An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

Annual Report 2004/2005

A word from the Chairman

Over half a century since Robert Lloyd Praeger founded this organisation to protect the Irish environment "against dilapidation, against injury, whether caused by carelessness, ignorance or ruthlessness," An Taisce continues to pursue its goal of sustainable development. It is not an easy task.



In the last year we have seen more and more pressure placed upon our fragile environment. The national road network is spreading across the land without heed to the long-term implications of a car-dependent culture, let alone the immediate impact on internationally significant sites such as Tara or Aughrim. Against all common sense, Shell has been granted permission for a refinery in Mayo. The cave of the great stalactite at Pól An Ionáin is to be developed as a tourist attraction. Most recently we have the relaxation of planning regulations on one-off housing.

However, there is still much to be positive about. Public appreciation and understanding of the value of our natural, built and cultural heritage is rising all the time. This is reflected in the increasing membership of An Taisce and in the number of voluntary, professional and government bodies that work with us on environmental protection.

An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland, is consolidating its position as a champion for quality of life. We have implemented a new fundraising strategy with the guidance of Niall O'Sullivan, a professional fundraiser, and the fundraising committee under the able chair of David Wilde are confident of raising significant funds on a continuing basis. Thank you again to all those who supported our 2004 appeal; we wouldn't be able to keep growing without the generous support of you, the members of An Taisce.

Demonstrating our confidence going forward, we are continuing to professionalise the permanent office of An Taisce. Our planning office has been expanded with the employment of a new graduate planner, who has taken much of the ordinary work off our Heritage Officer, Ian Lumley, allowing him to concentrate on cases of major national and international importance.

We were all very sad to say goodbye to our long-serving Natural Environment Officer, Shirley Clerkin, who took up a post with Monaghan County Council last October. We are now delighted to introduce her successor, Anja Murray, who is continuing the invaluable work of the NEC.

We are confident of receiving major funding for our properties function in the coming year and hope to be in a position to employ a properties officer in the near future.

The Environmental Education Unit under the inspired direction of Pat Oliver spreads the message of sustainable development wider each year. We now have 48% of Irish schools participating in our world-leading Green Schools programme. This year the National Spring Clean mobilised over a quarter of a million people from every corner of the country to come out and join us in cleaning up our local environments.

However, the backbone of An Taisce remains its hardworking volunteers. Too often, the commitment of the ordinary members of An Taisce, who give up so much of their time for so little thanks, goes unremarked. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your unswerving dedication to the cause of our environment.

Frank Corcoran,
Chairman

Secretary's Report

It's been another busy year for An Taisce. The board meets monthly and has been concentrating on laying the groundwork for a strong and effective organisation where the three strands of planning, environmental education and property management are interwoven to their mutual benefit.

The most important initiative of the Board in the last year has been the development of a strategy to take the organisation forward over the next decade and ensure that we can truly fulfil our remit as the largest and widest-ranging environmental organisation in Ireland.

I'm delighted to be able to announce that we have begun the process to recruit a new director for An Taisce who will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation and the implantation of the strategy once it has been approved by Council.

A public relations strategy has been put in place. Staff members are being trained in handling the media and it is hoped to extend this programme to volunteers around the country in the coming year. We have been fortunate to receive a donation of a mobile promotions unit, and it should be on the road before the end of the summer.

After the success of our fundraising appeal last year, we have adopted a five-year fundraising strategy and aim to have a part-time fundraiser in place later this year to implement the strategy and to develop a legacies programme.

There have been two changes in the Board since the last AGM. Valerin O'Shea recently resigned as Honorary Secretary and I have agreed to take on the role until the AGM in June. Our long-serving Honorary Treasurer Eric Conroy resigned in January due to pressures of work and has been replaced by Anne Russell, an accountant and lecturer in financial management.

There have also been a number of changes in our permanent staff. Martin Shiels continues to manage the main office and has been joined by Lorraine Morley as administrative assistant. Shirley Clerkin resigned as our Natural Environment Officer before Christmas and has been replaced by Anja Murray. We have created a second planning assistant position, which was filled until recently by Marcus Gilhawley. Marcus recently left and we warmly welcome our newest member of staff, Siobhán McManus, in his place. The projects office continues to grow and much credit must go to all there.

I'd like to thank all the board members for the hard work and commitment to An Taisce. This small team of dedicated individuals give up huge amounts of time and we hope that their hard work will bear fruit for many years to come.

Our heartfelt thanks to Valerin O'Shea and Eric Conroy for their tremendous contribution to An Taisce in recent years.

Charles Stanley-Smith
Acting Honorary Secretary

Heritage Officer's Report

Ireland is being held up as an example to the ten EU accession states of 2004 as a model of economic development. In truth, current development in Ireland is a model of unsustainability and fails to meet EU and UN obligations on climate change and biodiversity.



We have an accelerating pattern of car-based development that will cause enormous difficulties when oil production peaks and consequent price rises kick in. Witness also the scale and pace of development: we have an annual per capita construction of housing units that is six times that of the UK. The current bad planning will be irreversible, including the sprawl-based rural housing construction and the housing estates tacked onto cities, towns and villages without any connectivity to public transport and services.

If one overall trend can be identified, it is the acceleration of ribbon development, raised as a major concern by Robert Lloyd Praeger in his Raidió Éireann address in 1948.

All of the land use and transport trends in Ireland show an American pattern of development, with increasing car dependency and journey generation between places of residence, work, shopping and recreation. The Corine Land Cover Change data compiled by the European Commission for 1990-2000 show striking patterns of sprawl development, not just around the major urban centres but all round Ireland.

Most of the individual elements of the National Development Plan's inter-urban motorways and dual carriageways have been approved through oral hearings. Each EIS has been produced and each oral hearing conducted as though it concerned an isolated development – without considering the downstream impact of filtering more traffic into congested urban centres or generating more car-based sprawl across a wider catchment area.

The current advancement of a proposal for an outer orbital route around the Greater Dublin area, beyond the M50, will exacerbate this trend, while the mounting campaign for a new road into Connemara will accelerate the effect of commuter sprawl from Galway city.

Meanwhile, in some of the most scenic rural areas, tax-generated holiday villages and – in the rural renewal counties of the Upper Shannon – tax-generated housing estates in villages, are resulting in poorly designed developments unoccupied for most of the year.

Motorway development

The single greatest development that will affect physical planning in Ireland into the future is the acceleration of the dual-carriageway and motorway programme between the main urban centres. Justified on the objective of reducing travel times and achieving good regional distribution of goods and services, the main effect will be to increase the commuter and urban-sprawl belts, without any parallel strategy to increase the modal share of public transport use as required by Ireland's National Climate Change Strategy (2000). Land use and transport policies already in place through the DTO in the Greater Dublin Area, and other main centres, are not being implemented.

The Environmental Impact Statements on the individual road schemes are failing to address cumulative impacts and downstream traffic generation and congestion in and around urban centres.

There is an almost uniform prejudicial assumption that road vehicle numbers must be catered for without any consideration of the knock-on effect of increased emission of greenhouse gases and particle pollutants, congestion generation, and consumption of land and resources; or consideration of more efficient rail and other public transport-based strategies.

A prime example is the M3 motorway through County Meath to Cavan. This is problematic not only for its impact on the Tara-Skryne valley and its monuments, but also as it ignores the objective in the regional planning guidelines, to restore the rail link to Navan in tandem with the new road.



Booterstown Marsh Nature Reserve.

Wind energy development

The Department of the Environment's draft wind energy guidelines regrettably fail to provide an adequate national strategy for the sector and will inevitably lead to small 'one-off' proposals around the country, of no strategic value.

An Taisce has been reluctant to object to windfarm proposals except where there is significant nature conservation or scenic impact issues, as with the schemes successfully appealed at Bolybrack, Co Leitrim and overlooking the pilgrimage island of Lough Derg, Co Donegal.

Rural housing guidelines

These guidelines have been produced without any assessment or consideration of the capacity of the Irish countryside to accommodate current levels of one-off housing with regard to sewage treatment, traffic generation, road safety, or landscape and heritage impact and the maintenance of viable, smaller towns and villages.

Much of the content of the guidelines is little different from county development plan provisions which have been in place for years, and which, had they been implemented previously, would have resulted in a significantly smaller number of one-off houses across the country.

The guidelines maintain the principle – already in many county development plans – of controlling urban-generated housing in scenic areas and restricting applications to eligible categories of people in rural areas.

There can be little confidence in any control and implementation. No study has been carried out to determine what percentage of one-off houses constructed over the last decade have wastewater disposal facilities supplied and maintained in accordance with EU standards.

The Incorporated Law Society has upheld as constitutional the principle of restricting housing in particular areas to applicants who are resident and employed in that area. However, no evaluation has been carried out to establish the level of applicant compliance with occupancy conditions. In many cases, a house is put up for sale even before the house permitted is built!

The Irish planning system is essentially one damage limitation rather than being strategic. Most local authorities do not have the staff or resources to deal with the current volume of planning applications. According to Department of the Environment planning statistics for 2003, over 83% of applications are granted by local authorities. Planning Appeals Board statistics showed that just over one-third of all decisions made by local authorities are upheld on appeal; one-third of all decisions made by local authorities reversed and one-third confirmed. This is evidence that the Irish planning system is still in flux, particularly at county level.

The main effect of the guidelines is likely to be an accommodation of even greater volumes of housing in the Irish countryside, without any proper control, standards or enforcement with regard to wastewater disposal, occupancy, design or landscaping.

The Government has caved in to an articulate lobby. An Taisce's experience shows that an overwhelming majority of houses built in rural areas are not for the sons and daughters of the original landowners, but for a large interlocking group of site vendors, builders and auctioneers.

While Cork County Council has adopted excellent rural housing guidelines, Mayo councillors threw out similar guidelines; while the suggestion by Dr Edward Walsh of the University of Limerick that one-off rural housing should be fronted by belts of trees is rendered infeasible by the manner in which one-off house sites are road-front orientated. Unfortunately, the motivation of so many builders is to make an individualistic road-front statement.

Planning enforcement

Media exposure, such as the *Prime Time* documentary that exposed the unauthorised Standish sawmill in Co Laly, and Whelan's quarry in Co Clare, seems to be having little impact.

The issue of warning letters and enforcement notices under the Planning Act has little impact on unauthorised developers, and often unauthorised dumping or quarrying continues.

A standard ploy now being used by local authorities in cases where enforcement notices are not being complied with is to state that 'the matter is with our solicitors,' allowing the unauthorised activity to drag on for years, beyond the statute-of-limitation period for enforcement.

Even in the small number of cases where legal action is taken, the action is usually at District Court level where fines (such as the derisory €500 levy on an unauthorised quarry operator in Monaghan) are not a practical or effective deterrent.

The situation is rendered farcical by the ...ing of explosives licences by the Department of Justice and the escort of explosives onto sites with Garda permits, without any requirement to ensure that the operation has planning permission.

Planning maladministration

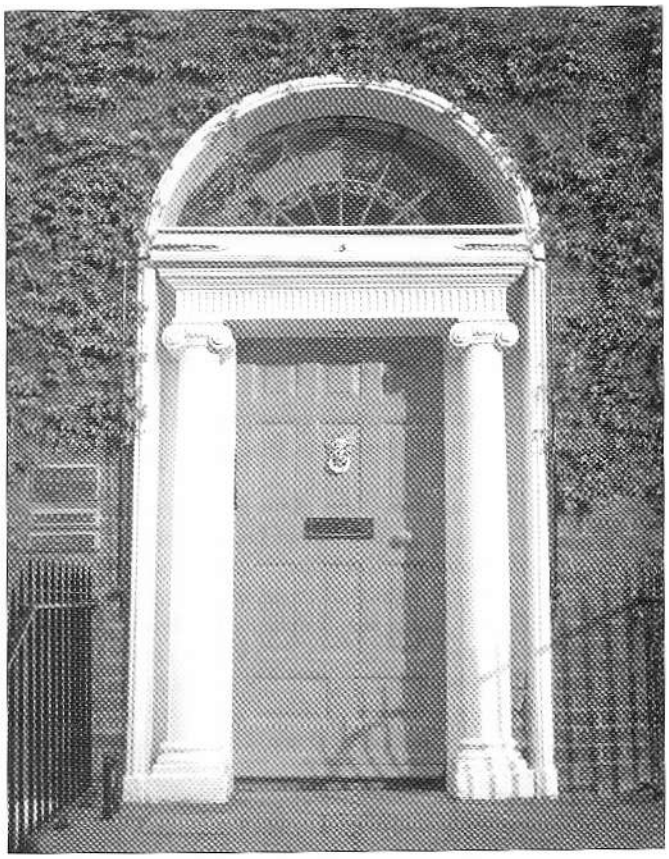
The Department of the Environment is devolving planning administration to local authorities, but is failing to intervene on large-scale maladministration – especially in regard to the notification of applications to An Taisce and other prescribed bodies, and in regard to acknowledgements and decision notifications that would allow cases to be referred to An Bord Pleanála.

As a result, An Taisce is unable to assess decisions in a number of local authority areas (e.g. Kildare, Galway and Westmeath) in order to lodge appeals with An Bord Pleanála.

Bord Pleanála decisions on appeals taken by An Taisce

There has been a significant decline in the number of appeals taken by An Taisce that result in local authority permission being overturned. In large part this is due to accommodation of 'local need' applications, the basis of the rural housing guidelines. However, occupancy conditions are seldom if ever enforced.

There is a serious unevenness in the quality and level of assessment. In relation to applications with Environmental Impact Statements, An Bord Pleanála is not addressing the issues contained in a 'reasoned opinion' from the European Commission in 2001 which formed the basis of a legal action against Ireland. One of the issues is the acceptance of applications with inadequate details and the granting of permissions leaving major issues to be resolved later by internal agreement between the applicant and the local authority.



Georgian doorway, Dublin. (Photograph courtesy Cork Kerry Tourism)

Significant refusal decisions

- 12-turbine wind development on north side of Lough Derg, Co Donegal. Refused primarily because of impact on pilgrimage island.
- Hotel, housing and nursing home at Monivea, Co Galway, facilitated on Coillte land. Refused on grounds of amenity impact on woodland.
- Re-alignment of public road to accommodate Nick Faldo's redesign of approved golf course at Lough Rynn, Co Leitrim.

Also significant were three separate refusals for demolition in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) in Bridge Street, Carrick-on-Suir; Main Street, Cashel; and Dublin Street, Monaghan. It shows that, as in so many other areas, consideration of national policy needs the expense of appeal to An Bord Pleanála, since the local authority cannot be relied on.

Significant permissions

- Shell Gas refinery near Belmullet, Co Mayo, on site where previous proposal was refused.
Retention of toilet block to accommodate caravan and mobile home development near Clifden, Co Galway, affecting NHA.
- Arklow sewage treatment works, after an oral hearing at which expert consultants raised serious concern about adequacy of an out-of-date EIS.
- Opening of Pol an Ionáin as a 'show cave' for the Great Stalactite, leaving a huge range of issues to be resolved by agreement between the applicant and Clare Co Council, which was the basis of taking the appeal.
- Large tourism and leisure development at Newtownmount-kennedy, Co Wicklow, leaving level of car parking and public transport provision to be resolved by a later "mobility plan" – to be resolved by agreement between the applicant and Wicklow County Council, which was the basis of taking the appeal.

Over the last year, a number of significant decisions have been overturned in cases where appeals were taken by An Taisce – including hotel developments in Kinsale, Co Cork, and Palmerstown, Co Kildare; and a number of significant decisions refusing development on nature conservation or pollution grounds – including a land-based fishfarm near Lettermullan, Co Galway; a housing and marina development at Rooskey, Co Roscommon; sludge lagoon in Co Roscommon; wind energy developments in Co Leitrim; and a housing development in Co Kildare, affecting a floodplain.

However, An Bord Pleanála has granted permission for other developments on floodplains based on the principle of the floor-level being above the historic flood-levels, without proper assessment of overall floodplain impact, e.g. at Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim.

See magazine for more by Ian Lumley (page 5).

Education Unit grows rapidly

An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit's programmes made significant achievements in many areas in 2004



The **Green Schools** programme has established itself as a huge success with teachers and students. By the end of 2004, the number of registered schools had risen to over 48% of all Irish schools. There are now five full-time staff working on Green Schools, and results of research show that the average diversion of waste from landfill for schools in the programme is 60%, and some schools have actually achieved zero waste. All schools that have been awarded the Green Flag are now working on Energy and Water management.

Three Green Schools students and a teacher from Scoil Íosagáin (Dublin) travelled to China in 2004 as part of an international group looking at environmental studies in Chinese schools. It was the trip of a lifetime for the girls, who subsequently had their experiences reported by *The Irish Times*. The trip was funded by the Education Unit of An Taisce.

Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) commissioned the Education Unit again in 2004 to monitor litter levels in towns and cities throughout Ireland, and while there is a long way to go, there were measurable improvements in many of the towns surveyed. The success of the **All-Ireland Anti-Litter League** has led to plans to increase the number of towns being surveyed in 2005.

The **Blue Flag for Beaches and Marinas** campaign was a highlight of the Education Unit's work in 2004, as we hosted the international meeting for all Blue Flag operators around the world. Held in Malahide, Dublin, in November, we had wonderful weather, and delegates were delighted to be able to see a little of the north Dublin coast, courtesy of Fingal County Council who hosted a tour followed by a meal and Irish music and dance in a wonderful community-run project. There were 34 countries represented at the meeting, and plans for maintaining the highest possible standards at Blue Flag beaches throughout the world were confirmed. On behalf of all National Blue Flag Operators, we acknowledge with thanks the support of the **Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government** in enabling us to hold this meeting in Ireland.

The **LEAF (Learning About Forests)** programme is continuing to expand, with more and more Green Schools wanting to take part. The emphasis is on giving children an appreciation of trees and forests, particularly children from urban areas who may not have much opportunity to visit the countryside very often.



The then minister for the environment, Martin Cullen TD (third left, top row), attends the awarding of the 2004 Blue Flag for Killiney beach in Dublin. Mary Hanafin TD is on the right.

During 2004, the partnership between An Taisce and the **Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM)** ended. This partnership had been established to devise and operate the **White Flag for Leisure Facilities.** The Education Unit of An Taisce had created the award at the request of ILAM and had modelled it on the International Blue Flag Award which is run in Ireland by An Taisce. The Education Unit had also monitored applicant and awarded facilities during the operation of the programme. However, An Taisce and ILAM differed on the emphasis which should be placed on criteria relating to higher environmental standards in the industry, and the Education Unit of An Taisce will not be involved with ILAM awards in the future.

The **National Spring Clean 2004** campaign, which took place for the sixth year, again through the month of April, was an even bigger success, with over 3,000 events and a huge range of volunteer groups taking part. This year, the focus was on recycling and **Repak** supplied the Education Unit with special colour-coded refuse sacks to encourage those taking part to segregate the rubbish collected.

The **Clean Coast Programme,** which is conducted by the Education Unit of An Taisce in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy, entered its second year, with new **Irish Coastcare Groups** being established. This programme, which is funded by **EU INTERREG,** encourages coastal communities to take ownership of their local beach and work in collaboration with the local authority to prepare Beach Management Plans. The programme also includes the **Green Coast Award,** which recognises beaches of the highest water quality but which may not have the infrastructure to enable them to apply for the Blue Flag. Scheduled to conclude in April 2005, the programme has been approved by **INTERREG** for a further three-year funding.

Some words of thanks....

In the Education Unit, we have been working with **Coca Cola** and **The Wrigley Company Ltd** to research and carry out measures designed to find long-term solutions to the **litter** problem. Their sponsorship over many years of the **Green Schools** and **National Spring Clean** campaigns has been crucial. The support of **Repak, Today FM, TV3** and **Vodafone** in **National Spring Clean** is also gratefully acknowledged.

Our thanks also to **Klee Paper, Trinity College, Fingal County Council** and the **Grand Hotel, Malahide,** for their support of the **International Blue Flag Operators Meeting,** and also to **Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council** for hosting the 2004 **Irish Blue Flag Awards** at Killiney beach.

The **Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government** has also given us huge support with the **Blue Flag Awards, National Spring Clean** and the **IBAL Anti-**

Litter League, and all **local authorities** have been totally supportive of our efforts in all our programmes.

We were delighted in 2004 to add **GREENSTAR** as new lead sponsors of the **Green Schools** programme, not only for their very valuable funding but also for support in helping us work out strategic plans for the future. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking them all for their support.

A word of thanks also to **FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education)** whose international co-ordination staff of the **Blue Flag, YRE** and **Green Schools** programmes in Denmark, France and Portugal are always totally supportive of our work in Ireland, and to all our FEE colleagues throughout the world.

For my part, I want to say a very sincere personal thank you to the **staff of the Education Unit** whose efforts and commitment truly are above and beyond the call of duty, and also thanks to the **staff of An Taisce's central office.** I would also wish to acknowledge the support of the members of our **Irish Blue Flag and White Flag juries.** Very special thanks are due to the members of An Taisce's **Project Management Committee.** Our excellent chairman of the committee for many years, **Philip Mullally,** stood down during 2004 and I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking him for all his support over the past few years. **Lewis Clohessy** was subsequently elected by Council to the chair of the committee and we are looking forward to working with him in 2005 and beyond.

Patricia Oliver
Director, Environmental Education Unit

Natural Environment Report — Anja Murray & Mide Gerrard

Heritage Council funds NGO collaboration on biodiversity

The Natural Environment Committee, working with the Natural Environment Officer, has seen a deal of progress in the implementation of An Taisce's Biodiversity Strategy over the period 2004–2005



Anja Murray

In the autumn of 2004, Shirley Clerkin along with Éanna Ní Lamhna, made presentations to the government's inter-departmental working group on the co-existence of GM crops with conventional and organic farming. The working group is advising the Minister for Agriculture on setting up structures for co-existence in the event of the introduction of GM crops to Ireland.

Shirley has since moved on to the Heritage Office of Monaghan County Council. The Natural Environment Committee wish her all the best in her new role.

In February, An Taisce appointed a new Natural Environment Officer, **Anja Murray.** Anja is an ecologist and has been working in research and conservation for some years.

Forestry and aquaculture

An audit of afforestation applications, selected from those applications which were referred by the Forest Service to An Taisce for comment in 2002, was carried out on the ground by David Hickie for An Taisce, with funding from the Heritage Council. The study found that while the Forest Service biodiversity guidelines are generally complied with, the incremental effects of contiguous private plantations on the landscape are serious, and each plantation is treated as a single unit with no relationship to other, existing plantations. The emphasis on non-native conifers, Sitka spruce in particular, continues, even on sites where broadleaves appear to be growing well in hedgerows and other areas.

An Taisce has continued to apply its consultative status on private forestry applications by submitting comments on afforestation applications referred to us by the Forest Service, where there is significant effect on heritage and the natural environment. Similarly, we have continued to submit comments on aquaculture applications that have significant impacts on SACs and SPAs.

Septic tanks and water quality

Our report on septic tanks and water quality looks at the quantity, operation, distribution and regulation of domestic waste-water treatment systems around the country and examines the relationship with ground- and surface-water quality. The report makes a number of recommendations, including details regarding the updating of presently acceptable standards and tests regulating septic tanks; support of householders in the maintenance of tanks; and planning for access tanks.

Collaboration on biodiversity

In October of last year the NEC ran a very successful biodiversity workshop in Tailors' Hall, covering issues such as the National Biodiversity Plan, the Convention on Biological Diversity, access to biological information, and effective participation.

This year, An Taisce has been awarded funding from the Heritage Council for an initiative to run a series of round-table meetings for environmental NGOs, to develop position and strategy on biodiversity. The aim of these meetings is to build capacity among ENGOs on biodiversity and to ensure a co-operative approach in relation to biodiversity conservation work, with specific reference to national initiatives at government level. We feel that the ENGO sector will be more successful in its approach to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Ireland and the National Biodiversity Plan if we can work together, discuss and exchange information on biodiversity issues, and develop a shared vision and collaborative approach. The main objective of the initiative is to produce a Joint Biodiversity Strategy by the end of the year for ENGO cooperation on biodiversity, and the formation of an NGO network on biodiversity.

Communications, links and lobbying

While actively working to develop and update new and existing An Taisce policy on issues that relate to the natural environment, we are also keenly promoting Ireland's compliance with national, European and international policy and directives. To this end, we have made submissions to the relevant authorities on the new salmon regulations, various Species Action Plans, relevant Management Plans, and we are responding to incoming alerts on habitat protection issues.

Anja Murray, Natural Environment Officer
Mide Gerrard, Chair,
Natural Environment Committee

EU funding obtained for An Taisce Booterstown project

An Taisce owns and manages heritage property not as museum pieces but so that their existence value can be harnessed for scientific, historical, cultural, recreational and educational purposes.



David Owen

The long-term strategy for An Taisce's properties is to maximise the potential of each property to make a positive contribution to the organisation – to build up a level of understanding and expertise within the membership of heritage management; to develop greater recognition of An Taisce with this work; and to engender support and new members.

The diverse nature of An Taisce's properties requires a broad set of skills to deal with the specific issues faced and, over the past few years, with more interest being shown in the properties and their inherent opportunities, we are attracting these skills along with a lot of enthusiasm! The committee would like to thank everybody involved in An Taisce's properties for their time, effort and commitment. With this level of momentum, we can achieve great things in the future.

However, the vital ingredient currently missing is access to regular income that will enable us to plan into the future. Therefore, the principal thrust of any efforts at the properties over the next few years will be to develop conservation management plans, the prerequisites for accessing funding support. In parrallel with this is the need to continue to pursue national trust legislation so that An Taisce can avail of all the benefits of such legislation to ensure heritage property conservation in perpetuity. In tandem with this is addressing the needs for ongoing maintenance.

In achieving these goals, heritage property ownership and management will play its vital part in empowering An Taisce to be a strong advocate for our natural, built and cultural heritage, like many other national trusts.

Conservation management plans

In order to succeed in harnessing heritage value it is paramount that there is in-depth understanding of a property itself, especially the threats to its existence. This knowledge provides the basis for conservation management plans – the prerequisite for any attempt to attract funding for property-specific projects. Some work has already been carried out, but all thirteen properties need these plans in place, not just as the basis for the future but also to impress on the public and government that An Taisce is taking its responsibilities seriously as The National Trust for Ireland.

National trust legislation

While the government is making announcements about establishing a statutory National Trust for Historic Houses, An Taisce still needs to pursue a course of action that enables legislation to recognise as many types of heritage as possible. Currently, the government seems to be concentrating on historic houses alone. This falls far short of what is required and does not include any An Taisce properties. In addition, we still know very little about the type of structure being envisaged, its governance, etc.

An Taisce needs to make certain that decision-makers are both aware of our concerns and understand the benefits of broadening the envelope to include many more heritage types. An Taisce has a key role to ensure that international best practice in governance is enshrined in any statutory national trust.

Properties officer

Activity surrounding An Taisce's properties will see a steady growth in momentum during the coming 12 months. It is hoped that a properties officer is appointed, which will provide greater consistency in property management, drive efforts to develop conservation management plans, coordinate the development of projects, properties presentation and promotion, and support local associations.

As this post is to be largely funded through INTERREG funding specific to Booterstown Marsh Nature Reserve, Co Dublin, the properties officer's first priority will be to fulfil those projects at the marsh.

INTERREG IIIa

A successful retrospective funding application was made, in partnership with the National Trust, Wales, at the end of 2004, based on conservation management at Booterstown Marsh in Dublin. These funds were approved on the basis that we used them to apply for a second tranche in March 2005, again in partnership with the Welsh National Trust. The second tranche is aptly called 'Making the Most of the Coast' and will stretch over three years. The overall objective is to use coastal heritage properties in Wales and the east coast of Ireland to engage local communities and create awareness of many coastal interactions as well as develop an understanding of integrated coastal zone management. This partnership with The National Trust in Wales is hoped will be the basis for further collaboration in the future.

Properties Committee

The committee's role is to coordinate and assist the individual property management teams and to propose property policy to council. It also aims to build up property management expertise and employ international best practice.

The committee were saddened to loose Robert Law, just before Christmas, who worked tirelessly with Meath Association to improve the conservation management of the Boyne Navigation. His contributions will be missed and we send our condolences to his family on his untimely death.

The committee would also like to thank all those who have given of their time over the years and have now decided to pass the reins of responsibility on. Consuelo O'Connor (Dublin City Assoc) and Bill Scanlon (Galway Assoc) have both been central to properties management for many years and their hard work will be hard to replace.

We are delighted that Ed Wheeler (Meath Assoc) has agreed to serve as vice-chairman of the committee. We would like to thank Norman Campion for all his hard work over many years, as vice-chairman.

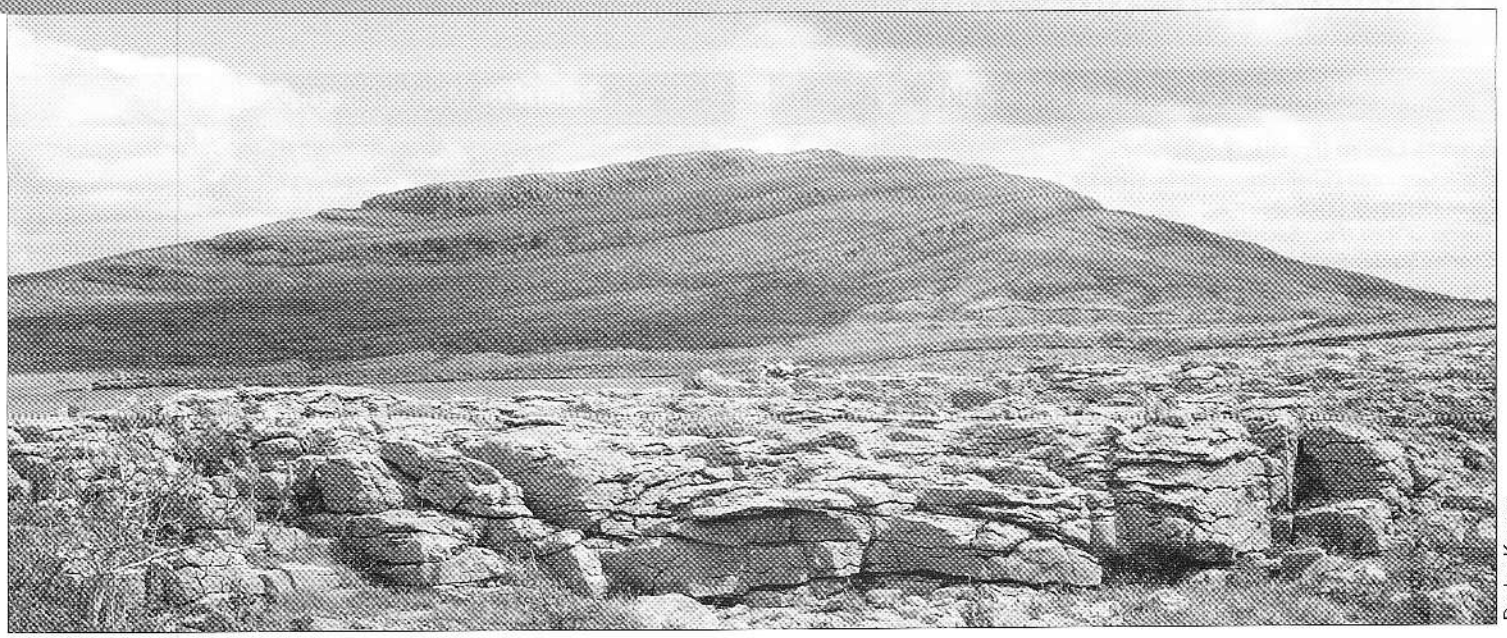
Property-specific issues

Mongan Bog, Co Offaly

A complete, up-to-date scientific assessment is required to commence the development of a conservation management plan for Mongan Bog. A work party is planned for this summer to identify key requirements. Contact the properties committee for dates if you are interested in taking part.

Kanturk Castle, Co Cork

This property is in the guardianship of the OPW. An archaeological assessment was completed in 2004, funded by The Heritage Council (see magazine article, p9). A further funding application has been submitted to fund elements of a conservation management plan.



Declan Kenny

Mullaghmore, Burren, Co Clare.

Booterstown Marsh Nature Reserve, Co Dublin

The success of attracting retrospective funding from INTERREG IIIa has enabled An Taisce to apply for a second tranche, in partnership with the National Trust, Wales. The work envisaged will complete three scientific projects: hydrology, sediments and *Puccinellia fasciculata* life-cycle analysis. This will provide the backbone to a conservation management plan. In addition, a large project, using the internet, lectures, and the establishment of a Friends of Booterstown Marsh, is aimed at creating better understanding of the functions of the marsh, its importance as a local amenity and integrated coastal zone management. Even if the funding application is unsuccessful, some of these projects may still go ahead.

The Tailors' Hall, Dublin 8

After many years of looking after the interests of The Tailors' Hall and being involved in its restoration, the properties committee thank Consuelo O'Connor and her committee for all their hard work and wish them well in the future.

Kevin Kellehan has been endorsed by Dublin City Association to coordinate a management advisory committee for the hall, and a meeting is planned once a structural engineer's report is ready. A number of issues need to be investigated, namely: sustainable use and management of the building; developing endowment for its up-keep and conservation; and appropriate governance and rentals.

The Grove, Morehampton Road, Dublin 4

There are a number of works that need attention, such as fixing the surrounding walls. There has been an active management group in the past. This needs to be reinvigorated.

The Boyne Navigation, Co Meath

Meath Association are progressing with plans to re-open the stretch of the Boyne Navigation from Drogheda to the Brú na Bóinne interpretative centre. The level of momentum generated has seen a number of groups supporting An Taisce. These include Inland Waterways and the county councils.

There is still a large amount of work to be done. Meath Association are currently looking for engineering advice and are aiming to assess the whole navigation for conservation requirements.

Crocknafarragh Mountain Reserve, Co Donegal

After visiting this property last summer, and having had meetings with members of staff at Glenveagh National Park (the holders of the management lease from An Taisce), a conservation management plan is being developed in collaboration with the park authorities.

An Taisce would like to thank the staff at Glenveagh National Park for their management expertise and commitment to managing Crocknafarragh, and we look forward to continuing proactive relations.

Rough Island & Gull Islands, Mulroy Bay, Co Donegal

The aim here is to enter into negotiations with state agencies to see how we can best use the islands as aquaculture monitoring centres of the Mulroy Bay SAC. An Taisce is a prescribed body under the Aquaculture Licensing Act. A visit is planned this summer.

Oweninny Bog Iron Flush, Co Mayo

A visit is planned this summer to assess the changes taking place due to the rehabilitation project now well advanced since the cessation of peat extraction and the building of a large windfarm.

The Crane, Gort Weigh House, Co Galway

Current options to install power at the site are being investigated. One option – to use small solar panels – is considered prohibitively expensive. A site visit is being planned for the summer.

Special thanks to Bill Scanlon who has taken The Crane under his wing for many years and has now decided to pursue other interests.

The Old Courthouse, Howth, Co Dublin

An application for funds to deal with damp problems has been submitted both to The Heritage Council and Fingal County Council.

The courthouse is currently being used permanently by FÁS, in one area, and the rest is rented out frequently for book sales, exhibitions and lectures. It is hoped that we can use the property to generate more support for An Taisce.

Mullaghmore, The Burren, Co Clare

Successful negotiations with the National Parks Board have generated new enthusiasm in Clare, and a number of projects are being assessed.

David Owen
Chair, Properties Committee

Personnel for 2004/2005

Officers of Council 2004-2005

Éanna Ní Lamhna (President)
Frank Corcoran (Chairman)
Peter Hennessy (Vice-chairman)
Valerin O'Shea (Hon Secretary to April 2005)
Charles Stanley-Smith (Acting Hon Secretary from April 2005)
Eric Conroy (Hon Treasurer to February 2005)
Anne Russell (Hon Treasurer from February 2005)

Local Association delegates to Council

Eamon Moore	Carlow
Oliver Moylan	Clare
Dagmar O'Riain-Raedel	Cork
Anne McGowan	Donegal North West
Valerin O'Shea	Dublin City
Kevin Duff	Dublin City
Ruth Thompson	Dublin Fingal
Eileen Collins	Dublin South County
Mairéad Mehigan	Dún Laoghaire
Derrick Hambleton	Galway
Catherine McMullin	Kerry
John Colgan	Kildare North
Frank Taaffe	Kildare South
Brian Hamilton	Kilkenny
Vivienne McKechnie	Limerick
Ed Wheeler	Meath
Mide Gerrard	Tipperary North
Peter Hennessy	Tipperary South
George Kavanagh	Waterford
Sean McCarthy	Wexford

Nationally-elected Councillors

Richard Auler	Eanna Ni Lamhna
Norman Campion	Donal O'Dwyer
Mark Clinton	John O'Sullivan
Lewis Clohessy	Anna O'Malley Dunlop
Frank Corcoran	Judy Osborne
Gerry Crilly	Jack O'Sullivan
John Ducie	Anne Russell (co-opted)
Bob Galvin	Paula Russell
Bernard Goggin	Bernard Ryan
Fergeal McLoughlin (Co-opted)	Charles Stanley-Smith (co-opted)
Philip Mullally	Kathleen Vandenberghe
Monica Muller	David Wilde

The properties committee is always looking for enthusiasts to get involved. If you have any ideas, please contact head office. Currently we would like:

Any **photos** of An Taisce properties. These can be recent or old. They will be scanned and, when used, the photographer will be acknowledged. An An Taisce calendar using the properties will be produced for 2005.

We would like to establish a **properties warden scheme.** A number of our properties are either isolated or attract unwanted activity, such as dumping, and consequently need monitoring. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact head office.

Board of Management 2004-2005

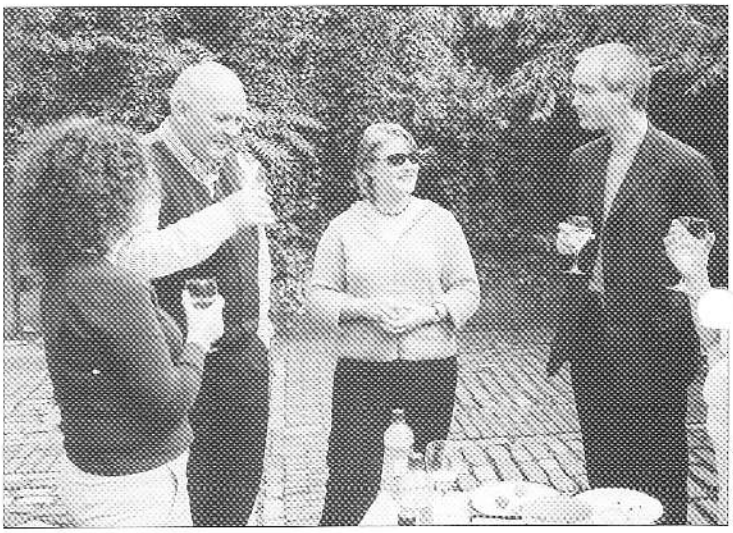
Chairman	Frank Corcoran
Vice Chairman	Peter Hennessy
Honorary Secretary	Valerin O'Shea (to April 05)
Acting Honorary Secretary	Charles Stanley-Smith (April 05 on)
Honorary Treasurer	Eric Conroy (to February 05)
Honorary Treasurer	Anne Russell (February 05 on)
Projects Committee Chairman	Lewis Clohessy
Properties Committee Chairman	John Ducie
Fundraising Committee Chairman	David Wilde
Board Member from Council	Judy Osborne
Board Member from Council	Fergal Mcloughlin
Board Member from Council	Charles Stanley-Smith
Co-opted	Tracy Pickerill

Organisation Committees 2004-2005 (Chairs)

Properties & Reserves Committee	John Ducie
Heritage Gardens & Designed Landscapes Cmte	John Ducie
Fundraising Committee	David Wilde
Projects Committee	Lewis Clohessy

Policy Committees 2004-2005

Built Environment Committee	Paula Russell (Chair)
Natural Environment Committee	Mide Gerrard (Chair)



kevin Duff

Oonagh Duggan, Frank Corcoran, Jane Helps and Martin Shiels pictured at an An Taisce event at the Tailors' Hall, Dublin.

...if each of us could sign up one friend, relative or neighbour we could double our membership, making us a stronger organisation with increased funding to tackle the issues that are vying for our attention