# An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland Annual Report 2013



An Taisce
*The National Trust for Ireland*

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# President's Report By Professor John Sweeney

Five years go incredibly quickly these days, and it is hard to believe that this is my fifth and final report as President of An Taisce. It has been an incredible honour and privilege to serve an organisation that I have come to cherish as the brightest star in the Irish NGO firmament and I am in some ways sad that my term of office is ending. But change is ultimately good for rejuvenating all organisations and I am sure my successor will bring new energies and perspectives to the benefit of the organisation.

As I look back on the past five years, I recall how the organisation battled to stay alive in the dark days at the end of the last decade when relatively few in positions of influence or authority seemed to really care about the environment, and when the national ethos seemed to be"It's the economy, stupid". As the economy crashed and burned, the demonisation continued for a time of those organisations who had warned of the unsustainability of letting things rip during the Celtic Tiger era. But the most satisfying element of that period for me was the discovery that there were enlightened people out there who had the vision to help An Taisce back from the brink and to turn things around.

From the end of 2011 I witnessed a remarkable recovery. People began to join, finances began to improve; the public began to see that we were not an elite group with pointy heads that wanted to dictate to them, but rather that we were concerned with helping to position Ireland inc. to capitalise on its unique natural and built heritage in a way that would bring long term benefits to all the population.

I am so pleased that new blood has now begun to energise the Board and Council, that younger voices are beginning to be heard at all levels in the organisation and that a truly professional cohort now occupies the offices in Tailors' Hall. A more youthful representation is something that needs to be nurtured carefully by the wise old heads around the Council table. The combination of raw talent and experience now available enables An Taisce's voice to be heard when needed on a range of issues from built heritage to agriculture and from transport to aquaculture. When we learn of places in Ireland where a town's sewage is still being poured into a hole in the ground, or where the mechanised destruction of protected peatlands is presented as a birthright inheritance, we know we have a fight to pick and we will not flinch from it.

Of course the energy was always there in the superb Education Unit. I can think of no more influential body in the environmental realm in Ireland, bringing the logic of sustainable living to the next generation in a variety of flagship schemes which the world comes to copy. I always describe them as the jewel in our crown and it is fair to say that what they save the exchequer in an average year is not fully appreciated. Naturally, Tailors' Hall and Swift's Alley have different ways of working, but ultimately they work to the same end and I am sure they will forge exciting new synergies in the years ahead.

There are many unfulfilled ambitions which I leave behind. I would have liked to get around a few more of the branches I didn't visit, and even try and resuscitate the one in my own area of Kildare. I would have liked to seek closer links between Ireland's fragmented Environmental NGOs, and maybe these are things that can still be pursued. There is always a tension between continuity and change; what is important is that the central objectives remain sound. I know that 'Brand An Taisce' is in good hands and our founder Robert Lloyd Praeger would I am sure be content that 66 years on, whatever tinkering we do to our ways of working, the mission statement is being fulfilled.



*World Days of Action. Eight Biodiversity Green-Schools from Cork City and County celebrated WDA at 'Coil na Sioga' the Green-Schools Woodland at Ballinreeshig Nature Farm.*

# Chair's Report

by John Harnett



We have had a busy year, many submissions, a few Judicial Reviews, improving our internal organisation, working on our Articles of Association, improving our compliance with the Charities Act and planning for our future. There is a great hum of energy around Head Office these days, all of which is thanks to the volunteers and our permanent team who toil daily and often till late to meet the needs of An Taisce and the environment. Our Education Unit has continued its successful programmes this year and leads the way with its ability to be able to prove that its programmes, in particular Green Schools and Smarter Travel, have and are changing people's approach to walking, cycling and not getting into the car.

All the time events unfold around us requiring our attention, but still we must remain focused. A case in point being the convulsion that rural Ireland has experienced in the last few months with the prospect of large numbers of industrial wind turbines and mega-pylons stalking the countryside. A H. G. Wells landscape in the mode of the War of the Worlds was the prospect that the local population felt they were offered. All this was driven by international finance chasing the very attractive prospect of constant income from renewable energy from UK consumers. As I write this report, the prospect has dimmed slightly but no doubt will return in the not so distant future after the local elections.

The industrial wind turbine/pylon battle is symptomatic of how we are running things on our island. We seem happier to let big industry do the initial running and then Government will see which way the wind is blowing. Our Climate Change Bill is another example where we are getting no leadership; a bill without targets or deadlines or real outcome is not leadership; it is merely playing the game with no benefit to anyone and only detriment to the environment and ultimately everyone's quality of life.

It is interesting that with the science of climate change now agreed, and the UN and other bodies moving on to formally map out the consequences and locations of flooding, drought and famine we are not taking it seriously here.

I mentioned the approach to the Climate Change Bill but it is also true of our approach to agriculture, in particular the strategy being rolled out in the Food Harvest 2020 programme adopted by Government. The approach is not to worry about meeting emission targets, rather to console ourselves with the production numbers going the right way!

Of course expanding agricultural production exponentially and ploughing on with the consumption of fossil fuels will have enormous climate change consequences, even if we can't see the consequences of our actions immediately. Is cheap energy really cheap - I don't think so. As part of the fulfilment of our mission, we are delighted that a new Climate Change Committee was established early this year and approved by the Council of An Taisce.

Our new website should be on-stream when you read this and should help you see what we are doing on a daily basis in the areas we focus on, including Buildings at Risk. Please have a look at what we do on Twitter and Facebook also.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your continued support as a member of An Taisce; your moral and financial support is equally important in helping us do our job! If you are in Dublin on Whit weekend and find yourself at Bloom, please come and talk to me and the team at our stand. Last year everyone found it uplifting to meet so many people who understood that the environment is the key issue.



*Close-up of an eagle taken at an An Taisce Westmeath birds of prey event in 2013 - Christopher Kelly*

# Honorary Secretary's Report

by James Leahy



Last year my report introduced three new internal projects: A new website, a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and a project to organise our archives. 2013 was spent progressing these. We have also started a new project to review our Articles of Association.

## Website

By the time you receive this report, a new www.antaisce.org will be launched. The site will have a new design reflecting the internal brand guidelines that we adopted in 2013. The content is now organised in a structured way around:

- Our three units: Education, Advocacy and Property
- Our Local Associations
- Our Programmes, such as Green Schools or Blue Flag
- Topics such as Water or Energy
- Issues that An Taisce is focusing on at the moment, such as Peatlands or CAP Reform

This gives us the ability to focus the website content on the people who use the website, making it easier for them to quickly find pages that interest them.

## Customer Relationship Management System

The consultant, www.fluidedge.ie, who developed our new website are also setting up the CiviCRM Customer Relationship Management system to manage our membership systems. This is a free open-source system which has been developed for Non Governmental Organisations. It will integrate with our new website and allow:

- members to manage their own membership,
- members to say what they are interested in; allowing An Taisce to send them focused news.
- give us the platform that we need to market membership and donations professionally.

The project will be completed in 2014. We have already tidied up our existing data to meet the requirements of modern Customer Relationship Management systems, created a new online shop for membership and donations, and set up the system on our new server.

## Managing our Archives

We implemented the Google Drive system for the Advocacy, Properties and Headquarters units. This allows us to safely store our electronic archive of files, and access and share them appropriately. The challenge is now to catalogue our paper archives and then scan and upload relevant documents. A number of workshops have been scheduled to progress this. A Dublin-based volunteer with basic computing and internet skills would be welcome.

## Review of Articles of Association

We are carrying out a review of the Articles of Association of An Taisce to:

- Reflect the new Companies and Charities Acts
- Reflect general changes to corporate governance for charities over the last decade.
- Clarify the respective roles of the Council, Board and Committees of An Taisce.

Comments are welcome to secretary@antaisce.org or through your Local Association. The aim is to bring proposals for change to a general meeting of An Taisce in 2015. A full legal review and further internal consultation through AnTaisce's Council will be carried out before then. I will also provide an update at the Annual General Meeting in June.

Most of An Taisce's membership is managed by volunteers. Thanks to David Ryan, who processes membership correspondence and the staff, interns, Board, Council and local association committees.



# Director's Report by James Nix



As 2012 drew to a close, An Taisce's Advocacy & Properties unit had just one staff member, the indefatigable Ian Lumley. Andrew Jackson, myself, Tomás Bradley and Damien O' Tuama joined the team over the course of 2013.

What's more, 2013 saw Tailors' Hall become home to as many interns as staff. An Taisce owes a huge debt to Patricia Cunningham, Emma Devlin, David Garvey, Julia Lubbock, Jack McCarthy, Ciara O'Hara, Grainne Ryan, Laurie O'Keeffe, Ciaran O'Sullivan, Roisin Kearney, Camilla Tunney and Dave Whittle for all their work in 2013. Now in DCU, Dave Whittle remains very active while Jack McCarthy continues his work in Tailors' Hall.

As well as a great uplift in our capacity and consequent output, 2013 will be remembered for seeking to implement the law. The Dalkey case means that deep sea drilling must now be properly assessed. The Hinkley case stands out too. Even at this early stage we know An Taisce's legal action to ensure consultation will break new ground. Very heartening was a call from Germany in late 2013 asking how a donation could be made in recognition of our work on Hinkley. The An Taisce case is about ensuring consultation with Ireland and the Irish people on such projects, and the donor wanted to support work to ensure neighbouring member states consult each other – as promised by their Governments.

Another 2013 success is the change to the proposed legislation for the Living City Initiative, a major programme to rejuvenate city centres. I can't put it any better than the Department of Finance did in supporting documentation for the Budget:

> "Another recommendation…was that the types of residential premises be extended. Initially the Initiative was restricted to "Georgian" houses (1714 to 1830). The Department of Finance received other representations in this regard and so it has been decided that all residential properties constructed up to the end of 1914, in the designated areas, will now come within the scope of the Initiative. The year 1914 was chosen following a recommendation from An Taisce. Finance Bill (No.2) 2013 will make this legislative change."

Another highlight has been creating an Agri-Environment Office here in Tailors' Hall. If Ireland's agricultural output is to be sustainable, there's a need to actually take real steps to ensure this. Flagship programmes for particular produce are worthy – and we have many successful examples – but they represent only a footnote as habitat and species loss continues unabated, with agricultural intensification largely responsible.

Our work on peatlands is ongoing, our most recent initiative being to seek a higher level of protection for a large number of Natural Heritage Areas.

There continues to be high levels of public interest in An Taisce's submissions. Overall a good part of the director role is to ensure the office-based team can achieve to its full potential, helping to fuse that energy with that of the Board and Council. And aside from policy and operations, it's important to keep an eye out for suitable funding applications. Submitted in late 2013, the news on Dubline is good; more information to follow in the ezine.

For new cycle stands, a rainwater harvesting system, a completely redecorated Wolfe Tone room, and much more, we have Louis McGee to thank. And for a revamped courtyard, with large flower pots coming into bloom, a huge thanks to Louise Burns. Thanks also to Ronan Murnaghan, who took on being the bookkeeper at Tailors' Hall in the spring, and who we've all enjoyed working with since.

Sad news came in late 2013 with the passing of Mide Gerrard. Eternally generous and vivacious, Mide brightened up the lives of all she touched. At the same time Mide was blessed with sound judgement and never shied of hard work, as she showed as a member of An Taisce's Council and Board over many years. Time and again Mide and her husband Peter opened their North Tipperary home, bestowing many fond memories of being beside a warm fire in the house in Coolbawn or ambling about the Lough Derg countryside, a landscape blessed with the lakeshore fields, rolling hills and hedgerows that Mide worked so hard to protect.

*View of Lough Derg*



# Treasurer's Report by Peter Howley



As Honorary Treasurer, I am pleased to be able to say that 2013 was a relatively uneventful financial year in An Taisce Advocacy and Properties Units, as was the case with 2012, although it was a more challenging year for the Education Unit. As in previous years, An Taisce's continued focus was on the core activities of advocacy, properties and education.

Within the Advocacy and Properties Unit, the five salaried staff worked with interns on an increased number of initiatives (e.g. Bloom, Harvest Festival etc.) whilst overall costs remained in line with budget. I am pleased to report a net surplus in the Advocacy and Properties Units for the year of €15,162 against a planned surplus of €1,099. Whilst the 2013 income of €248,034 was down on 2012 (income of €284,693; net surplus of €37,927) due to one-off bequests totalling €38,681 in 2012, 2013 income was in line with plan with over than 50% of this coming from members. In 2014, strategic initiatives are planned which should strengthen An Taisce's future income from membership and bequests, whilst still maintaining a firm grip on expenditure.

In 2013, a limited number of events were held by An Taisce's Event Management Company, Tailors' Hall Events Ltd. (THEL) and costs were incurred to support these functions. Thus, the operating loss for the 12 months was €2,844 compared to a 2012 loss of €29,556. In 2014, the Board intends to seek new operators for THEL with a view to returning it to profitability and enabling it to support An Taisce's core activities.

Disappointingly, in 2013, the Education Unit recorded a deficit of €57,024 (in 2012 a surplus of €128,580) as a result of a fall in income and increased costs across its 9 key programmes, which include Green Schools, Clean Coasts and Blue Flag. The total amount of funds which the Education Unit administered for all programmes was €3,392,867 in 2013 (€3,485,442 in 2012). Looking ahead, 2014 is expected to be a similarly demanding year for the Education Unit.

As in 2012, the 2013 accounts show the consolidated financial position of the Advocacy, Properties and Education Units and THEL, offering Members a clear view of the various activities within An Taisce. A full set of accounts is available to download at http://www.antaisce.org/ireland/2013-accounts and any member wishing to receive a set of the accounts in paper format by post may contact the office at (01) 454 1786.

It should be noted that, the 2013 accounts (as was the case in 2012) reflect the fact that the Advocacy unit is relatively free to spend the funds it raises from members and external sources in pursuit of its governing mandate, whereas the funds received by the Education Unit are predominantly ring-fenced for specific programmes due to the strong binding conditions attached, and are not available for use by either other programmes within the Education Unit or for broader advocacy.

I would like to thank the bookkeepers for the Advocacy/Properties and the Education Units, namely Ronan Murnaghan and Dawn Parkinson respectively, for their support during the year. I should also note that Colin Sloan joined the Education Unit as part time Financial Controller late in the year.

Finally, although I will not be seeking re-election for personal reasons, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the An Taisce Board for its assistance during the year. They are an extremely dedicated and competent group of people committed to fulfilling An Taisce's goals, and it has been a pleasure to work with them during my time at An Taisce.

*Please note: Figures are subject to audit at the time of publication.*

# Built Environment Office

by Ian Lumley and Tomás Bradley



*Ian Lumley*



*Tomás Bradley*

While the workload of the Built Environment Office varies throughout any year, its attitude remains consistently fervent. Every challenge which presents itself is taken as an opportunity to promote a 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. The enthusiasm of the office over the year was carried, to a large extent, by the work of our voluntary interns, namely: David Whittle; Camilla Tunney; and Ciaran O'Sullivan; whose commitment, trustworthiness and professionalism were unrivalled.

The work of the Built Environment Office expanded throughout the year with several issues coming to the fore nationally, requiring a more focused approach.

These included:
**Energy and Climate Change;**
**Development Management;**
**Forward Planning;**
**Enforcement and Legal;**
**Transport and Smarter Travel and,**
**Heritage and Urban Centres**

## Energy and Climate Change

Energy and Climate has been the contentious topic of 2013 and has consumed significant resources of the unit as the government progresses plans for increased capacity on our electrical grid and harnessing wind energy, particularly in the west of Ireland. The office has stood firm on the view that the state should firstly be prioritising energy conservation and efficiency. Ireland needs to take international leadership in emission reduction and efficiency and fully involve local communities in the action required. To this end, An Taisce in late 2013 moved to incorporate a Climate Change Committee into the organisation's structure to promote climate science and the positive actions required.

Throughout the year, we dealt with applications for peat power generation and servicing of peat extraction for horticulture, road developments, car dependent out-of-town retail and new employment developments. Both the local authorities and An Bord Pleanála have failed to consider the mitigation of climate emissions in transport, energy and other projects such as the extension of the operating life of the Edenderry Peat Power Plant. Dispersed, car based single rural housing developments still dominate planning referrals from all counties.

An Bord Pleanála has shown a significant policy shift in granting applications on appeals taken by An Taisce in relation to the above. This is despite what should be an irrefutable requirement that all further investment needs to be focused on the mitigation and reduction of climate emissions in all sectors. Secondary to this is the issue of adaptation to the climate impact of a warming world.

An Taisce is advocating for the prioritization of a holistic national energy strategy focused on investment in energy efficiency first and foremost. For this to happen, fossil fuel power generation and imports need to be reduced, along with the scale of investment going into energy infrastructure. At the same time, the 40% renewable target for 2020 could be achieved with the existing 500 MW interconnector to Wales providing export for surplus capacity.

Wind energy investment is continuing to meet the 40% target for 2020, but this is linked to an unjustified accommodation of increased energy demand. Currently, local authority renewable energy strategies are dependent on major new pylon routes to achieve distribution and interconnection with the UK and potentially, after 2020, with France.

Our primary comment on the 2013 wind energy export consultation for the midlands was that the initiative was developer led and not plan led. It was not integrated with a credible energy strategy for Ireland to reduce emissions, and the 6.5 billion euro annual fossil fuel imports. Furthermore, it was put forward in a manner which alienated local communities.

Major alternating current (AC) grid development is unavoidable if continued energy consumption growth is to be catered for. Eirgrid's 2025 strategy is facing increasing opposition from the catchment areas affected by the 400 kV connection to Armagh from North Leinster, the Gridlink route options in South Leinster and East Munster from Co. Kildare to Cork via Waterford Harbour and the North West Connacht proposals.

## Development Management

On a daily basis the team carry out 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 2,000 development management cases. Some of the cases which fostered discussion in the office included: Kildare Retail Village which included an oral hearing; an equine development close to the Knowth archaeolgocial complex in Co. Meath; a Rowing Centre on Lough Rynn (pNHA); Bunnyconnellon Windfarm, Co Mayo; a proposal for a Tesco on Cork City's northside as well as 'drive thrus' in the urban centres of Drogheda and Navan plus many more items ranging from the size of a domestic porch in Glanmire to a nuclear power plant in Somerset.

## Forward Planning

The prescribed functions of the organisation also stretch to forward planning functions. To this end, An Taisce has been the most proactive 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, with a focus on transitioning to a low-carbon society and economy, mitigating the significant risks associated with rising energy costs and promoting climate change adaptation.

Some of the key consultations during the year included: Climate Change Heads of Bill; Commission for Economic Development in Rural Areas; Better Energy Financing Project; the National Transport Authority Greater Dublin Area Implementation Plan; An Bord Pleanála Strategic Infrastructure Planning Process Review; the Energy Efficiency Directive; Renewable Energy Export Strategy for Ireland; 2050 Low Carbon Roadmap - Electricity Generation Sector; plus Development Plans for South Tipperary, Cork City, Newbridge, Kilkenny, Cavan, Carlow and significant submissions on several noise action plans, landscape character assessments, renewable energy strategies, retail strategies; green infrastructure strategies, heritage plans and regional waste strategies.

## Enforcement and Legal

In 2013, the team undertook a review of all live enforcement cases held by the office. This coincided with the publication of 'A Guide to Planning Enforcement in Ireland' by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. This renewed vigour in relation to enforcement and legal cases is also partly due to the addition of Andrew Jackson, who as in-house solicitor is pursuing several enforcement cases. There were two cases last year put under judicial review which never made it to court, as the respondents conceded defects in their consent process; the first being the Kish Bay (Dalkey) Oil Drilling case and the second against Westmeath County Council on their failure to notify An Taisce of a decision. 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. Ian Lumley was requested as a speaker at several conferences including a UCC Law Conference on Integrated Marine Planning, additionally; Tomás Bradley had a journal article published on Landscape Characterisation in the Irish Planning Institute's Pleanáil.

## Buildings at Risk

An Taisce maintains a significant role in monitoring the most significant cases of Buildings at Risk (BAR) around the country with a top ten being subject to periodic review. BAR remained the unit's key heritage issue in 2013 with the publication of Limerick BAR, Waterford BAR and the Most Significant BAR in Ireland. 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 has continued to pursue developers, their financial institutions and local authorities to maintain these buildings.
Most notably in 2013, pressure was applied with regard to



*Aldborough House in Dublin*

Aldborough House in Dublin 1, Hazelwood House in Sligo and several meetings with officers of Limerick City Council to progress plans to regenerate Georgian Limerick.

The case of Aldborough House on which Bank of Ireland holds a charge, shows the need for a change in the law to address the legal responsibility of financial institutions and other entities holding the deeds or a charge on protected structures as loan security. Where the building owner defaults on the obligation to maintain a protected structure under the Planning Acts, the obligation needs to pass to the institution holding the title deeds.

## Future of Irish Urban Centres

A number of historic urban centers are facing decline with high vacancy rates and retail activity migrating. Limerick has a particularly problematic level of empty or poorly maintained buildings in the Georgian Core. A detailed inventory was made in 2013 on over 50 empty buildings and the future of Limerick was a particular focus of concern.

An Taisce played an active part in the consultation process for the proposed Department of Finance "Living City" scheme to target new use for buildings in historic urban areas. The most significant planning decision during 2013 was the An Bord Pleanála refusal of the demolition and significantly higher redevelopment of Liberty Hall, Dublin. This sent out an important signal for the protection of the historic urban environment and development affecting the setting of protected structures.

## Transport and Smarter Travel

Transport accounts for 20% of national greenhouse emissions. On top of this is its contribution to the 6.5 billion euro annual fuel import burden. The introduction of a token percentage of mainly imported bio fuel does not achieve a proportionate emission reduction since environmental impacts are caused by the cultivation and production process in other countries, as well as potential conflicts with food production and biodiversity.

The real issue to be confronted is the level of car dependence in Ireland which creates congestion slowing down public transport and service vehicle movement, undermines cycling, causes air pollution, exacerbates urban sprawl and inefficient land use, is causing historic urban centres to decline in favour of out of town shopping, is suburbanizing the rural landscape and promotes unhealthy lifestyles and contributes to Irish obesity levels.

Smarter Travel policy to reduce car dependence was adopted by Government in 2009 but is not being implemented within the planning system, even by agencies under the control of the Department of Transport. The NRA is proposing to increase the level of traffic generated from the catchment areas feeding the M7 into the greater Dublin area and members of "professional" bodies are lodging planning applications both with local authorities and Bord Pleanála across the country, ignoring Smarter Travel targets.

An Taisce is seeking a review of the "Kilkenny Access Scheme", a road and bridge severing the St Canice's Cathedral area from the remainder of the historic city centre. The discovery in 2013 of the substantial late medieval remains of a house in Vicar St on the route means that the demolition of a National Monument would be required to proceed with the scheme requiring a formal application with Environmental Impact Statement.



*St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny*

## Tourism

The most welcome overall trend of the last year has been the growing appreciation and investment in outdoor recreation. This is evident in the level of greenway investment being proposed around the country including the extension of the western greenway along the redundant railway route between Westport and Achill. At the same time there is a welcome development in the promotion of areas and activities based on the appreciation and value of the local landscape ecology, cultural heritage and food.

While it is very welcome to see Fáilte Ireland supporting an initiative for declining historic towns such as Youghal, it is disappointing to note that they are also promoting an outmoded concept of long distance car driving through the 2,500 km Wild Atlantic Way from Inishowen to Kinsale with loops off the route, which also conflicts with the attractiveness of coast roads as cycling routes.



*Youghal harbour*

# Built Environment Committee

The Built Environment Committee had several meetings throughout 2013, with major issues arising such as the Commission on Economic Development in Rural Areas (CEDRA), the potential review of the National Spatial Strategy and the major efforts being made to create awareness on Buildings at Risk among others.

The committee would like to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all members with an interest in the built environment to become involved in the discussion and help steer An Taisce's vision into the future and where is should be focused.

The committee worked closely with the Built Environment Office through the year, which has been fronted by Ian Lumley for many years with assistance from several full time volunteers who are a critical link for the committee in understanding the issues and receive critical advice on matter. We were delighted to see two full technical staff members, Tomás Bradley and Damian Ó Tuama, come on board in 2013 to compliment Ian Lumley in advocating for positive changes to our built environment.

The committee took particular time in 2013 to submit detailed evidence to the Commission on Economic Development in Rural Areas (CEDRA). An Taisce has always supported the objectives for sustainable rural communities that were developed in the EU's Salzburg Declaration (EC, 2003), however, our approach to rural matters has received much public criticism despite clear failings of current policy lying with government.

Large parts of rural Ireland have lagged behind in terms of relative disadvantage; employment and job creation; and the extent of rural poverty and social isolation. Peripheral regions, especially in the northwest and north midlands, have consistently lost population share and experienced considerable deficits in respect of services, communications and other infrastructure. These trends have become ever more acute following the collapse of the 'Celtic Tiger' property bubble and the subsequent fiscal austerity and retrenchment measures which have seen the withdrawal of key services in rural areas.

An Taisce set out proposals for the creation of a vibrant rural Ireland in evidence to CEDRA. Ours is an alternative viewpoint which is put forward in the context of transformative energy and climate challenges of the 21st Century.
Our rural natural resources have therefore never been more important and must be sustainably managed for the long-term. Our civilization is wholly dependent on its ecological and social foundations and our economy should function to sustain and enhance human well-being. It is easy to lose sight of this, especially in times of crises.

Rural Ireland is today experiencing the stored-up costs of over half a century of poor policies that facilitated a widely dispersed settlement strategy that has failed to generate a supportive economy and this locked-in legacy will be extremely difficult to unpick. Clear and bold strategic policy choices with a long-term focus will need to be recommended to government

In 2013 the Minister for Environment put the National Spatial Strategy up for review which is and will be a large discussion for the committee and will result in a high level policy statement for An Taisce outlining the basic spatial strategy for the country. The ideas are already flowing from the committee meetings and you can rest assured An Taisce, with a solid footing following our submission to CEDRA, will take this an opportunity to promote an alternative vision for Ireland which tackles climate change and creates resilient communities going forward. We hope you will join us in fostering this vision in 2014.





# Cycling Officer Report

by National Cycling Coordinator – Damien Ó Tuama

2013 was an exciting year on the cycling front for An Taisce as it saw the first formal collaboration between us and Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network. Cyclist.ie has been lobbying at a National level since 2008 to help foster the development of a strong cycling culture in Ireland - while its largest member group, Dublin Cycling Campaign, has been doing similar work in the capital since 1993 (and celebrated its 20th birthday last year!). Further to securing funding from the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), Cyclist.ie teamed up with An Taisce and a new National Cycling Coordinator position was created.



*Participants in the "Strategy Day" at Tailors' Hall, Sep. 2013*

Initial efforts concentrated on supporting the great work of the existing dozen or so (mainly urban focused) cycling campaigning groups in Ireland. A "Strategy Development" day was held in Tailors' Hall in September with delegates from almost all groups attending.

The purpose of this phase of work is to create stronger ties between groups and engender a culture of sharing campaigning ideas and knowledge. The work is also helping to build a stronger relationship between An Taisce local groups and other successful cycling advocacy groups from within the ECF.

The Cycling Coordinator prepared and linked into submissions regarding ("Part 8 Planning" related) applications to develop cycleways and greenways along the corridors of disused rail-lines, alongside canals and in other locations. With the help of some valuable input from local An Taisce groups, submissions have included:

Westmeath – Athlone Greenway (EuroVelo #2)*
Westmeath – Mullingar to Athlone Greenway (EuroVelo #2)
Kildare - Royal Canal Cycleway (EuroVelo #2)
Cavan - Navan to Kingscourt Greenway
Dublin / Greater Dublin Area - National Transport Authority Cycle Network (via Dublin Cycling Campaign)
Kildare - Naas Public Transport Facilities (Part 8)
Meath – Kells, Gardenrath Cycleway (Part 8)
Tipperary Town – Link Road

The main arguments made in the submissions were that An Taisce warmly welcomes the construction of high quality cycle routes by local authorities, where their impact on the built and natural environment has been thoroughly assessed, and where they have been designed and constructed in a manner sensitive to those environmental considerations. An Taisce supports those interventions which help provide a safe and attractive environment for walkers and cyclists, catering especially for families with children for whom the roads are currently perceived to be too hostile. However, providing separate greenway routes is not an alternative to calming local roads so as to make them safe and attractive for non-motorised road users. All such roads need to be bicycle friendly too if we are to normalise everyday cycling.



*Dublin Bikes - Courtesy of Fáilte Ireland*

Furthermore, if we are to reach a 10% modal share for cycling by 2020 (cycling currently represents only approximately 2% of trips) then we need to see the steady implementation of all of the measures outlined in the 2009-2020 National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF), the implementation and monitoring of which is also an important part of the work of the position.

* EuroVelo Route #2 links Galway to Moscow via Dublin, London, Berlin, Warsaw and Minsk.

# Environmental Education Unit

by Patricia Oliver

## A Memorable Year

It was a memorable year for the Environmental Education Unit (EEU) which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2013. Begun in 1993 following a Business Plan for An Taisce which showed that members wanted the organisation to be more involved in education, it was set up with the aspiration of looking at environmental education in its broadest sense – not just through schools, but through programmes aimed at all sections of Irish society.

Directed successfully by the Education Committee, which was formed with former officers and members of Council who were invited to become committee members on the understanding that they commit themselves to a long-term involvement in the new venture, the sustained support of these members and others over many years has played a large part in the unit's success. Given that the unit had been given no initial funding and could not look to An Taisce for any future financial support, this demonstrates their commitment to the organisation.

From one programme in 1993 (Blue Flag for Beaches & Marinas), the EEU now co-ordinates nine national and international environmental education programmes; works with over 90% of all schools; with every local authority; with government departments and state agencies; with business and communities; carries out surveys and research and employs 61 people. Its operation of international programmes is considered best practice and many countries in Europe and beyond have travelled to Ireland to study how the EEU delivers programmes such as Green Schools and Green Schools Travel.

The Education Unit held numerous events throughout 2013 and its staff came in for extraordinary praise. All staff worked to deliver outstanding results despite difficult financial constraints and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Assistant Dr. Michael-John O'Mahony, our Business Manager Dawn Parkinson, Development Manager Anthony Purcell and all Education Unit staff for their outstanding work. This is a view shared by the members of the Education Committee: Margaret Sweeney, Vice Chairperson, Norman Campion, Bernard Ryan, Kathleen Vandenberghe, Valerie Bond, Eileen Collins, Alison Carter, Jeanne Meldon and John Harnett under the Chairmanship of Charles Stanley Smith. Their commitment to An Taisce's Education Unit is invaluable.

## National Spring Clean (www.nationalspringclean.org)

The 2013 campaign saw the number of people taking part rise again after the slight dip in registrations in 2012. In fact, with more than half a million people taking part there were more events than ever before at 5,351 and an estimated 550 tonnes of litter collected of which more than 35% was recyclable. The use of online registration by volunteers for National Spring Clean certainly makes life easier and speeds up delivery of clean-up kits. The percentage of people registering online increased again in 2013 and this looks set to continue in 2014 and their enthusiasm is what truly inspires this campaign. Minister Fergus O'Dowd TD, along with representatives of our sponsors launched the campaign and model and Clean



National Spring Clean 2013:
*(L-R)* ***Pat Oliver,*** *Chairperson. National Spring Clean;* **Fergus O'Oowd,** *TD, Minister for State at the Dept. of Environment. Heritage & Local Government and* **Bill Collins**, *Repak celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the NSC last year.*

Coast Ambassador Sarah McGovern was much sought after to bring a touch of glamour and help publicise many events around the country while working with local authorities and community groups.

## Green-Schools & Green-Schools Travel (www.greenschoolsireland.org)

Green Schools Travel has come up with some wonderful ideas to make walking and cycling to school enjoyable but, as usual, the schools themselves are coming up with even more fun, novel and exciting ways to make the move away from the car. And it's working, with more and more parents realising what a difference it makes to their children to have an opportunity of getting exercise on their way to school not to mention the reduction in congestion at the school gates and the number of cars on the road at peak times.

Green Schools Travel has also been working with a number of Smarter Travel Projects nationwide to deliver the schools element of the project. The areas include Limerick City, Dungarvan, Westport and Cork. As we go to press, the Limerick City Green Schools Travel project has just been awarded a prize by the Irish Planning Institute. Congratulations to Green Schools Travel Officer Ellen O'Sullivan who has worked tirelessly to deliver the project in Limerick.
The Green Schools core programme continues to astonish us with participation exceeding over 90% of all Irish schools in 2013 working on the themes of Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity and Global Citizenship. It is expected that the milestone of the awarding of the 3000th Green Flag will happen in 2014.

## Green Campus & Eco-Centres (www.greencampuisireland.org )

New themes are emerging within Green Campus. Some, such as the complementary theme of "Climate Justice" originated within Green Campus Committees in colleges looking to foster their individual specialities in international aid & development and climatology, as is the case with the jointly registered NUI Maynooth and St. Patrick's College Maynooth (together known as Maynooth Green Campus). Other themes such as "Green Information and Communications Technology" are in development as a result of initiatives by An Taisce in partnership with HEAnet, Ireland's National Education and



**TCD Green Flag: Trinity College Dublin awarded 'Green Flag' for environment**
*(L-R)* ***Gwen Duffy,*** *Students Union Environmental & Ethical Trading Officer,*
***Libby Key,*** *Trinity Environmental Committee,*
***Dr. Patrick Prendergast,*** *Trinity College Dublin Provost,*
***Patricia Oliver,*** *An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit and*
***Xanthe Caldercott,*** *Trinity Student waving their green flag after the College received An Taisce's Green-Campus Award.*

Research Network. A highlight of the Green Campus year 2013 was the awarding of the Green Flag to Trinity College, Dublin. The Green Flag has also been adapted for eco-centres. The first centre to be awarded the flag was the Lifetime Lab, Cork in 2010 and 2012 saw them joined by Fota Wildlife Park and Delphi adventure Centre, Mayo. The highlight of 2013 was the awarding of two new flags to Gurtbrack Organic Centre, Kerry and Killarney National Park.

## Blue Flag & Clean Coasts Programme (www.beachawards.ie; www.cleancoastproject.org )

2013 saw the introduction of the new stricter Bathing Water criteria for Blue Flag and it was expected that this would have an effect on the number of Blue Flags awarded to Ireland. Beaches had to meet the new 'Excellent' standard to achieve the flag while beaches that achieved the 'Good' standard were not considered, though some of them would have been eligible under the old rules. This decision of Blue Flag International reflects the new stricter European Bathing Water Directive and as the water quality criteria for Blue Flag is also used for the Green Coast Award it was expected that it would lose awards also. And this proved to be the case when the Awards were announced in June 2013 at a ceremony at which 74 Blue Flags and 45 Green Coast Awards were presented by Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government Mr. Phil Hogan T.D.

There was a loss of 13 Blue Flags and 11 Green Coast Awards being a decline of 15% and 20% respectively. Ireland, however, scored well relative to other European countries. 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 expanded its activities in 2013 in pilot projects in Kerry, working with community groups, ICA, Tidy Towns and residents associations. Carrying out simple online actions, householders can see how much waste they are producing, energy they are using and what their mode of travel is costing them and take steps to alter their behaviour by adopting the "Slim Your Bin" and "Energy Vampire" challenges. Surveys carried out by Green Home show that a household in the programme can save up to €350 a year by carrying out quite simple actions. Green Home also continued its work with schools in getting the message home to parents. These joined the 10,000 households already participating in the programme which is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and facilitates and acknowledges sustainable behaviour in the home.

Green Communities
Helping you enhance your local environment (www.greencommunitiesproject.org)
An Taisce

The intended purpose of An Taisce Green Communities programme is to deliver monthly action based training events and field trips for community volunteer groups. Generally the events are as wide ranging as the groups themselves, but they are all based on environmental, horticultural, and natural history topics and skills that are relevant to people living in Ireland.

In 2013 The Green Communities Programme grew to a network of 27 community groups actively engaged in horticulture and environmental improvement activities. In total, 8 Green Communities Training Days were organised during 2013. These included Bird Watching Trips, Green Home Clinics, Composting Workshops, Organic Gardening, Poly-tunnel Training, Allotment Open Days, and a visit to a Grassland Grazing Project. The highlight of all of these varied activities was possibly the open day at South Dublin County Council's Friarstown Allotments, where in excess of 50 people took part in Green Communities Training on Saturday the 5th of October.

The Green Communities Programme was also very active in working with West Limerick Resources to deliver a training programme to Tidy Towns Groups across West Limerick. This saw an intensive programme of class based learning, fieldtrips, and mentoring being delivered to 19 Tidy Towns Groups. The training focused on the Wildlife, Habitats, and Natural Amenities Criteria of the competition, as well as the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management. Those Tidy Towns groups that engaged with this training saw scoring increase by up to 133% within these categories!

## Greening Communities

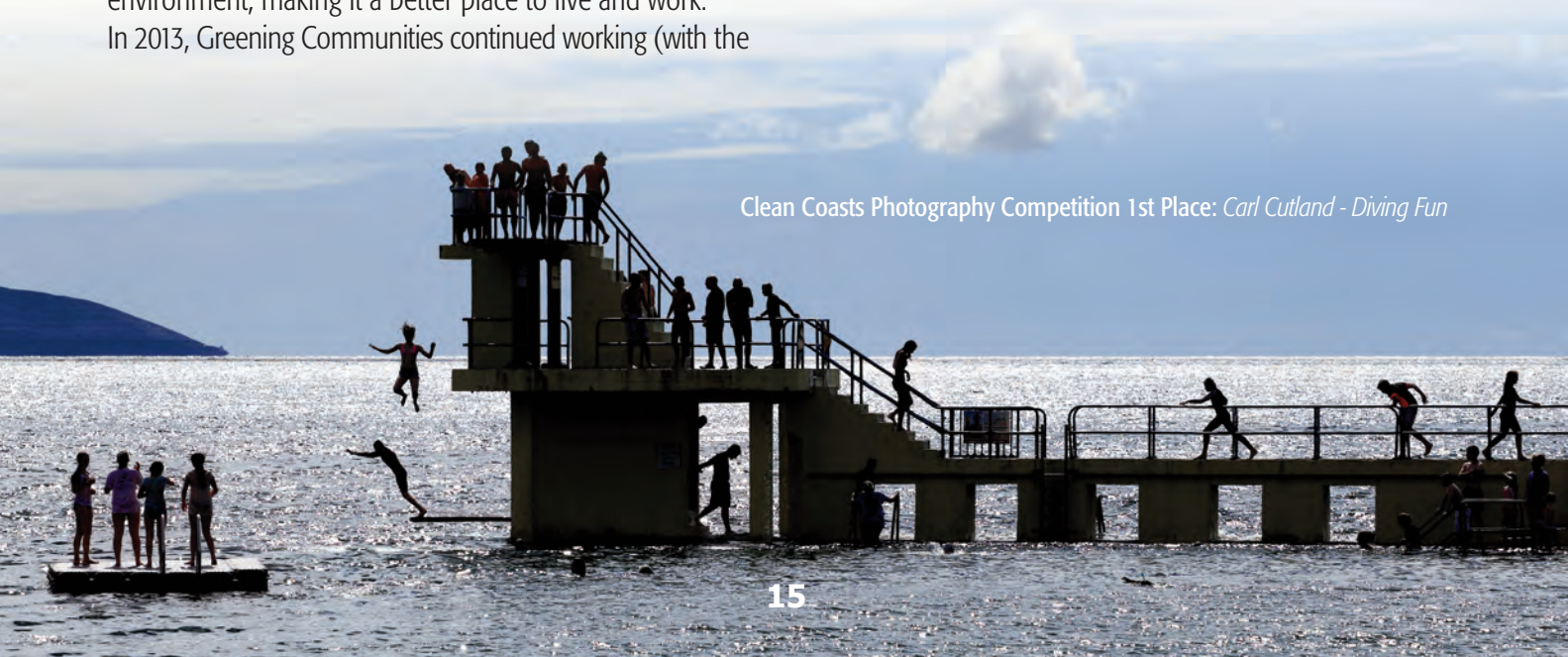
Greening Communities epa
An Taisce

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. In 2013, Greening Communities continued working (with the help of dedicated members of the community) to facilitate and document environmental best practice. Examples include: Working with the Tidy Towns Network (14 communities) in Meath undertaking a series of workshops on Sustainable Waste and Resource Management; Facilitating the 2013 National Spring Clean in Wexford Town, with a large scale cleanup at the local sports grounds, involving Tidy Towns and the local sports groups and leading to an increase of over 200 members to the Green Home Programme; Working with the Docklands Business Forum (DBF) with their Annual Docklands Clean-up, provided a positive "giving it back" medium for business to the local community with the biggest ever DBF Spring Clean with more than 60 DBF volunteers (representing 20 businesses across the docklands) and six local schools (with their parents and teachers, coordinated by the local community centre and local community Gardaí).

A key objective of the programme in 2013 was to establish a robust accreditation / award system, with built-in flexibility and local application, to establish these communities as "Greening Communities". Five communities have been selected to be piloted in 2014 and have been issued "Greening Communities Challenges" for 2014. The continued success and growth of the Greening Communities Programme is made possible by active community members and their drive to constantly improve their local area.

## 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 (Limerick Leader), commercial sponsors (Repak, Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland, The Wrigley Company, HSBC), the King Baudouin Foundation and, of course, all local authorities. It is a great pleasure to acknowledge their support over many years.



Clean Coasts Photography Competition 1st Place: *Carl Cutland - Diving Fun*

# Natural Environment Office

by Andrew Jackson



A key focus of the Natural Environment Office since January 2013 has been increasing the Office's capacity to perform its functions effectively. As with many charitable organisations, the main perceived (and experienced) barrier was a relative lack of resources. Since taking up my position as Natural Environment Officer and In-house Solicitor I have sought to tackle these issues by recruiting highly qualified interns, and by pursuing new funding lines, including conceiving and coordinating an EU LIFE+ funding application.

Our superb interns contributed enormously to the work of the Office in 2013. The Office grew from two to four: currently Natural Environment Officer plus three interns: Julia Lubbock, Jack McCarthy and Fintan Kelly. This growth has allowed us, amongst other things, to focus in a dedicated and consistent way on agri-environmental matters. Given that about 64% of our land territory is used for agriculture, this whole area is of central importance in environmental terms. (Please see the separate agri-environment report for details.) Sincere thanks must also be extended to interns who contributed to our Office's work during 2013 but who have since moved on, including Róisín Kearney, Ciara O' Hara, Patricia Cunningham, Gráinne Ryan, David Garvey and Laurie O'Keeffe.

On the funding side, whilst our LIFE+ application was not successful in 2013, we are considering resubmitting in 2014, depending on the feedback we receive from the European Commission in due course. If successful, the LIFE+ project - which secured a commitment of co-funding of ¤410,000 from RTÉ, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, and the Department of the Environment (which would have brought the project's total budget to just under ¤1m) - would have involved making two wildlife TV series for RTÉ as well as biodiversity work in schools via Green Schools. Given the strength of the project and our excellent partners, GMarsh TV (makers of RTÉ's "Living the Wildlife") and AquaTT (which has significant experience of working on large EU-funded projects), we hope to give this another shot.

In addition, in 2013 the Natural Environment Office coordinated a round of funding applications for Local Agenda 21 funding from local authorities. These applications ultimately brought in about €5,000 for wildlife walks and talks in various local association areas, and we hope to see many of you at these events in 2014.

In addition to our prescribed functions (e.g. commenting on afforestation, aquaculture and planning applications), work highlights in 2013 included:

- An investigative report which exposed the discharge of an entire town's (Glenamaddy) sewage into a priority habitat turlough Special Area of Conservation in Co. Galway;
- Hinkley Point judicial review, challenging the UK government's grant of planning permission for a new nuclear power station in England without first consulting the public in Ireland. This case is due to come before the Court of Appeal in London for a hearing in summer 2014;
- Actively engaging in the ongoing campaign to conserve and restore Irish peatlands – via the Peatlands Council, media appearances, etc.;
- Co-managing An Taisce's Facebook and Twitter accounts and greatly increasing our numbers of followers;
- Seeking to improve the conservation status of one of An Taisce's properties – in Killaha West, Co. Kerry – as a habitat for the lesser horseshoe bat (Rhinolophus hipposideros). A nationally important maternity roost of bats has developed at this site, and we will be seeking to raise funds in 2014 to secure the long-term future of this building as a bat reserve;



*Lesser Horseshoe Bat by Jessicajil*

- Raising An Taisce's profile by participating as speakers at numerous conferences, universities and local association events, and by attending national events in a representative capacity, including Bloom, Harvest and the National Ploughing Championships; and
- Playing an important role in modernising Tailors' Hall's IT and archiving systems and in the creation of a new website for An Taisce.

# Agri-Environment Office Report



by Jack McCarthy

It has been an interesting year for Irish agriculture. The main framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the next 7 years has been largely agreed, and is now in the process of being translated into national level schemes. The government have also continued pushing the Food Harvest 2020 plan in advance of the removal of milk quotas in 2015. An Taisce's Agri-environment Office, which was established in 2013 as part of the Natural Environment Office, has been heavily engaged with both of these developments, producing four submissions for relevant public consultations and an array of press releases.

Three of these submissions related to the domestic implementation of the CAP reforms. An Taisce made strong recommendations in this regard. Drawing on evidence from successful projects across Europe, An Taisce recommended targeted, outcome-based, agri-environment schemes. Targeted outcome based designs could address the failings of the REPS (Rural Environment Protection Scheme) and AEOS (Agri-Environment Options Scheme) schemes, which were carried out with little or no monitoring or evaluation.

Where data were available, there were no notable improvements in terms of biodiversity, habitat status, or water quality. An Taisce recommended a removal of the fixed €5,000 cap on the new GLAS (Green, Low carbon, Agri-environment) scheme and on the additional €2,000 for GLAS+. Farmers must be adequately funded for the valuable environmental work that is needed, and in many cases this will exceed these fixed caps.

An Taisce also made a submission on the Direct Farm Payments section of the CAP funding structure. This submission highlighted that many of the potential problems arising from the direct payments system stem from how the areas eligible for payments are defined, and what specific practices are allowed in each of those areas. For example, there has been ongoing debate about whether pesticides and certain types of crop cultivation will be allowed within Ecological Focus Areas (EFA), part of the new greening measures. These issues are of prime importance and ineffective policy design in this regard has led to environmental destruction in the past. An Taisce has urged the government to acknowledge and learn from past mistakes. On this issue of direct payments, An Taisce has also welcomed the redistribution of funds from highly intensive farms to smaller low input farms through the new 'approximation' mechanism. Although the extent of this redistribution does not go as far as An Taisce recommended, it is a small step away from production-oriented subsidies that led to farm intensification in the past.

An Taisce has continued to engage in the Food Harvest 2020 (FH2020) public consultation process. An Environmental Analysis Report on FH2020 was produced in 2013 by consultants engaged by the government. An Taisce was heavily critical of this report in a submission to the Department of Agriculture. The report was commissioned following excellent lobbying work by environmental NGOs in 2012. However, having reviewed the report, An Taisce argued that it lacked scientific rigour and understated the likely impact of, in particular, achieving the goal of a 50% increase in dairy output. The report assumed 100% compliance amongst farmers with best practice approaches to farming. This is not in line with current trends. Even with these shortcomings, the report projected increased greenhouse gas emissions, and slight negative impacts on biodiversity and water quality at a national scale premitigation.

At a European level, An Taisce has been continuously engaged as a member of the European Environmental Bureau's (EEB) agriculture working group. An Taisce hosted a meeting of this group in April while David Garvey and Jack McCarthy attended a subsequent meeting in Brussels in September. These were both excellent events and were highly valuable in facilitating the exchange of ideas and increasing understanding of the impacts of the CAP reform package in different EU Member States. The EEB continue to keep us up to date on the CAP reform process at a European level.

# Natural Environment Committee

by Dr Declan Murphy

The Natural Environment Committee (NEC) meets on the Saturday morning prior to Council meetings, and attendance is generally about 6-10. Membership is open to all members and is somewhat fluid, but there is a core group of members that have a diversity of interests and experience. Andrew Jackson - the Natural Environment (NE) Officer - attends either in person or by teleconference, and the committee is abreast of the multiple developments being dealt with by the NE office. The committee chair is a member of the An Taisce board of management, and acts as a link between the NEC and both the board and council. There were four meetings in 2013 and one so far in 2014, and our agenda includes almost the whole range of natural environment issues. The chair reports verbally to council immediately afterwards, and our deliberations feed into An Taisce actions and policies.

The main issues we dealt with included aquaculture, forestry, farming and fisheries policy, surveillance and protection of SACs and other protected areas, illegal turf cutting on protected bogs, invasive species, biodiversity loss, An Taisce properties including Killaha in west Cork, climate change, energy policy, and NE office projects.

Biodiversity loss threatens a wide spectrum of species due to habitat loss and degradation as well as invasive species and pests. Ash trees are particularly under threat from the fungus chalara fraxinea, and phytophera ramorum fungus is spreading infestation on Japanese larch and noble fir. The Teagasc website (teagasc.ie) is the most up-to-date source of information on such outbreaks in Ireland. The recently acquired An Taisce property at Killaha West in Kerry houses a colony of lesser horseshoe bats, and work is underway (in conjunction with NPWS) to protect the old vernacular farmhouse as a maternity roost for this protected species.

The NE office made robust submissions in 2012 opposing the controversial plans for a massive fish farm off Galway Bay, but Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) continues to promote its development. The proposed intensification of agricultural production under the Food Harvest 2020 programme has disturbing implications for habitat and biodiversity issues, and will lead to significantly increased carbon emissions. This is an interface that this committee will share with the recently formed Climate Change Committee.



*Foxes by GrahamC57*

In 2013, the NE officer produced a six-month strategic plan with about 50 targets across a broad spectrum and receives support from a number of graduates with specialist qualifications through the JobBridge scheme. Their roles allow An Taisce to produce a steady flow of high-quality reports and submissions. The NE officer has a multi-faceted role between environmental issues, legal oversight of environmental law compliance, and office management to maximize high-quality output despite limited resources. The dedication and expertise of Andrew Jackson and his team, is abundantly clear to the committee and we hope to convey that sense of mission to our membership.



*Three trees under threat of infestation by fungi: (L-R) Ash, Japanese Larch and Noble Fir*

# Properties

by James Nix



Further work was completed on the 1800s house in Killaha West, 5km from Kenmare. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and An Taisce are working together to ensure the structure remains a happy home for lesser horseshoe bats, a protected species. The harsh weather of late 2013 did cause a small amount of roof damage but all has been made good in early 2014.

Work continues apace on the restoration of the Boyne Canal navigation system. With An Taisce's work spearheaded by honorary secretary James Leahy, the restoration is a joint venture with the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland.

Kanturk Castle in Co. Cork continues to be used for festivities, particularly over the summer period. July 2013 saw the Wild Boar Festival take place in the grounds of the castle and 2014 is already seeing requests for similar events.

Mongan Bog in Co. Offaly, a protected peatland, continues to be of scientific interest and the NPWS is currently undertaking a study of its features. Mongan Bog is one of many properties where An Taisce is actively seeking more proactive engagement from members on the ground. Other properties where similar help is sought include Gort Weigh House in Galway, the Grove Nature Reserve near Donnybrook, the Browne-Clayton Monument in Co. Wexford and the Old Court House in Howth.

Tailors' Hall has been blessed in 2013 by the work of two people in particular – Louis McGee and Louise Burns. Working with An Taisce through the Tús scheme, Louis has completed a myriad of improvements to the hall. These include window restoration, a new rainwater harvesting system, five spanking new stainless steel cycle stands, a completely redecorated Wolfe Tone room, while also working with a builder to install a "non-return valve" in the water outfall network. Addressing both rainwater management and the non-return valve have already shown their worth in early 2014 when Tailors' Hall survived unscathed from the heavy rainfall events.

If you would like to volunteer to help on any of the above properties, or any of the ones we have not specifically highlighted this year (Booterstown Marsh Nature Reserve, the Burren in Co. Clare, Crocnafarragh in Donegal, Oweninny in Co. Mayo, or islands off Mulroy Bay in Donegal), please email properties@antaisce.org.



*Kanturk Castle*



*Booterstown Marsh Nature Reserve*



*The Burren by Marcella Bona*



*Gateway entrance to Tailors' Hall - Headquarters of An Taisce - The Skibbereen Eagle*

# Monuments & Antiquities

by Dr Mark Clinton



Throughout the year, correspondence with the office of Mr. Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht continued in relation to the reported structural damage of two souterrains (subterranean refuges) of late 1st Millennium AD date. The issues raised remain unresolved. The Department's National Monuments Service (NMS) inspected both monuments but had not determined whether any wilful or deliberate damage had been done to the structures. An independent inspection conducted by the committee revealed that the souterrain at Bective in County Meath had in fact suffered severe and clearly deliberate damage. The National Monument at Donaghmore in County Louth had apparently suffered structural damage as the result of an error in the planning process.

Considerable effort has been devoted to the preservation in situ of the standing remains of a Manse House of late medieval date in the historic city of Kilkenny.
This important and indeed rare discovery has the misfortune to lie in the path of the Central Access Scheme (CAS), an ill-conceived project of the first order. Not only would the proposed road demolish the newly discovered monument, segregate the Medieval Cathedral from the historic town, impinge upon the buried remains of the original Early Medieval ecclesiastical enclosure, but would in effect pour traffic into the heart of ancient Kilkenny.

The committee has worked in close union with the local association of An Taisce, Head Office and our highly motivated full legal team. It has taken our collective efforts to get the Council officials to even admit that a new monument had been discovered in the overly concealed site. The NMS has been alerted and continually quizzed regarding all developments. Committee member Shirley O'Brien prepared and submitted a detailed complaint to the EU. The complaint was formally accepted as worthy of detailed examination. Ms. O'Brien has furnished additional material upon request by the Commission.

Committee member Ruadhan McEoin has maintained an active watching brief on the proposed Harbour Development at Bremore in North County Dublin. It has, to date, proved impossible to obtain any clarification from the relevant authorities as to why the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (No. 4158) has been reduced in area. This reduction (to the immediate north of the River Delvin) in protected shoreline coincides with the area occupied by the remains of the Gormanstown Passage Tomb cemetery. The suspicion has to be that the contraction of the SPA is an early facilitation of this superfluous development. The mouth of the River Delvin (Inber nAilbine) was one of the important points of entry into Early Medieval Ireland.



*Corlican ringfort bank*

On a happier note, the recent vote by the Council of An Taisce in favour of the acquisition of Corlican in County Wexford is to be warmly welcomed. In the spring of 2011 an approach was made to the committee by the Enniscorthy Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in relation to the former burial ground of the Friends (Quakers) at Corlican. Advice was sought as to how best to safeguard the site in the long term. What was fascinating was that the burial ground was sited within the confines of a ringfort of late 1st Millennium AD date. A series of reports were prepared at the request of the Chair and the Director. These reports have more recently been employed by the local branch of An Taisce to pursue potential grant-aid. Given the association between the burial ground and the founders of the State of Pennsylvania, there are wonderful opportunities for future transatlantic co-operation for the protection and preservation of this unique monument. It will be in safe hands.



*Corlican Headstones*

# Local Association Reports



*Mullaghmore in the Burren, Co. Clare.*

## Clare Association Anny Wise

Over the past year we have been very busy with the properties including the Burren Land, the Gort Weigh House and on behalf of a member in Ennistymon with regard to Blake's Corner.
We have tried to get funding and are still waiting for a response for our latest attempt. Two of the above properties have received further damage from the recent storms and we are busy trying to put things right before further damage occurs. We are busy getting surveys and estimates but will unfortunately miss the Heritage Council's deadline for funding Protected Structures at risk.
The subject of "Climate Change" is coming up more often now because of the storms and we are thinking of starting up KULYANA again where "Community Combating Climate Change" may have a better response than in the three years when we ran this project.

We have also covered the forthcoming Local Authority Restructuring and its implications on public participation with a special meeting.



*Cork City by night*

## Cork Association Kevin Connolly

Regarding the Cork City development plan 2015-21, we contributed to the initial public consultation process in its review. Now that the draft plan itself is coming up for public consultation, we intend to make a further lengthy submission.

In 2013, An Taisce Corcaigh made a submission to the draft Cork County development plan review, which is a stage in the development of a new county plan for 2015-2021.

We issued a press release on the Marina Park development, calling on the GAA and the city council to review the project, in the light of objections from local residents to the splitting up of a proposed sub-regional public park by a GAA centre of excellence.

In addition, submissions were made relating to the redevelopment of a protected structure on Dyke Parade, and the proposed construction of a large office complex on Albert Quay.

The association also received a generous grant of €1,200 from Cork County Council to undertake a nature project as part of the Local Agenda 21 scheme which facilitates sustainable development at community level. We intend to undertake this project in summer 2014.

# Donegal Association Noel Foley

In 2013, we had our AGM and 12 committee meetings. The overall attendance by committee members was 70%. Discussion took place on a wide variety of topics such as planning, awareness raising and publicity, liaising with other groups, Green Schools, County Donegal Heritage Committee, National Monuments, community gardens and allotments, etc. Ian Lumley led a very informative discussion under the title "Issues for the Future for Donegal" at our AGM. The AGM passed the motion that our association would contribute €1,000 to the National Association – the cheque was handed to Ian and subsequently lodged in the coffers of the National Association.

In January, we invited two National Schools in the Donegal Gaeltacht (Doochary and Glendowan) to carry out a survey of birds in their locality. Doochary was chosen as it is close to a river and the remnants of old oak woodland and Glendowan is surrounded by moorland. Both schools produced wonderful reports of bird sightings as well as of local names for birds. Glendowan N.S. reported daily sightings of the golden eagles from the nearby Glenveagh National Park. There was great excitement in Doochary N.S. when one pupil saw a cormorant in the nearby Gweebarra river. Our association donated €150 to each school.

One of our members noticed that a well-known standing stone in Foxhall had gone missing. This was reported in the local press, to the Donegal County Museum and to National Monuments. We searched for the stone locally but it has not been found. Many contacts were made with Donegal Co. Council and Letterkenny Town Council in relation to planning, illegal dumping, allotments, tree planting and invasive alien plants. We also had contact with the Forest Service in relation to alleged illegal tree felling.

Invasive alien species also took our attention. Himalayan balsam is increasing at an alarming rate along road verges (perhaps being spread by loads of clay being brought in from elsewhere). Rhododendron ponticum continues to flourish in old woodlands. Glenveagh National Park has done Trojan work on controlling the species but our continuous worry is that funding for the work may be cut and put all that has been achieved to date in jeopardy. Our association was asked for its views on how to combat erosion caused by walkers on the approach to Errigal. Our suggestion was to provide a boarded walk on the moorland part of the approach. We await developments.

The profusion of ivy on mature hedgerow and ornamental trees is an ongoing problem. When giving advice, we seek a balance between the benefits in terms of food and shelter that ivy gives to wildlife and the sometimes increased risk of windthrow and/or the tree being overwhelmed due to the presence of ivy.

In August, we launched our calendar "Treasures of Donegal 2014", our book "Gate Lodges of Donegal" and our series of note cards (8 per set). Our Annual Craft Sale was held in November and maintenance of our Butterfly Garden continues throughout the year.

*Glenveagh National Park Donegal, showing invasive species Rhodedendron Ponticum - Courtesy of Fáilte Ireland*



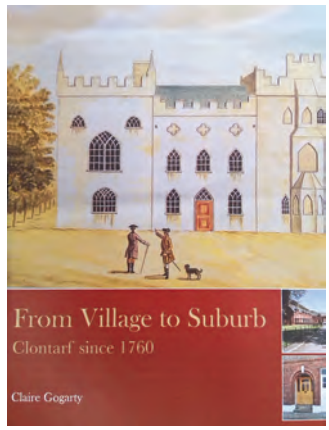
# Dublin City Association Claire Gogarty

We started off the year in March of 2013 at the Little Museum, where we had a tour by the curator, Trevor White (an An Taisce member), before holding our AGM there.

Our next meeting was preceded with a talk by a member of the An Taisce National Spring Clean office. This was in an effort to bridge the perceived distance between those on the committees and those who actually work for An Taisce, both of whom do sterling work but at an unnecessary remove from each other. This exchange of ideas worked very well.

During our monthly committee meetings, we discussed such matters as Roslyn Park, window shutters on business premises in the city centre and suburbs and Aldborough House as an ongoing planning uncertainty. Other big issues at the moment include the ESB's planned rebuilding of their headquarters. We feel it would actually be more productive for them to move their office to another office building and rebuild houses on the sites of those they demolished, to bring in more residential space in the south inner Georgian core.

One of our members launched a building history on Clontarf called "From Village to Suburb – the Building of Clontarf since 1760". We have recently opened a Twitter account, with which we hope to keep in touch with more members of An Taisce. Our address on Twitter is @dubantaisce.




On 20th February we had a talk by Frank McDonald on "After Boom and Bust: picking up the pieces". This was a joint venture with Dublin City University, which recently got its Green Campus status and has a good Environmental Society. The talk led to plenty of discussion, which led a large group to continue on to the pub for further discussion.

# Dun Laoghaire Association

## Chair's Report: Mairead Mehigan

The Dún Laoghaire Association was established over 40 years ago; we celebrated this milestone in 2013. Looking back, it's clear that much was achieved by the An Taisce volunteers over that time. While many heritage buildings were pulled down, trees felled and landscapes cleared over those 40 years, many more would have been lost if our organisation did not exist.

Through our active engagement, and with community support, we advocated for and successfully saved many buildings of heritage and historical significance, marine heritage, trees and unique landscapes, eco systems and nature reserves. Securing St. Helens House and Booterstown Marsh are just two examples of An Taisce achievements over the last 40 years. There are many more. I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank Rebecca Jeffares, Veronica Heywood and Avril Larmour who continue to ensure the protection of these two great sites.

Over the years, we have built many relationships with local and like-minded individuals committed to saving our unique natural and built heritage. We have had to do battle when called for. We have challenged excessive development and sought to influence decisions that would negatively impact on the natural and built environment. At all times we sought to advocate in a fair and reasonable way.

To the sub committees, volunteers, supporters and friends - I say A BIG THANK YOU! I would particularly like to thank the committees who regularly meet and make valuable contributions to the work of the local association. Special thanks are due to our joint Secretary / Treasurer, Ms. Sarah O'Connor. As always, we would welcome new members to the main committee or any of our sub committees.

Our founder Lloyd Praeger was never afraid to challenge officialdom or commerce; his guiding principles have sustained us in our work. Mindful that many members have deceased or moved on over the past 40 years, our challenge for 2014 is to recruit and engender Praeger's love of the environment and Ireland's unique heritage, fauna and flora.

## Booterstown Nature Reserve Committee

Several of the 40th anniversary celebrations centred on the Nature Reserve. Rebecca Jeffares organised three very successful events during Biodiversity Week with 63 Willow Park boys: An unveiling ceremony of the new information sign, field trips and wildlife painting and workshops in their classrooms.
Volunteers as usual helped with the annual clean-ups during the National Spring Clean, removing the usual shopping trolleys and political campaign posters amongst loads of assorted garbage. Then in the autumn, another work-party removed nasty looking flotsam and jetsam from the foreshore and the newly formed sand spit.

The main celebration was on Heritage day. As usual Sean Hogan of Birdwatch Ireland (BI) captivated a large audience with his great knowledge of wild birds, and Brian Gormley,



with his great knowledge of wild birds, and Brian Gormley, also of BI showed the Cathaoirleach of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Council (DLRC) the wonders of the Reserve. Declan Dooge took us round to the new sand bank, showing us all the different habitats and was also involved in mentoring an MSc student, who presented her thesis on the new sandbank in UCD's Agriculture Faculty. Sean Hogan ran a series of field trips, enthusing the participants to take up wild bird watching as an absorbing pursuit, pointing out how to identify the different species and imparting a sense of wonder.

The County Council culvert beside the Reserve seems to be a canvas for graffiti. The Council arranged for the probation service to remove it, but it was back within the week. Rebecca Jeffares and Veronica Heywood removed it but to no avail. Dublin City Council workers accidentally broke into a drain releasing gallons of crude oil into the Reserve. They were called upon to put booms across to prevent serious contamination. Worries that the swan and her cygnet would be injured were relieved when they emigrated to the Blackrock pond.

The two latest threats are an infestation of the intrusive Japanese knotweed and the site next door being put up for sale by the unknown owner who outbid Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Councils for the NAMA sale. Protecting the reserve requires constant vigilance and we welcome any help to preserve the sanctuary of this special place.

On a sad note, the committee unfortunately lost Maurice Bryan, who died at the start of the year; he had contributed so much of his expertise to conserve and enhance the Reserve and is sorely missed.

## Planning Committee:

The Planning Committee was active throughout the year, with the following being some of the highlights:

- Reviewed Dún Laoghaire Harbour Master Plan and made a submission on Dún Laoghaire Baths Site.
- Objected to the demolition of Blackrock Baths and monitored the planning conditions attached to the restoration of Blackrock Library.
- Sought enforcement in relation to the Old Tram Sheds Blackrock.
- St Helen's House - Planning Application pursued by Rebecca Jeffares
- Campaigned to save Moran Park and Trees – which is now the new Dún Laoghaire Library site.
- Made a submission on the restoration of the gate lodge at Dún Laoghaire People's Park.
- Continued monitoring of planning decisions associated with Dún Laoghaire Town Centre as well as all protected structures, local area plans and enforcement issues.

## Events of 2013

Our year opened with a talk in March by Rebecca Jeffares on Rathfarnham Castle demesne entitled "A designed Landscape through Time and Space". This drew a large crowd. Cabinteely Park was the location in National Tree Week for the planting of a tree in memory of our late member and good friend Dr Jack Durand. Members of the Durand family attended. The AGM in May also drew a large crowd to hear the speaker Zoe Devlin talk about her book "Wild Flowers of Ireland".



*Russborough House entrance*

In July we set off on our annual outing. Our first stop was to visit June Blake's wonderful garden 'Tinode', near Blessington. Then we had an excellent guided tour of Russborough. After lunch we were granted the privilege of a visit to see the ongoing work of the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland (RHSI) on the restoration of the garden.
As a follow up to the March talk, Rebecca Jeffares led a tour in September of the Rathfarnham Demesne including the Castle grounds, Badgers' Glen and the Ice House. In October, 12 volunteers worked hard to clean the foreshore at Booterstown in preparation for the overwintering birds.

We ended our year in December with a Christmas lunch in the RDS to celebrate the 40th anniversary of An Taisce Dún Laoghaire. John Holohan, Council Member of the RDS, gave us a short history of the Society before leading a tour of the main rooms and art works.

Rebecca Jeffares, Sarah O' Connor,
Veronica Heywood, Mairead Mehigan

# Galway Association Derrick Hambleton

First off, I will give you a list of the past years lecture series and tours, which are the core of our social year and usually well attended.

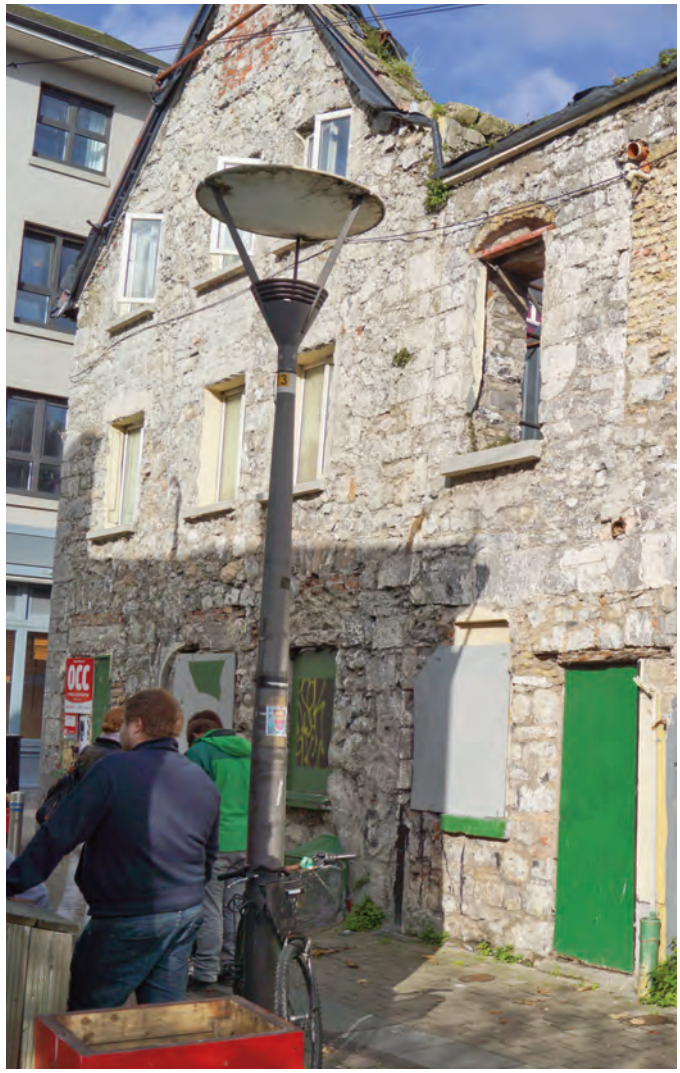
**Feb 20th** - Peadar O'Dowd gave an entertaining talk, with slides, entitled "Galway When the Humour is on it".
**March 20th** - Sheila Gallagher gave an illustrated talk on her activities with The Green Sod Trust.
**April 17th** - Dr. Christy Cunniffe gave a slide presentation on "Religious and Secular Iconography from Graveyards of Galway".
**Sept 18th** - Jim Reid gave a slide show on Walter Macken's plays
**Oct 18th** - Dr. Kate McAney gave a talk on bats, entitled "Leather Wings and Bushy Tails".

On **May 19th**, a tour to Fore Abbey – "The Seven Wonders of Fore" was led by Oliver Ussher, Ceannanas Mór. July 21st saw a trip to Arigna Mines and on 11th August, a visit was paid to Glasnevin Cemetery.

Our AGM took place on Nov 20th, with Derrick Hambleton returned as Chair, Dr. Eithne Conway-McGee secretary, and Dr. Emer Colleran as treasurer. Other committee members are Pauline Fitzgerald, Martin Byrnes and Christy Fitzgerald.

2013 was a busy year for planning submissions, with most concerning applications for retention of shop fronts, which is a real problem in Galway city. Letters written to Minister Jan O'Sullivan from Derrick requesting that she crack down on abuses of planning retention have, so far, gone unanswered.

Planning applications for the upgrade of Ceannt Station and extension to Galway's Docks are currently being dealt with, while regular press releases are issued on behalf of An Taisce's Galway Association, detailing our many concerns about local planning issues.



*Example of a building at risk on Quay Street, Galway City (Currently in the hands of receivers)*

# Kerry Association Catherine McMullin

The Kerry Association had a busy year and members meet monthly to discuss the many environmental issues which arise in our county. We continue to monitor planning applications referred to us and while the total number is declining, the number of big developments (mainly associated with alternative energy) remains high. These include wind farms and associated developments, such as upgrading of substations and provision of quick response diesel powered generators.

Wind farms have been a feature in certain parts of the county for more than 10 years and now produce about 13.5% of the total electricity for the State. When all the wind farms granted permission are erected, Kerry will be a net exporter of electricity to the National Grid. The first wind farms erected were mainly in the more remote areas of the county with a low population density and had little difficulty obtaining planning permission. Recent planning applications are in more densely populated areas and this has led to much opposition from local residents.

The rapidly increasing 'suburbanisation' of the countryside by one-off housing is of major concern. This is a complex problem and shows no sign of being resolved. We have expressed our views at the Built Environment Committee of An Taisce.
In Killarney National Park, money has, at last, been made available to carry out badly needed works on Killarney House and to restore the gardens associated with it. We are also monitoring the proposed Lough Leane Loop Walk/Cycle path, which would pass through a very sensitive area of the Park, and have made a submission outlining our concerns.

The Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015 is under review at present and there will be opportunities for the public to make submissions at various stages of the process. We would ask our members to watch out for advertisements advising the public of proposed changes, when public information meetings will be held and last date for submissions. An Taisce will be making submissions at all stages but we encourage members to make their own also and to send a copy to the address below.

We have representatives on a number of committees, as follows :

**Lough Leane Working Group.** Monitoring of Lough Leane for pollution is continuing and, despite the hot summer, the lake remained in good condition in 2014.

**Killarney National Park Liaison Committee.** This Committee represents the views of the local communities and groups that have a legitimate interest in the management of the Park. Current items under discussion include concerns about pollution arising from the Killarney Town waste water treatment plant, the state of the internal Park roads and the proposed Lough Leane Loop walking/cycling path.

**Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee.** Items discussed during the year included work being carried out on 'Ghost Estates', control of quarries, flood risk management, development plans etc., all of interest to An Taisce in its planning work.

The Kerry Association meets in Maeve O'Donnell's house, 16 Denny St., Tralee on the first Thursday of the month at 8.00 pm and all Kerry members are invited to attend.

*Slea Head from Dunbeg Fort, Dingle Peninsula, Kerry*



# Kilkenny Association Dr. Declan Murphy

Kilkenny is justly proud of its rich archaeological and historical heritage, and the OPW, Fáilte Ireland and the local councils have made admirable moves to conserve and enhance this in many ways. It is disappointing therefore that a key activity of this association is in opposing a major road scheme – the Central Access Scheme (CAS) through the heart of the historical core of the city. The project began in 2007 and envisaged a major extension of the Ring Road around the city as well as the CAS.

An Bord Pleanála permitted the CAS only, following significant modification and a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2011. An Taisce and other heritage groups remain implacably opposed to the destructive nature of this road, and have been joined by a large local community activist group especially opposed to its traffic implications.

Works were due to commence last year but have been held up pending fuller archaeological investigations of a small terrace of houses that are due for destruction. These houses have rich archaeological and historical association with the 13th c. St. Canice's Cathedral and form part of the unique cathedral close.

The scheme becomes more misguided by the day, for economic, planning, traffic management and climate change reasons. Yet the council is rightly proud of its credentials in implementing Smarter Travel policies, and its moves to save the 12th c. St. Mary's Church. An Taisce contributed to public discourse on the master plan for the recently acquired vast Diageo / Smithwick's city centre site which contains the historic ruin of 13th c. St. Francis Abbey. Rural communities throughout the south-east were galvanized by the Eirgrid "Grid 2020" pylon plans. Opposition came from a bottom-up community-led revolt and An Taisce in Kilkenny was largely by-passed by the many local ad-hoc groups that coalesced to become a powerful advocacy group. The emergence of widespread concern about the landscape impacts is encouraging in view of public disinterest in environmental degradation during the boom years.


*Kilkenny, St.Canice's Cathedral*

Hopefully this will develop to encompass the range of conservation issues at the heart of An Taisce's existence. We aim to hold about three public events annually, and our committee meets monthly. We welcome new members – and our meetings are never dull!

# Meath Association Margaret Monaghan

The Meath Association celebrated its 45th anniversary with a talk by Kevin Mulligan, architectural historian on Ellison Awards winners accompanied by a photographic display of the 2012 awards in Ashbourne library. These displays were then moved to other libraries including Navan, Drogheda and Dunshauglin which resulted in great press coverage by the Meath Chronicle and other local newspapers.

The AGM was hosted on 7th May 2013 in Bellinter House, which was well attended and Sean Foley joined the committee to become the new planning contact. Jean Carr remained as Chairperson.

The Boyne Navigation achieved a milestone with the completion of the Sealock at Oldbridge and the concrete wall which had been installed in the 1930s to prevent tidal damage was successfully removed to make this section navigable. The Boyne Navigation Group of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) continued working on the navigation and Meath County Council consulted with An Taisce, IWAI and the OPW before commencing construction of the Boyne Greenway at Oldbridge. John Ducie gave a guided walk along this stretch of canal for National Heritage Week for members and non-members of An Taisce.

There were several wonderful social functions organised throughout the summer by Christopher Gray, including picnics at Ballindoolin, Edenderry, Co. Offaly and St. Mary's Abbey, Trim. There was a Saturday 'Miscellany' at Higginsbrook and a performance of 'The Village Wooing' by G.B. Shaw by the Bewley Café Theatre.

The Christmas party was hosted in Headfort School. Members in good standing actually increased, some of the new members were achieved through the An Taisce stand at Bloom. Planning matters were handled by Head Office and the key strategic infrastructure they saw impacting on the county in the medium term was the North-South Interconnector 400kv Lines which had reached a preferred route and was making its way through the process with An Bord Pleanála. An Taisce raised issues on several developments, most notably the crossing of the Blackwater which passes close to Tailtean and Donoughpatrick and the crossing of the Boyne in close proximity to Bective Abbey.

There had been no major increase in residential development in the county, however some larger proposals were surfacing in commuter towns and while proliferation of single rural houses continued with local need dominating the argument, rather than correct site selection and consideration of environmental impacts. An Taisce took only one appeal on a single rural dwelling in Meath.

An Taisce continued to monitor protected structures which account for a significant portion of development in County Meath and have taken a positive position providing support to the applicant to ensure the use and design approach is sensitive to the character of the structure, thereby reducing the risk of it falling into dereliction. The Meath Association continued to update its Buildings at Risk Database.

# Dublin South Association Sylvia Dockeray

We were delighted to have John Harnett, National Chair, address our 30th AGM in November 2012. Our association's programme of events followed, with a lecture series between February and May. The lectures were well attended and included talks by architectural historian Frederick O' Dwyer on Victorian Dublin; Vartry Waters - a pure water supply to Dublin and South Wicklow by Ron Cox, Heritage Research Associate, Civil Engineering TCD; Irish National Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge, by Margaret Gormley, Parks Superintendent, Office of Public Works. Tim Carey, the Heritage Officer for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, is an old friend and spoke to us on The Memorials of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. Lectures are organised by Eileen Collins and we thank her for her time and research in producing a diverse and interesting programme. Our annual outing in May was to the delightful old medieval city of Waterford with several fascinating tours, including one to the Bishop's Palace. The two regular fundraising events are the Garden Party in June, held in 2013 at Clodagh Bowen's beautifully diverse garden on the Ballycorus Road, and the Christmas Concert in December (when we were entertained by The Dublin Male Voice Choir with soloist Áine Mulvey, and classical guitarist, Damien Kelly, followed by a mulled wine party held in the Parish Hall at Kilternan (C of I)). In April, during Biodiversity Week, a walk was arranged along the Dodder, ably and fascinatingly escorted by members' naturalist Christopher Moriarty, botanist Sylvia Reynolds and zoologist Julian Reynolds.
We produce two newsletters each year which are posted to our members in Spring and Autumn. We continue to search for new ways forward for the Association and to encourage membership and we invited representatives from the Dun Laoghaire Association to join us for our second Strategy Meeting in April, chaired by Professor Frank Convery with Education Unit Director, Patricia Oliver and current National Chair, John Harnett. We discussed various ideas and will liaise with others to attract more families and younger age groups to membership. We also had separate meetings to discuss common issues with the Heritage Officer for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Tim Carey, and our local County Councillor, Lettie McCarthy. We have two active sub-committees, Planning and Environment.

## Planning

Andrew Parkes has chaired the planning committee for several years and retired at the end of 2013 but remains on the committee. We have been very grateful for his measured and meticulous management of planning issues.The committee met monthly, reviewing planning applications in both Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and South Dublin County Council (SDCC) areas, making comments when requested on 47 in the former and 42 in the latter; considering further files and making comments on 25 and 24 respectively. Two appeals were lodged in each area and comments were made on the draft Local Area Plans.

## Some main issues:

In the SDCC area, an appeal was made against a 30m mast at the top of Ballinascorney Hill; this was finally successfully upheld in 2014.

Assistance was received from the Ombudsman in relation to our concerns about the effectiveness of SDCC in enforcing planning laws. In two cases we referred examples of delay to the Ombudsman's office and were pleased to note that following the Ombudsman's intervention, the Council did move forward with enforcement procedures.

Development around Protected Structures: Following notifications to us by the Councils of proposed housing developments in the grounds of Protected Structures, we have considered the impact on the structure weighed with the need to allow development and how that might help safeguard the Protected Structure. In one case we appealed to An Bord Pleanála to protect the curtilage of a fine Victorian house.

Recognition of Vernacular Heritage and High Quality 20th century Architecture: The DLRCC Development plan recognises the special interest of both modest vernacular structures and distinctive 20th century buildings even though they are not listed for protection or conservation. An Bord Pleanála endorsed our objection to the demolition of one cottage at the end of a row of single storey cottages, stating that "it is an important part of the architectural heritage and makes a positive contribution to the streetscape and historic landscape of the area".

## Environment

The Environment Committee works to undertake projects that are directed at increasing people's awareness and understanding of their environment. A new exhibition is in progress on symbols (on and in buildings) and their meanings by committee member Sue Pedlow.

Finally, may we recommend a book by one of our members, Sheila Carden, grand-daughter of Alderman Thomas Kelly, on his articles covering the period 1850 to 1910. The Streets of Dublin, copiously illustrated by David Rowe, can be obtained from the publishers, The Dublin Civic Trust, 4 Castle St, Dublin 2, or through your local book shop.



# Westmeath Association Jack O' Sullivan

2013 was a year in which the Westmeath Association held two successful excursions to local places of interest, gained some new members, continued our working relationship with Westmeath County Council, and made written submissions to Westmeath County Council, to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, and to Dublin City Council.

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

In April 2013, the Westmeath Association made a submission to Westmeath County Council at the draft stage of the new County Development Plan, 2014 to 2020. We were pleased to note that some of the policies and objectives which we advocated at the pre-draft stage had been incorporated into the draft Plan; while our other policies and objectives were mentioned, but no real targets or commitments were included.

The April 2013 submission, prepared mainly by Jack O'Sullivan, with the assistance of the Westmeath Association committee, welcomed some improved policies on "the preservation, protection and enhancement of the County's natural and built heritage and social assets", and the aim to reinstate the disused rail line between Mullingar and Athlone, as this was considered by the Council "to be of strategic importance in the promotion of public transport interconnectivity at a county, regional and national level".

However, the Westmeath Association also expressed concern that the County is seriously lacking in the appropriate level of communications infrastructure for the 21st century – the public transport system does not provide a network of routes between villages and towns, the rail system consists of only two unconnected major lines through the County, there are no rapid or frequent public transport links between the three "gateway" towns of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore, there is inadequate mobile telephone service in some rural areas of the County, and broadband availability is very poor outside of the major urban areas.

One of the principal tasks undertaken by the Westmeath Heritage Forum during 2013 was the preparation of a biodiversity plan for the County, and the Westmeath Association was an active participant in this process. The biodiversity plan will be published in 2014.
On Saturday 17 August, the Westmeath Association organised an excursion by boat to a number of islands and shorelines in Lough Ree, during which we were accompanied by Ms Noreen McLoughlin, who provided a description of the plants found growing around the lake. Two very interesting ruined churches were visited, and six new members signed up.

On Saturday 24 August, the Association held another very successful event, with wildlife expert Rosie Campbell (www.animalmagic.ie) who demonstrated and spoke about birds of prey in Ireland. Members saw 16 bird species, approximately 40 people attended, and some 12 or 13 new members joined An Taisce.
During our meetings, we discussed at length the proposed largescale wind-farm plan, involving the export of wind energy, which would have the effect of visually dominating the Midlands, and which would result (if permitted) in selling off a valuable resource which should be under the control of the Irish people.
The proposed number, size and location of the wind turbines has aroused widespread public opposition.

On 22 November, the County Westmeath Association of An Taisce made a submission to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on the strategic environmental assessment of the proposed renewable energy export policy and development framework.

The submission urged that:

- Environmental and social issues must take precedence in any Government policy on wind energy export, such that if a community is against a proposed development, the views of that community must not be ignored;
- The principles of the Aarhus Convention must be fully applied, i.e., real and effective participation in environmental decision-making, access to all the information needed to keep members of the public well informed, and access to environmental justice at a reasonable cost;
- If the Government were to consider how to most appropriately maximise the social and economic benefit of the available wind energy, including the energy available in the midlands, this should be done through smaller wind farms, locally owned and operated, located where there will be no adverse effects on residential amenity or on natural resources, on the environment or areas of conservation; and we referred to the situation in Denmark, where at least 50 % of wind energy production is locally owned and locally controlled; and,

On 19th December, the County Westmeath Association of An Taisce made a submission to Dublin City Council Regional Waste Coordinator in response to the Council's notice of intention to commence preparation of regional waste plans. Early in 2013, the Minister for the Environment had agreed with the County & City Managers Association that the original 10 waste management regions would be reduced to three, with a very extensive Eastern Region under the control of Dublin City Council. There had been no publicity about this new arrangement until November 2013, when Dublin City Council advertised a very limited form of public consultation. As the new Eastern Region would include County Westmeath, we considered it important to make a submission, in which our principal comments were:

- the creation of such an extremely large waste management area would copper-fasten the practice of transporting Dublin's waste as far as possible from the city, and into rural areas, with resulting adverse consequences;

- giving control of the new Eastern Waste Management Region (encompassing some twelve counties) to Dublin City Council would result in that Local Authority having far too much power, and this would be an inappropriate and retrograde step;
- no environmental information or data had been provided to support the proposed change in waste management regions, and therefore it is impossible to critically evaluate the reasons behind this important policy change;
- there was no real public consultation about the policy change which could directly affect many people whose waste is collected by private companies operating in any or all of the counties listed in the notice; and,
- such a significant policy change should be subject to strategic environmental assessment as required by the EU Directive and relevant Irish legislation.

During the year, the Association's committee discussed the unauthorized destruction of extensive areas of bog near Coole in County Westmeath, which the Westmeath Association is continuing to oppose.

The Westmeath Association wishes to record its thanks to Thomas Pakenham who chairs our meetings; to Thomas and Valerie Pakenham for inviting us to hold our meetings in Tullynally Castle; and to John Harnett for organising the events in 2013.



*Lough Sewdy*

# Wexford Association Tim Ryan

This has been a quiet year with only a few contentious Planning Applications to deal with. Towards the end of 2013, the Committee opted to refer most of the planning oversight back to Head Office for better scrutiny. However, the 'Pylons' issue brought calls for An Taisce to become involved and these calls were also referred to Head Office to obtain a Policy Statement which was then provided by James Nix.

The most interesting occurrence was the opportunity to bring the Corlican Ring Fort and Quaker Burial Ground under the Local Association's control for preservation. This has meant that we are to keep the place presentable and tidy where it is now overgrown and dilapidated.

We were influential in the prevention of the proposed demolition of the "Rice House" in New Ross which has a 1798 history and is connected to Edmund Rice, the founder of the Christian Brothers. The main house (2 storey cottage) is now to be preserved and an unobtrusive extension is to be built to house modern amenities.

During the year, members served on several County Strategy Committees, on the National Committee, the Properties Committee and the Built Environment Committee.



*Blackrock Mountain*

# Who are An Taisce?

## Council of An Taisce

### President

Prof. John Sweeney

### Immediate Past President

Éanna Ni Lamhna

### Local Association Delegates

Alan Price, Carlow
Anny Wise, Clare
Kevin Hurley, Cork
Anne McGowan, Donegal
Claire Gogarty, Dublin City
Maire Mhic Giobuin,
Dublin South (R. Dodder to Stillorgan Rd.)
Mairead Mehigan, Dun Laoghaire
Derrick Hambleton, Galway
Catherine McMullin, Kerry
Ann Gibbons, Kilkenny
Walter Ball, Meath
Alan Moran, Northwest
Charles Stanley Smith, Tipperary North
John Harnett, Westmeath
Brian Rickwood, Wexford

### Local Association Deputy Delegates

Karen Christine Wise, Clare
Louis McGee, Donegal
Margaret Monaghan, Meath

### Nationally Elected Members

Kathleen Vandenberghe, 2010
James Leahy, Elected 2011
Justin Byrne, Elected 2011
Frank Corcoran, Elected 2011
Gavin Daly, Elected 2011 (resigned Oct 2013)
Judy Osborne, Elected 2011 (resigned Oct 2013)
Kevin Connolly, Elected 2012
Dr. Mark Clinton, Elected 2012
Bernard Goggin, Elected 2012
Jack O'Sullivan, Elected 2012
Eamonn Moore, Elected 2013
Attracta Uí Bhroin, Elected 2013
John Ducie, Elected 2013
Declan Murphy, Elected 2013
Jili Mili, Elected 2013

### Co-Opted Members

Eric Conroy, Co-opted Jun 2013
Eileen Collins, Co-opted Jun 2013
Peter Howley, Co-opted Jun 2013
Tim Ryan, Co-opted Jun 2013

## Board of Directors

### Chair

John Harnett

### Vice Chair

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Brian Rickwood

## Representatives of An Taisce on External Bodies

### Monuments and Antiquities Contact

Dr. Mark Clinton

### European Environmental Bureau

Frank Corcoran

### International National Trusts Organisation

John Ducie

### Europa Nostra

John Ducie

An Taisce
*The National Trust for Ireland*

# Your Legacy for Future Generations

A gift in your will helps An Taisce plan ahead for the future and secure Ireland's natural and built heritage for everyone, for ever.

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



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