trinity Capital Hotel, Pearse Street, which partly incorporates the former Central Fire Station on Tara Street, an attractive redbrick building of 1907 with adjoining watchtower architectural landmark. Dublin City Council had granted the hotel permission to replace an existing mansard roof to a 1990s building fronting Pearse Street with three glazed penthouse floors (two bedroom floors and a rooftop bar with external terrace). Due to its height and proximity, this extension would have significant adverse effect on the setting and prominence of the Fire Station watchtower, a historic city landmark and Protected Structure. The proposal is currently with An Bord Pleanála. We have also been monitoring a number of planning applications by the TGI Fridays restaurant chain, part-tenants of the former historic Bewley's café on Westmoreland Street, who have sought to insert doors within the stained-glass shopfront windows to the Fleet Street façade of the premises. This shopfront is a good example of the architectural heritage of the Victorian period. We have recommended that alternatives are looked at to address the needs of the current restaurant tenant so as to safeguard this unique shopfront for future generations.

DUN LAOGHAIRE REPORT

The Dun Laoghaire Association of An Taisce covers the Coastal area from Ballybrack to Booterstown and inland to the N11 dual carriageway. This is a large area with numerous wonderful heritage buildings, landscapes, trees, open spaces and much more. It is the end of another interesting and busy year and our Executive Committee continues to convene on alternative months with the representative of each subcommittee in attendance. We have three committees: Trees, Events and Environment; Booterstown Nature Reserve; Planning. The achievements of the committees during the year are an endorsement of both their commitment and the benefits of the committee structure operated by the association. We cannot move on without their continuing efforts. An Taisce Dun Laoghaire wishes to work in partnership with the Council and communities to protect the natural and built environment. Membership numbers are vital and every member will count. Please do all you can to encourage new members!

TREES, EVENTS AND ENVIRONMENT: As development has increased in our area in the past year trees are increasingly being felled while fewer are being planted to replace them, particularly in the urban areas. We are concerned about the future of trees and landscaping of Moran Park and along the seafront of Dun Laoghaire. We congratulate the Council's Parks department for its work in the parks but would like to see young trees planted and the mature trees maintained. During National Tree Week in March an oak tree was planted in Booterstown Park adjoining the Williamstown Creek with the participation of the girls of Our Lady of Mercy School, Booterstown. DLR Parks Department gave the tree and helped greatly. Under the Local Agenda 21 Fund there was an afternoon of educational guided walks and talks in April focusing on the history, wildlife, habitat and flora of the Nature Reserve. Other events of note throughout the year included: A talk on Decorative Interiors of the State Apartments of Dublin Castle given by Graham Hickey of the Dublin Civic Trust. 'Meet and Eat the Invaders' presented by Rebecca Jeffares in Willow park School. National Spring Clean of Booterstown Nature Reserve, supported by the Dublin branch of the Irish Wildlife Trust and members of the public. Thirty-three bags of rubbish were collected. Our AGM in May at which An Taisce's Natural Environment Officer, Andrew Jackson spoke. An outing to Tullynally Castle with our

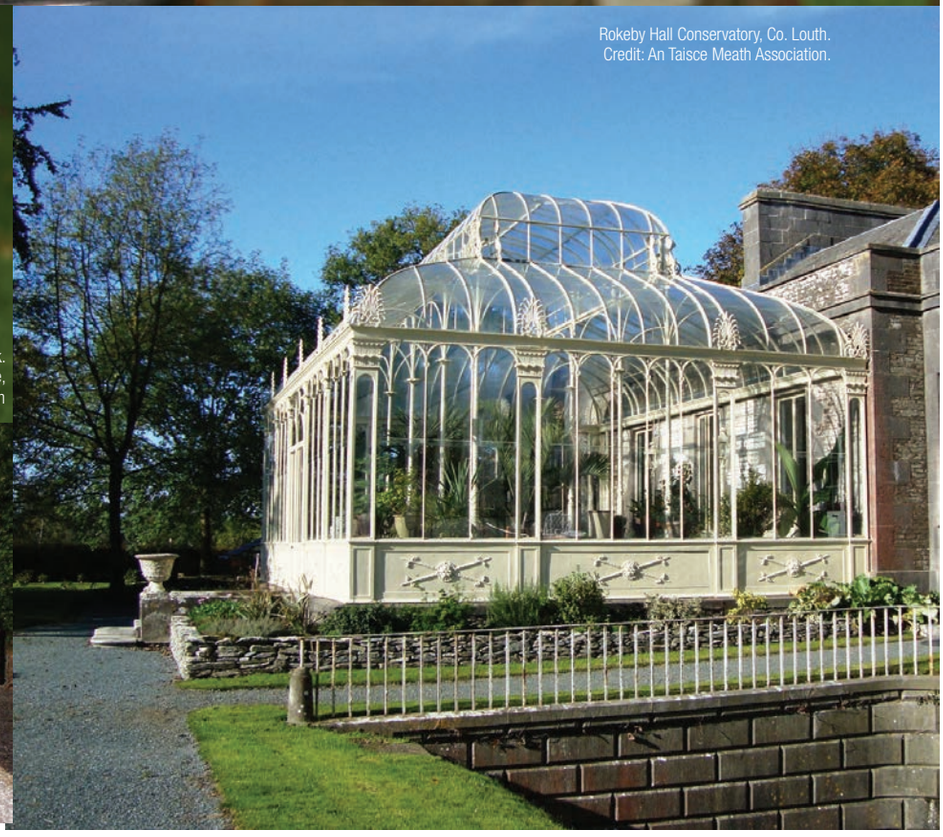


Birds of Prey Event, Ballincollig, Co. Cork.
Credit: Terry Hume.



Birds of Prey Event, Cork.
Below: Collon House,
Co Louth





Rokeby Hall Conservatory, Co. Louth.
Credit: An Taisce Meath Association.

colleagues in An Taisce's South Dublin Association. Art on the Marsh in June hosted by artists Veronica Heywood and Jo Callanan. Heritage Week walks on bird watching, botany and wildlife led by Seán Hogan and Declan Doogue. The autumn marsh clean up in October, resulting in resulted in twenty-four bags of litter being collected with the help of twelve volunteers. A Christmas visit to the Maritime Museum guided by Seamus O'Connor and Padraic O Brolchain.

BOOTERSTOWN NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BMAC)

During 2014 BMAC has been following up its primary objective by conserving and protecting the Reserve and its wildlife. This included organising conservation initiatives, educating the public, lobbying government and ensuring the Reserve is fully enjoyed by all feathered and human visitors. The work of BMAC was rewarded by the winning of the EnviroCom award for volunteers engaging Communities in Environmental Projects, presented by the Chamber of Commerce & DLR County Council in St Helen's Hotel on the 12th November 2014.

Environmental and educational programmes and activities that are offered to the public or undertaken by BMAC include:

- Regular surveys of wild birds and plants
- An annual foreshore clean-up day
- Habitat enhancements e.g. new nesting and roosting areas, non-native, especially intrusive, plant removal, etc.
- Regular clean-ups
- Fund-raising for the installation of improvements such as the wildlife view-point and illustrated educational panels
- Educational talks for the public on Wild Birds, plants and the coastal environment
- Guided field trips for schools
- Wild Bird and Plant Field trips for the public and groups such as the Society of Tour Guides
- 'Stop B4 U Drop' anti-litter project involving DLR primary schools
- Facilitating scientific research

The Reserve has been restored as a fully functioning salt marsh habitat that is home to rare and endangered native species of plants and wildlife. Public awareness has increased and so has the enjoyment of this special place within the city environs.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

At the start of the year, our committee carried out a comprehensive review of An Taisce's Guidelines & Practical Information 1996 (where it applies to the preparation of submissions by local branches). This year, our committee received 149 planning referrals. Whereas we examined and noted all of these files, we commented on 12 of these. The referrals included, inter alia, planning applications for the Badeschiff Baths on the East Pier, Neptune House, Carnegie Library Blackrock, The Radisson Hotel, the Carlisle Pier, and Glencairn Apartments in Dalkey. Over the past year, when considering whether or not to comment on a referred application, our committee has felt constrained in its ability to do so in certain circumstances.

This arises from fact that the An Taisce Guidelines & Practical Information is dated and fails to address a number of current planning considerations and the fact that the current Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan contains a level of 'discretionary language' that, in our opinion, affords the Council too much leeway when considering planning applications. In addition, our committee has had to balance the concerns of its local committee and those of its members with an overriding direction from An Taisce Head Office wherein it can ultimately veto any submission made by our committee.

We are encouraged with the amount of sympathetic restoration works carried out to architecturally valuable buildings within the county, in particular on Royal Terrance and Clarinda Park.

We welcome the fact that an appreciation of these buildings has resulted in their return to functioning residential dwellings that positively contribute to the elegance of the period squares and terraces. On the flip side of this positive initiative is the concern that many architecturally valuable buildings within the county are falling into dereliction. Our committee, intends to review Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council's mandatory derelict sites register and ensure that the Council complies with its duty under section 10 and 11 of the Derelict Sites Act 1990 to use its powers to require measures to be taken to avoid such dereliction and by directing the owner of the said land to take such measures as may be specified in the notice and specify a period within which such measures are to be taken. The committee is engaging with the new development plan (2016-2022) which is at public consultation stage and I strongly urge you and friends to visit the plan. It is on show in the Town Hall from Monday 2nd March to Monday 11th May 2015.

Finally, often it is the little things that make a difference and our committee believes that our architectural inventory, e.g. railings, gates, gateposts, capstans etc., contribute to the richness and character of our unique architectural heritage. We have been disappointed with what we consider to be an unwelcome precedent whereby in quite a few instances, these architecturally valuable items have been removed in favour of off street car parking.

The AGM of An Taisce's Dun Laoghaire Association will take place on Wednesday 13th May 2015 in St. Patrick's Church Hall (behind R.C. Church), Monkstown, Co. Dublin. With thanks to Veronica Heywood, Rebecca Jeffares, and Sarah O'Connor.

KERRY ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **CATHERINE MCMULLIN**

Good planning is very important in a tourist county, such as Kerry, where the main attraction is outstanding scenery. This year the County Development Plan was reviewed and we made a number of submissions. Opposition from An Taisce and local residents in north Kerry lead to a welcome reduction in the areas where wind farms are permitted. The new plan will be available shortly. Unfortunately it is a battle to protect scenic areas, particularly as the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005, which planners must follow, allow people to build on family land regardless of any need to live there. To counteract this, An Taisce recently launched a policy 'Sustainable Rural Settlement', which recommends the development of small towns and villages as the best way to revitalise rural areas. A major problem in recent years is unauthorised development, where people build without planning permission and then apply for retention. It is not uncommon to find a number of unauthorised developments on the same site and the record must be one, which we appealed recently, to retain 21 structures. The appeal was hardly lodged when the Enforcement Officer visited the site and found number 22 under construction. An Taisce's Judicial Review of the N86 Dingle – Tralee road has been criticised locally but we have also got support from others who, like ourselves, are not happy with the plans. Hopefully, the matter will be resolved quickly and result in a better road. Killarney National Park (KNP) has come under considerable pressure from commercial interests in recent years. While a certain amount of recreational use is acceptable, national parks were set up primarily to conserve and enhance the ecological value of natural habitats. Two proposed developments are of concern. The first, on June 27-28th is a large scale Food and Music Festival on a 60-acre field near Killarney House. At least five large marquees and a couple of tents are to be erected and 20,000 people are expected to attend over the two days. The second, the Lough Leane Loop Trail, is a loop walk/cycleway around all three Killarney lakes. More than half the route is existing roads/paths but a new path would go through one of the most isolated parts of the Park, where the re-introduced White Tailed Eagle is nesting An Taisce is participating in the new local government structures and represents the environment sector on the LCDC, the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee and the Secretariat. The process is still at an early stage and you will be hearing more about it in the coming months. Finally, some good news. Our Chair, Bernard Goggin, has obtained funding to run nature outings in the coming months. Full details will be available later. Meetings are held in Maeve O'Donnell's house, 16 Denny St., Tralee on the first Thursday of the month at 8.00 p.m. and all Kerry members are welcome to attend. E-mail us on kerry@antaisce.org for up-to-date news.


Trim Castle and the Boyne River

KILKENNY ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **MARY T. BRENNAN**

The local committee met monthly, reviewed all planning applications, made objections to developments where it was deemed appropriate and discussed issues of environmental and heritage interest. There was a noticeable increase in planning applications to Kilkenny County Council (KCC) towards the end of 2014. The committee were addressed by KCC on the Green Dog Walker Programme, which we actively supported, and by a Lisdowney community representative on a windfarm development. A number of submissions were prepared e.g. to An Bord Pleanála in response to an Environmental Impact Statement for the extension of the Northern Ring Road around Kilkenny City including a presentation at an oral hearing; to the County Council regarding the amendment of the City & Environs Development Plans 2014-20 and the heavy commercial vehicle management plan for Kilkenny city. An update to the draft master plan for the Brewery site was published by KCC in December and will engage us in the forthcoming year. The Central Access Scheme (CAS) engaged us throughout 2014. In April a report by KCC's archaeologists on the Vicar Street houses was in part contradicted by independent archaeologists. A meeting followed between An Taisce and the County Manager at which it was agreed that only the gable wall of No. 22 would be preserved – this was not in the route of the CAS so we had no legal basis for stopping the development. A new County Council was elected in June and we joined a protest by 'Complete the Ring Road Campaign' at County Hall against the CAS. Construction work commenced on the new bridge over the River Nore in July and when Protestors picketed the work site we gave them moral support. The Protestors took a case against the Council under the Habitat's Directive, KCC submitted a request to An Bord Pleanála to continue with modified in-river works and the case awaits a decision expected at the end of April 2015. We held three events that were open to the public - a walk in Jenkinstown Wood to see the bluebells, a biodiversity walk along the River Nore Valley, and a talk by Minister Ann Phelan on 'The CEDRA Vision for Sustainable Rural Development'. Our AGM was in November and a Christmas lunch in December. We participated in the creation of the new PPNs with a committee member as a rep on each of the four municipal PPNs in Kilkenny, and one on the LCDC. We attended several meetings and workshops. In December we put forward nominees to participate in a new Municipal District Advisory Committee. At the end of 2014 we had 64 members and total assets of €2422.

MEATH ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **MARGARET MONAGHAN**

Our social calendar started with the AGM on the 29th April in the grand surroundings of Slane Castle where we enjoyed fine canapés and mulled wine. The Earl of Mountcharles gave an overview of the proposed whiskey distillery at Slane Castle prior to the meeting. To mark biodiversity week in May, John Ducie gave a guided tour of the Boyne Navigation at Oldbridge. This was Christopher Gray's last year to organise the social calendar which resulted in a great turnout for all the social events. The entrance gates to Bracklyn House were an intriguing feature of this event and added to the drama of the torrential rainfall and muddy fields we experienced when visiting the family tombs of the Featherstone Haugh family. Delightful hot beverages followed at the Lefroy family home.
In September there was an excursion to two outstanding venues i.e. 'The Deeps', Wexford, which houses the collection of the Pearson family and the house and gardens of Huntington Castle, County Carlow. The Ellison Awards were launched at the AGM and this year properties from both Meath and Louth were eligible for nomination. We had a great response and the standard of projects was exceptional. The awards ceremony was hosted in Killeen Castle. Mary-Rose Carty spoke on the history of Killeen and the independent judges Philip Geoghegan and Kevin Mulligan awards first prize jointly to Collon House and Rokeby Hall, both properties we will be visiting in 2015 where our members will get the opportunity to appreciate the work people undertake to preserve our heritage. Second prize went to the charming Mill House at Rosnaree.
Sean Foley became the Meath Association representative on the Public Participation Network while Geoffrey Clarke was nominated as our representative on the Meath Heritage Plan Forum. Head Office continues to handle our planning affairs and made a number of planning submissions on our behalf. In the past year we lost two truly great supporters and formerly very active members of our local association. Marie Fennell a previous Chairperson passed away in June and Doyne Nicholson former treasurer sadly left us at the beginning of January.

PROGRESS ON THE BOYNE NAVIGATION The sea lock is now open and operational and the voluntary effort has moved onto the guard Lock in Oldbridge Estate (near the Horse Bridge) where preparations are being made to receive new Lock Gates. The Gates are being fabricated by and will be installed by a specialist contractor, hopefully, by the end of May this year. The completion of this Lock will give access to the beautiful broad expanse of the River Boyne all the way westwards to Staleen. Work is also progressing well on the cleaning and restoration of the stonework at the Staleen Lock, sadly, however, funds are not available to purchase Gates for this Lock. When Staleen is complete it will be possible to navigate the Boyne westwards from Drogheda to the Interpretive Centre at Newgrange (Bru na Boinne). Volunteer efforts are also progressing at Slane where Slane Community Forum is managing a Community Employment Scheme to clear and upgrade the Boyne walks from Slane westwards to Beauparc and Stackallen. The walk eastwards to Morgan's Lock at Fennor has been well cleared which adds greatly to its amenity. The provision of two new sluice gates at Morgan's Lock has been a great success as the level of the water in the Canal has been raised by 1.5 metres, back to its old navigation level. This work was undertaken under the supervision of An Taisce and the Boyne Navigation Branch of IWAI. Members of the Navan Coarse Angling Club provided volunteers last summer to carry out clearance work on the canal at Athlumney near Navan. Meath County Council have prepared plans to extend the Boyne Greenway (Phase 2) westwards from Oldbridge to the Newgrange Interpretative Centre. Final details of the route remain to be decided but it is hoped that it will avail of the tow paths alongside the Canal and River. The first Phase of the Greenway, from Drogheda to Oldbridge is, of course, complete and is already attracting substantial recreational pedestrian and cycle traffic from Drogheda.

NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **MICHAEL KIRBY**

An Taisce's Northwest Local Association covers counties Letrim, Sligo and north Roscommon. Membership is open to everybody and all are welcome to get involved. Our AGM was held in Rathcormac History Centre in August 2014 with Alan Moran returned as Chair and Michael Kirby as Secretary. The work of An Taisce locally was discussed including Green Schools, Spring Clean, Clean Coasts, etc., and as many members were unaware that these were An Taisce initiatives a need to promote these as part of the An Taisce brand was identified. We hope to progress this in 2015. Members discussed the potential for future projects in the region and agreed to sound out other members and stakeholders in this regard. A Facebook page was established for the local association which you can find here: http://goo.gl/LjKCyS. The local association has started work on identifying local at risk heritage structures and some of these have been highlighted on the Facebook page. More recently, Alan Moran has been elected to the Roscommon LCDC representing An Taisce's Northwest Local Association and Michael Kirby to the Sligo PPN Secretariat and Sligo LCDC also representing the association. If you have any questions or would like to get involved, please contact me directly at michael@meehantully.com

SOUTH COUNTY DUBLIN REPORT

REPORT BY **SYLVIA DOCKERAY**

Our main committee meets monthly and the two subcommittees (Planning and Environment) have separate regular meetings. 2014 was a busy, successful year for the association. We have a regular supportive membership but are seeking to encourage new and younger members.

PLANNING COMMITTEE: Main issues included: ***Masts on the mountains***: We appealed to An Bord Pleanála the 30m mast at Ballinascorney, which was granted permission by SDCC and were successful on the grounds that the mast was isolated and obtrusive and no effort had been made by the developer to co-locate on adjoining hills where there were masts already. ***Assistance from the Ombudsman:*** Although the Office of the Ombudsman took up two SDCC cases for us, they were unable to investigate practices in the Enforcement section. Other issues included Protected Structures, trees, County Development Plans, Ticknock Retirement village and an appeal to the Information Commissioner regarding access to documents.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ***Education:*** Funding was granted for three Local Agenda 21 events: A Birds of Prey display, a Bat Walk and a Fungi Foraging expedition. The events were free, led by experts in their field and attended by many. ***Exhibition:*** Symbols in our environment. Researched by Sue Pedlow, the exhibition takes over thirty of these symbols displayed in our area e.g. carved pineapples on gate pillars and explains their distinctive histories.

SOCIAL PROGRAMME ***18th Feb:*** The Life & Works of Sir Edward Lovett Pearce by Pat Sheridan, local historian. ***18th March:*** Sean Keating by Eimear O'Connor, Art historian ***15th April:*** Unearthing the Archaeology of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown by Christiaan Corlett of the National Monument Service.***20th May:*** Gold Frenzy: A Story Suitable for Modern Ireland by Dr Peadar McArdle, retired Director of the Geological Survey of Ireland. ***Annual Outing 15th May:*** Over 60 members enjoyed a coach trip to Tullynally Castle (family home of the Packenhams, later Earls of Longford, for the past 350 years), a boat trip on the river Shannon and a visit to the steam engine museum at Dromore. ***Garden Party 12th June***: We were blessed with sunshine for our garden party attended by over 70 members in the peaceful surroundings of committee member Paddy Glanville's garden in Kilternan followed by a visit to the exquisitely planted garden of Sally McFerran.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND PARTY This year the concert was in Kilternan C of I Church and the adjacent Parish Hall for festive refreshments. An exquisite classical guitar performance by Eoin Flood was followed by the entertaining Seymour Cresswell and the Waterfront Warblers. ***The Bottle Tower, Churchtown*** Previously known as "Hall's Barn" and built in 1742 by Major Hall in imitation of the rather better "Wonderful Barn" in Leixlip. It has a spiral exterior staircase and is a 'protected structure'. James Howley, the eminent conservation architect advises that conservation work needs to take place costing €8,000. €3,500 of this has been offered by the government Heritage Management Scheme and our Association can contribute €1,000 from its funds leaving a gap of €3,500, which we hope might be raised from An Taisce's membership. Please contact us if you can help.

DECEASED MEMBERS I would like to recall our sadness in reporting that two of our active members passed away in the Spring of 2014. Our past secretary, ***Mary Lou Glynn***, passed away in April. Her dynamism and enthusiasm for the ideals of our organisation were evident to all who knew her. Her contribution will be missed, and we sympathise with Liam, and with her family, over their loss. In May, ***Jane Glanville*** died, unexpectedly, after a short illness. Jane had contributed greatly to our local association and to local school communities. In recent years she had become with Paddy, an integral and dynamic support to our social activities.

Thanks to Andrew Parkes, Patrick Leonard, Ken Mahwinney, Sue Pedlow, Veronica Rowe, Eileen Collins for their reports and to the other committee members, Valerie Bond ,Sec; Jim Cleary, Treasurer; Maire MhicGiobhan, Sean Murphy, Joe O Loughlin , Paddy Glanville and Sean Murphy.

WEXFORD ASSOCIATION REPORT

REPORT BY **BRIAN RICKWOOD**

Wexford Local Association began 2014 with a change of Chairman and a well attended annual dinner in the Riverbank Hotel Wexford. We were delighted that Patricia Byrne offered to chair our monthly committee meetings and Mark Clinton agreed to travel to Wexford as our after dinner speaker. Our thanks to both Patricia and Mark. For our local association 2014 has really been the year of Corlican ring fort/ Quaker burial ground, a unique site and the only one in Ireland. Mark Clinton gave us a very interesting talk on the historical background to the site and we were charged by the Council to raise two thousand euro for the development of Corlican. This took a great deal of time and effort but by the end of the year we had raised over three thousand euro for the project. We have continued to monitor the planning applications in the county and with the help of staff officers made a number of submissions, mainly for unsuitable one-off houses and unregulated developments. Major issues for us have been the continuation of the motorway building programme in the county disguised as bypasses and buildings at risk. We have been very concerned with the St. Senan's Hospital building in Enniscorthy We organised two visits in 2014. The first, a study visit to Corlican to examine the biodiversity and list the wild flowers on the site; and the second, to Altamont Gardens/Newtonbarry House near Bunclody. There was a good attendance for both visits. We have a small number of committee members but a wider county membership who can be called upon when we require extra help, our thanks to all our members for a very successful year.

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WHO ARE AN TAISCE?

COUNCIL OF AN TAISCE

PRESIDENT
To Be Filled

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
John Sweeney

LOCAL ASSOCIATION DELEGATES
John Harnett, *Westmeath*
Mairead Mehigan, *Dun Laoghaire*
Maire Mhic Giobuin, *Dublin South (R. Dodder to Stillorgan Rd.)*
Margaret Monaghan, *Meath*
Alan Moran, *Northwest*
Alan Price, *Carlow*
Brian Rickwood, *Wexford*
Charles Stanley-Smith, *Tipperary North*
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, *Clare*
Tadhg Hanifin, *Kerry*

ELECTED DELEGATES 2010
Kathleen Vandenberghe, *Tipperary North*

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

ELECTED DELEGATES 2012
Dr. Mark Clinton, *Fingal*
Bernard Goggin , *Kerry*

ELECTED DELEGATES 2013
Eamonn Moore, *Carlow*
John Ducie, *Dun Laoghaire*
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.)*

CO-OPTED
Eric Conroy, *Dublin City*

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 2014*
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, *Properties Committee Chair, Joined Board in 2009*
Gerry Conroy, *Joined Board in 2014*
Jeanne Meldon, *Education Unit Committee Member, Joined Board in 2014*

KEY EMPLOYEES

AN TAISCE MEMBERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION
Eoin Heaney, *Programmes and Administration Officer*

AN TAISCE ADVOCACY
Ian Lumley, *Built Environment & Heritage Officer*
Tomás Bradley, *Planning & Environmental Policy Officer*
Andrew Jackson, *Natural Environment Officer and In-house Solicitor*
Damien Ó Tuama, *National Cycling Officer*

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION UNIT OF AN TAISCE
Patricia Oliver, Environmental Education Unit Director
Michael John O'Mahony, Assistant Environmental Education Unit Director
Anthony Purcell, Development Manager
Dawn Parkinson, Business Administration Manager
Emlyn Cullen, Anti-litter League Manager
Annabel FitzGerald, Coastal Programmes Manager
Cathy Baxter, Green-Schools Manager
Jane Hackett, Green-Schools Travel Manager
Robert Moss, Green Communities Officer
Bríd'n Mulhall, Greening Communities Manager
Susan Vickers, Green Home Officer
Emlyn Cullen, National Spring Clean Manager
Eoin Morton, Neat Streets Officer

REPRESENTATIVES OF AN TAISCE (2015)

Dr. Mark Clinton, *Monuments & Antiquities Contact*
Attracta Uí Bhroin, *European Environmental Bureau*
John Ducie, *International National Trusts Organisation*
John Ducie, *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*
Patricia Oliver, *FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education)*
Patricia Oliver, ELPA (European Litter Prevention Association)

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.

Built Environment Committee
Climate Change Committee
Education Committee
Natural Environment Committee
Properties Committee
Transport Committee

An Taisce

The National Trust for Ireland



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



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