

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

PROTECTING IRELAND'S HERITAGE,
SAFEGUARDING ITS FUTURE

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

EDUCATION

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

PROPERTIES

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

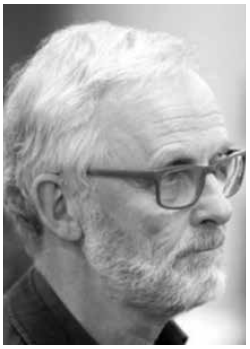
ADVOCACY

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

Registered in Ireland 12469
Charity No. CHY4741
EU Transparency Register no. 473905437651-60

Cover photo is of Sparrowhawk taken at The Grove. Credit Gustavo Zoladz.

Chair's Report for the Annual Report



Philip Kearney, Chair

Protecting Ireland's heritage, safeguarding its future

In the second half of 2019 An Taisce embarked on a transition and a revisioning of its mission to incorporate 21st century challenges, most particularly the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

The transition is being led by a new Board strengthened by the addition of highly qualified volunteers almost all of whom were recruited through Boardmatch. Judy Osborne, as vice chair, played a critical role in identifying suitable candidates and beginning their induction. Judy, Charles Stanley-Smith, John Pierce, Pat Oliver and others stepped down after the AGM in June. Their substantial contributions to An Taisce are acknowledged.

The new Board members include experts in the areas of corporate governance, financial management, properties, human resources and risk and compliance.

Prof John Sweeney provides continuity, institutional memory, academic authority and wise advice.

The person who deserves much credit for influencing this transition is the Head of Advocacy, Ian Lumley, who has been involved with An Taisce since the 1970s. In a series of visionary contributions, Ian has argued for a widening of the original lens described by Robert Lloyd Praeger in 1948 from 'the protection of built and natural heritage' to a more encompassing vision including a focus on ecosystem resilience and biodiversity enhancement as essential to sustain human community and wellbeing.

Ian has attended the last five UN Climate Conferences and interacted with a range of eNGOs and the International National Trust Organisation. This exposure to global trends has engendered a commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and an awareness of the interconnection of the climate crisis and the ongoing devastation of the natural world. In this he is supported by the Advocacy staff, An Taisce committees, the Board and the Council.

A survey of members late last year by the new fundraising committee confirmed that the focus on climate action has climbed to the top of their concerns. The An Taisce Climate Committee has continued to publish scientifically-informed contributions and to promote greater ambition by the Government. The Environmental Education Unit (EEU) has an extensive range of programmes with a climate or biodiversity-related focus reaching tens of thousands of participants of all ages all across the country. A lot of the credit for the widespread involvement of young people in climate demonstrations in 2019 must go to the contributions of Green-Schools programmes over many years.

The Natural Environment and Properties Committees continue to contribute significantly to maintaining An Taisce's core activities as a National Trust and the commitment and varied activities of the Local Associations are vividly captured within these pages.

The transition is being enshrined in various ways:

- A revised Constitution has been drafted and is being debated by Council. It will clarify structures to be more consistent with Company law and the Governance Code of the Charities' Regulator and embed the revised vision. It will be submitted to the 2020 AGM for approval.
- The 2019 AGM supported a series of motions to curtail the plan to divest the EEU from An Taisce and relocate it in a separate company. These decisions were subsequently endorsed by the Board and Council. Much of the work of the Board has been focussed on this consolidation.
- After a strategic review, the Board decided that the employment of a CEO was a sine qua non for the accountable management of the organisation. Good governance practice requires a senior executive to oversee the implementation of the Board's strategy and the organisation's Vision and Mission.

It is important to emphasise that the core principles of Praeger's original vision remain central and intact. They provide the bedrock of An Taisce's raison d'être to which have now been added the urgency and focus required by the challenge of ensuring a sustainable biosphere for future generations.

It is hoped that 2020 will see large elements of this transition completed - a unified organisation, an Interim CEO in place, a new Constitution approved and Governance Code compliance largely achieved.

Philip Kearney, Chair
An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland
Chair@antaisce.org

Treasurer's Report for 2019



Eric Conroy, Retired Treasurer

2019 was in financial terms eventful, in that we received our greatest single gift to the organisation with a legacy of over €73,000 from the Estate of the late Paul Donnelly. Like many of us, he was very concerned about climate change and we were delighted to receive this generous gift from him. Our membership income remains consistently below €85k. and non-project costs exceed €200k per annum. Thanks are due to Ian Lumley, who has worked tirelessly getting multi-annual funding to keep our Advocacy work afloat. Our Financial position in 2019 has improved significantly on the 2018 position, where we had to fund advocacy from general income. I am pleased to report that together Head Office & Advocacy achieved a surplus of c.€90k. in the year.

As has been the case in recent years, the Environmental Education Unit operates almost exclusively within the constraints of restricted, programme specific funding and allocates its costs across those programmes in accordance with the terms agreed with the funders and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regulations. Although the size and the scale of many of the programmes has grown during 2019, unrestricted funding is required to develop and support pilot programmes and other initiatives.

Although outside the remit of the 2019 accounts, we decided before year end to sell off our share portfolio to optimise our cashflow position given the high level of share values and a prospect of an economic downturn. I am pleased to report that this proved to be a wise decision as we sold before COVID19 impacted world stock markets. This brings a certain sense of déjà vu, in that I (when I was previously Treasurer of An Taisce) oversaw the sale of most of our share portfolio, including Bank of Ireland, in 2006 before the financial crash in 2007! Many thanks to Olivia Rogers, our Governance Chair for coordinating the sale.

It is our view that we need to take management fees on restricted project income as well as fees on properties income negotiations to help our sustain and support our overall finances. This will help augment the membership income gap I referenced earlier in this report. There is also need to maximise income from other areas such as from wills and legacies. I intend to remember An Taisce in my will and I hope members reading this will do too. If you are going to live for many more years, and you are well provided for, you might consider giving some of an intended legacy before you pass on and enjoy watching it being used on the good work we do!

As I write, we are into the second half of 2020. As many of you know. I had to resign as Treasurer after seven months in January 2020 on health grounds. I am back now assisting on a temporary basis as we work to recruit a new Treasurer. We have had huge turnover in the post over the last decade. We need to address why this is happening – A key factor is a lack of integrated accounting and a centralised Finance function for the whole organisation and the workload expected of a volunteer accountant. Consideration needs to be given to funding for a part time accountant for all of An Taisce.

I can report that the bookkeeping at HO/Advocacy has moved back in-house – this decision was also taken in 2019. Therefore the monthly accounting bill has been saved to the tune of €11k. p.a. Thanks goes to Operations Manager Sinead Owens who has taken over bookkeeping. I have been able to assist her in producing quarterly accounts.

I'm optimistic that we can manage our costs and optimise our income appropriately, including new fundraising ideas overseen by board member Hugh O'Reilly from the Wheel. Thus 2019 will not be an exception from previous poor financial years, and 2020 and beyond will continue our upward progress on financial wellbeing.

Eric Conroy

Secretary's Annual Report



Stuart McCaul, Honorary Secretary

Susan Casey, as Head Office Operations Manager, held the fort for most of 2019, eventually handing over the reins to Sinead Owens who runs a tight ship. Charles Stanley Smith kindly acted as Temporary Secretary until the AGM and I was glad to step up from September onwards. Former officers Charles, Judy Osborne and James Leahy, and also Education Unit Business Administration Manager, Dawn Parkinson, continue to put up with my calls whenever I need help, which provides valuable continuity. I really appreciate their support.

There were six An Taisce Council meetings and 15 formal Board meetings in 2019. The latter number is misleading as there are daily discussions by email and WhatsApp, as well as online meetings, as the Board has really operated like an executive management team. The cohesion and hard work of the Trustees has been a pleasure to experience.

The compliance burden for charities like An Taisce continues to grow and there is no state support for the associated costs. Statutory filings last year, which were made on time, included the annual submission to the Charities Regulator (CRA), the annual return to the Companies Registration Office, and a submission to the Register of Beneficial Owners. In addition to that, An Taisce regularly updates the Lobbying Register, the EU Transparency Register, and of course the Revenue Commissioners. Our Governance committee of volunteers, led by Olivia Rogers, along with Prof John Sweeney, Gary Freemantle and myself, also handled GDPR issues and queries from the CRA.

Our auditors, RBK, completed their 5 years of service to An Taisce, finalising the 2018 review. We launched a competitive tender process and appointed Woods Partners as our auditors for the next 5 years. Woods are busy working on our 2019 audit as I write and they expect to be finished in plenty of time for our September AGM. As we are short a Treasurer, I'm especially grateful for the hard work of Eric Conroy, who is committed to helping us with our accounts and our annual audit along with volunteers Ruaidhri O'Boyle, Aideen O'Dochartaigh, Rose Boyle and myself on our Audit committee.

Relying heavily on volunteerism, and with the steadfast support of hard working staff like Susan, Dawn and Sinead, An Taisce managed to keep compliance costs to a minimum in 2019. An Taisce's members, donors and programme funders, who continually audit our Education Unit, can be assured that their money does overwhelmingly go to support the frontline effort for environmental education, advocacy and conservation.

Stuart McCaul
Honorary Secretary
secretary@antaisce.org

Environmental Education Unit Report



Michael John O'Mahony,
EEU Director

Introduction

The Environmental Education Unit (EEU) has been operating since 1993 and 2019 was another busy year for the Unit. Currently, the EEU employs over 70 staff and operates 11 national and international environmental education and management programmes. The programmes are funded and supported by a number of Government Departments (e.g. DTTAS, DCCAE, DHPLG, DFA, DRCD) and Agencies (e.g. NTA, EPA, SEAI, Irish Aid, NPWS), Local Authorities, Utilities (e.g. Irish Water) and Foundations (e.g. Wrigley Foundation, JS Greene Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation).

Blue Flag & Green Coast Awards 2019

In 2019, over 4,500 beaches, marinas and sustainable tourism boats were awarded the Blue Flag in 47 countries around the world (see www.blueflag.global). In 2019, 80 beaches and 8 marinas in Ireland achieved the award (blueflagireland.org). To be granted Blue Flag status sites must comply with a specific set of criteria relating to water quality, information provision, environmental education, safety, accessibility and environmental management.

The Green Coast Award is an award for beaches that meet the excellent standard for water quality as set out in the Bathing Water Directive but may not have or not require the necessary built infrastructure to achieve Blue Flag status (greencoastaward.ie). In 2019, 62 beaches in Ireland were awarded the Green Coast Award, the highest total to date.

The 2019 Blue Flags and Green Coast Awards were presented at The Armada Hotel, Spanish Point in County Clare.

National Spring Clean Report 2019

2019 was the 21st year of National Spring Clean (www.nationalspringclean.org), Ireland's largest and most popular anti-litter initiative.

In Summary for 2019:

- There were 5,448 clean-up events nationwide (9% increase on 2018)
- An estimated 2,850 tonnes of litter were collected
- Approximately 35% of the total amount of waste collected was recycled
- 250,000 refuse bags, 16,000 pairs of gloves, 1,000 pickers and Hi-Vis vests were distributed

National Spring Clean works closely with all Local Authorities. Once participants register for the event and then are sent their clean-up kit by us, they then contact their local authorities to arrange the collection of the full litter bags once their clean-up is complete. This close co-operation with the LAs is a vital component of the long-term success of the campaign.

Green-Schools Report 2018-2019 academic year

There are currently 4,000 schools and education centres in Ireland registered for the Green-Schools programme (www.greenschoolsireland.org). 3,461 of these have been awarded the Green Flag. During the academic year 2018-2019, a total of 810 schools renewed the Green Flag and 53 schools were awarded their first Green Flag.

162 teacher-training seminars were delivered to a combined audience of over 519 teachers in 27 locations. Green-Schools also held two five-day EPV approved teacher-training courses for teachers in July 2019. The courses followed a new format "Green-Schools and the Global Goals" which linked the UN Sustainable Development Goals to aspects of the Green- Schools programme.

A new online course was developed for primary teachers entitled 'Climate Change, Science and Action' in 2019. The course is accredited by Drumcondra Education Centre on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills and took place from July 2019.



Dr. Pramod Kumar presenting the UL Green-Campus committee with their reaccreditation

In 2019 sixteen National Green Flag ceremonies were held in Cork, Dublin, Athlone, Kilkenny, Mayo, Meath, Galway and Donegal to award schools who had successfully reached Green Flag Status.

In the academic year 2018 – 2019 participating schools:

- reduced their waste to landfill by 39% year on year, diverting almost 3,000 tonnes of waste from landfill.
- saved over 20 million kWh of electricity
- reduced their per capita water consumption by 16% year on year
- 857 new bird feeders were installed in schools
- 83% of schools planted trees or shrubs with 3,501 new trees planted
- on average, biodiversity awareness and knowledge among students and staff increased from 26% to 83%.

Green-Campus Programme – Annual Update 2019

In 2019 the Green-Campus programme (www.greencampusireland.org) continued to grow with six new sites registering and three campuses awarded the Green Flag for the first time. NUI Galway were awarded their Green Flag in March 2019. Letterfrack Further Education Centre, the smallest campus to receive their flag, were awarded in May 2019. The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland were awarded their flag in November 2019. This brings to thirteen the number of awarded campuses in the programme.

The six new sites that registered on the programme in 2019 were IT Carlow, Sligo Institute of Technology, Colaiste Stiofáin Naofa, Cork, Waterford CFE, Templemore CFE and Mary Immaculate College – Thurles Campus. This brings the number of registered campuses to thirty-two by the end of 2019.

In 2019 Ballsbridge College for Further Education, Trinity College Dublin and University College Cork successfully renewed their Green Flag status and HEAnet were successful in their reassessment for Green-Campus Partner status.

The Green-Campus Network Meeting in February 2019 had over 80 delegates from participant sites and representation from various stakeholder agencies. Presentations from Green-Campus participants provided an insight to delegates on the various innovations in place in Green Campus sites. An awarded Green-Campus meeting took place in November 2019 where representatives from 10 awarded campuses reviewed the Government's Climate Action Plan from a third level perspective.

Dr. Pramod Kumar, Senior Director of Education with FEE (Foundation of Environmental Education) visited Dublin City University and the University of Limerick in March 2019 to get an insight into the Green-Campus Programme in Ireland.

National Climate Change Action and Awareness Programme 2019

The National Climate Change Action and Awareness Programme (NCCAAP) has been operating in schools and communities nationwide for over two years. The programme is now well established with a large network of participants who continue to undertake climate actions. The core outcomes of the programme to date include;

- Climate Ambassador Programme – the programme has trained and supported over 200 citizens to become Climate Ambassadors in their community.
- The third Climate Action Week took place from the 14th - 20th October 2019.
- Over 130 primary and secondary school teachers have participated in training.
- Online Climate Change Training – a new online teacher training course was developed in Spring 2019 and launched in July 2019.
- The Green-Schools Climate Action Teacher Resource was developed for post-primary teachers and was published in March 2019.
- Climate Action Officers and Ambassadors engaged with the public at 80+ events.

Green-Schools Travel Report 2019

2019 saw increased participation in sustainable travel initiatives, the creation of new campaigns and the development of a revision theme - Global Citizenship Travel. Following the 2018 Green Flag award ceremonies, 663 schools were invited to participate in the Travel theme for the 2018/2019 academic year. During the autumn semester, Travel Officers delivered 31 training events nationwide to coordinators on the Travel and Global Citizenship Travel themes.

2019 commenced with the Big Travel Challenge in February which celebrated its fifth birthday with hundreds of schools participating in the 10-day challenge. St. Peter's N.S. from Dromiskin, Co. Louth was named 'Ireland's Travel School of the Year'. Other key events which took place during the year included; Scoot to School Week in March, Walk to School Week in May and Bike Week in June. In addition, Green-Schools Travel premiered Ireland's first Clean Air Week in October 2019. The week-long initiative is the newest campaign from Green-Schools Travel and is focused on raising awareness of air pollution at school gates.

The Green-Schools Travel programme was selected to present at the international Velo City Conference which took place in Dublin in June 2019.

Early in the year, Green-Schools Travel partnered with Cyclist.ie to coordinate the new EU Erasmus+ Project: Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Community in Ireland. A new campaign was developed to focus on increasing the number of teenage girls who cycle to school. The campaign entitled #andshecycles was launched in September 2019 following focus group research with teenage girls from participating schools. The campaign gained widespread media attention and was featured on RTE News, The Irish Times and the Sunday times as well as on social media.

Green-Schools Travel Officers also carried out over 2,200 school visits which included educational workshops, experiential training, travel action days and also undertook 214 walkability audits and 50 cycleability audits. Green-Schools Travel also worked in partnership with the National Transport Authority, National Disability Authority and Age Friendly Ireland to develop a national Walkability Audit template.



February 2019 Green-Campus Network Meeting, Radisson Golden Lane, Dublin



EEU Green Schools, credit Alison Laredo

Green Flag for Parks Award 2019

The Green Flag Award Scheme is an international standard for well managed public parks and green spaces that are freely accessible to the public. Internationally it now operates across 15 countries where nearly 2,100 sites were accredited to Green Flag Award status in 2019.

In 2019 Irish Green Flag Award sites increased to 60 accredited public green spaces. These include; parks, gardens, national parks, historic graveyards, university campuses, and community gardens.

With the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development the Scheme also operates the Green Flag Community Award for our volunteer led green space projects. These have continued to grow in 2019. This has extended the programme to community gardens, community parks, allotments, and other community run green spaces.

Since 2017 the Pollinator Plan Award has also rewarded the best efforts of our Green Flag Award Scheme sites in delivering on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Other 2019 achievements:

- Maynooth Campus hosted the 2019 Green Flag Award Ceremony – with over 250 attendees.
- Saint Anne's Park Dublin was one of the World's top five favourite Green Flag Award Parks announced in October after a Global Peoples Choice Vote







Newly Awarded Sites: Top to Bottom NUIG, Letterfrack FEC & RCSI

Clean Coasts Programme 2019

Clean Coasts volunteer groups numbers have continued to grow in 2019 with 1,113 groups registered with the programme. This is an increase in registrations of 196 Clean Coasts groups in 2019.

Clean Coasts undertook a series of events including the Clean Coasts Roadshows, Clean Coasts Week, Big Beach Clean, Love Your Coast Photography and Ocean Hero Awards.

21 Clean Coasts Roadshows events took place in 2019. Clean Coasts Week takes place for 10 days at the start of the Summer. In 2019 this week was from 1st to 10th June 2019. This week is a national call-to-action for Clean Coast participants. Clean Coasts teams up with the International Ocean Conservancy annually for the Big Beach Clean. Over 300 clean-ups took place around Ireland, engaging approximately 8,000 volunteers who removed at least 45 tonnes of marine litter across the country in September 2019.

The Love Your Coast photography competition celebrates Ireland's amazing coastline through the following categories: Coastal Heritage, Coastal Landscape, People and the Coast, Wildlife and the Coast and Underwater. In 2019, over 1,000 entries were received and the 50 best shots were shortlisted for the final exhibition displayed as part of the awards in Printworks, Morrison Hotel, Dublin.

The Ocean Hero Awards recognise the remarkable work being carried out by Clean Coasts groups and participants all along the Irish coast. The number of Ocean Hero categories have expanded to include eight categories: Group of Year, Volunteer of the Year, Youth Volunteer of the Year, Youth Group of the Year, Beach Clean of the Year, Fishing Community of the Year, Business of the Year and Think Before You Flush Community of the Year.

Young Reporters for the Environment Report 2019

The Young Reporters for the Environment (Litter Less Campaign) is a four-step programme sponsored by the Mars Wrigley Foundation. Participants identify a litter and waste issue in their locality and research a solution to it. They then communicate this as a journalistic piece in the form of an article, video or photo story and go on to raise awareness of their work throughout their school and local community.

In 2019, over 80 entries were submitted from more than 300 students all over the country working in teams or by themselves. The winning article on discarded fishing nets by Luke Dahler of Coláiste Einda in Galway was published by the Irish Times and the winning videos are available to see on the YRE Ireland YouTube channel.

GLOBE Report 2019

The GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) programme is a NASA supported international science and education programme that offers students the chance to participate in data collection and the scientific process and contribute meaningfully to our understanding of the Earth system and global environment (www.globe.gov).

GLOBE was relaunched in Ireland in September 2017 by the EEU Unit of An Taisce with support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The GLOBE weather campaign, which commenced in November 2018, continued in 2019. To date, 59 teachers have uploaded a combined 2,636 observations to the GLOBE website mainly relating to atmosphere and biosphere investigations.

In 2019, 51 schools actively participated in GLOBE Air Quality campaigns in Ireland. Schools collected over 150 nitrogen-dioxide (NO_2) measurements during two campaigns, held in Spring and Autumn. The results of the Spring campaign were showcased at a GLOBE Air Quality Event held in Woodquay, Dublin (May 2019). Following the GLOBE event, the schools' projects were reviewed and two students and a teacher from Larkin Community College were selected to represent GLOBE Ireland at the GLOBE Annual Event in Detroit (July 2019) in recognition of the excellent quality of their research project.

Leaf (Learning About Forests) 2019

The aim of the Learning about Forests (LEAF) programme is to reconnect students with their environment, and to increase levels of awareness and knowledge about the key role forests play for sustainable life on our planet. This is achieved through interactive learning and field trips.

During 2019, the programme over 1,100 students actively participated in the programme. Each participating school undertook fieldwork in Coillte's Curragh Chase Forest Park. Almost 400 trees were planted by the participating schools, with the majority of these trees planted during Tree Week in March 2019.

An Choill Bheag is an Initiative of LEAF Ireland. Choill Bheag is a small, dense, biodiverse native woodland habitat on the school grounds. 800 trees (4 Choill Bheags in 4 LEAF schools) were planted through the Choill Bheag initiative in 2019. In March 2019, Ireland hosted the annual LEAF National Operators Meeting (NOM), which took place in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick over three days. Delegates from 28 countries took part in the international conference on forest education.

Neat Streets 2019

Neat Streets is a Litter and Waste education and action programme for secondary schools across Ireland. During the 2018/19 academic year the Neat Streets programme (https://neatstreets.org/) worked with 31 secondary schools. This represents a student body of 15,257 individuals. In 2019 participating schools reduced littering by on average 31%, increased recycling rates by 40% and increased involvement in litter and waste events and activities in school by 47%. The Neat Streets Awards and Celebration event took place in May 2019 at The Gresham Hotel, Dublin. The annual Neat Streets photo competition #instabin was run once again in February 2019 and students were rewarded for their anti-litter video entries through the social media platform Instagram.

In 2019, Neat Streets launched a new Pilot Programme "Town Takeover" with 3 Secondary Schools in the town of Ennistymon Co. Clare to help tackle litter and waste in the local area in a coordinated fashion.

Advocacy and Planning 2019 Report



Phoebe Duvall,
Planning Officer

The An Taisce advocacy role embraces most of the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals and all of the considerations set out in the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive:

> biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between these.

This includes an overarching concern about human health and wellbeing, which is a unifying objective of non-government organisations globally.

Our work as the only independent statutory consultee for planning applications, infrastructure proposals and other projects with general environmental, ecological and cultural heritage impacts means we face a daily avalanche of postal and email notifications on development plans, pre-planning consultations and individual applications.



Castleblayney Markethouse.

In addition to engaging with An Taisce's Local Associations and members, we respond to extensive daily queries and requests from the media, individuals, residents' groups and communities across the country. The issues brought up range from overarching national issues to individual planning applications and complaints on unauthorised developments. This amounts to the large-scale provision of an unpaid advisory service.

We assess all programmes, plans and projects on how they advance sustainable development as well as health and wellbeing goals, in particular:

- Advancing climate action, clean air and energy initiatives, and elimination of fossil fuels
- Enhancing protection of nature, landscape and cultural heritage
- Creating better connected communities with access to safe walking and cycling routes, green spaces and amenities
- Diversifying local food production compatible with local ecosystems
- Reviving village and town centres

Advocacy Office

In April of 2019 we were sad to say goodbye to Doireann Ní Cheallaigh, our exceptionally able Planning and Environmental Policy Officer of four years, who left to begin a new job in renewable energy planning. She was pivotal to the work of the Advocacy Unit during her time here. Later in 2019, we were very happy to appoint Phoebe Duvall to take over the role. Phoebe has been with An Taisce since 2017, working with Doireann as the Planning Intern as well as in other positions in the An Taisce Head Office and in the Education Unit. We were also fortunate to have Elaine McGoff continuing in her role as the Natural Environment Officer (see her report which follows).

Prescribed Planning Role and Policy Work

2019 was another very busy year on the planning front. We continued our prescribed role of making submissions on the deluge of planning applications coming in from Councils around the country as well as from An Bord Pleanála. Thanks to the combination of the Advocacy Unit and the dedicated work of our Local Associations' planning committees, we were able to cover the length and breadth of Ireland, evaluating developments ranging from one-off houses to large infrastructure proposals such as data centres and wind farms.

The sizeable number of Strategic Housing applications (developments of over 100 units) that go directly to An Bord Pleanála bypassing local councils, continued apace in 2019 as well. We made submissions on many of them, highlighting the continuing failure to link new residential schemes with enhanced safe walking and cycling access and public transport links – all key to create healthy, connected and sustainable communities.

In relation to climate and energy, An Taisce took a lead role in the planning process and An Bord Pleanála oral hearing on the Offaly Peat/Biomass Power Plant. We were instrumental in advancing the arguments upon which the proposal was ultimately refused.

We also advanced two Supreme Court appeals relating to quarries in Counties Monaghan and Galway on the compatibility of the very permissive Irish planning regime for retrospective permission or "substitute consent" for unauthorised quarries in complying with EU law. We fed into the research and participated in an RTE Investigates documentary November 2019 on the level of unauthorised quarrying in Ireland.

One of the main areas of focus for Advocacy in 2019 was the expansion of industrial bovine agriculture. The increase in dairy production volume and milk processing is having an accelerated adverse cumulative impact on greenhouse gas emissions, water quality, ammonia air pollution, and biodiversity. Throughout 2019, we submitted on an increasing number of milking parlour planning applications all over the country. We also lodged a major appeal to An Bord Pleanála on the application for a Dutch cheese factory to locate to County Kilkenny without a proper assessment of the ecological and climate impacts of the milk production required to sustain the factory. This followed the lead of a Norwegian cheese factory project recently locating to County Cork, with the effect of "migrating" environmental and climate impacts from abroad into Ireland.

In furtherance of the National Planning Framework/Project Ireland 2040, the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) completed the public consultation process in 2019. An Taisce Advocacy has been heavily involved in the process from the outset, and this culminated in comprehensive submissions on all three RSESs early in 2019 – a very significant body of work. Much of the content of the three RSESs is progressive in advancing sustainable planning principles. However, the challenge, as with all forward planning, will be to ensure implementation on the ground.

An Taisce Advocacy's remit and concern extends to all of the natural environment and cultural heritage, which come under the remit of the Department of Heritage. As such, we made a detailed submission in March 2019 into the Heritage 2030 process, emphasising the need for Ireland to adopt the most progressive international legal protections, policy and public engagement measures on all aspects of heritage.

Additionally, An Taisce Advocacy was represented on four important multi-stakeholder forums in 2019, for the national Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) planning group; the marine spatial planning forum (which covers all aspects of the marine and coastal areas); the Peatlands Council; and the National Water Forum (see more on that in Elaine's report). Participation in these forums allows An Taisce to take a lead role in advancing the most progressive sustainable development principles in various areas as well as to engage directly with the position taken by industry representatives and other stakeholders.



An Taisce participated in a RTE Investigates documentary in Nov 2019 on large scale unauthorised quarry development in Ireland

Natural Environment Officer Report



Dr Elaine McGoff,
Natural Environment Officer

Overview

In May of 2019 the Dail declared a climate and biodiversity emergency, committing to establish a citizen's assembly on biodiversity. Just days later Ireland's 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was published by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and was a damning indictment of the state of biodiversity in Ireland, with insufficient progress reported across most targets. To further compound the message, later in the year the NPWS released their 6 yearly report for the Habitats Directive, describing the state of our most protected European habitats and species. It highlighted that 85% of the 59 listed habitats in Ireland are in unfavourable status, with almost 40% of these described as being in 'bad' condition. There was an ongoing trend of decline in almost half of the habitats. These declining trends are most notable in peatland, grassland, woodland and marine habitats. Finally, the year finished up with a report from the EPA on the state of Ireland's waters, which highlighted that approximately 50% of all our waters are polluted, with agriculture being the main pressure. The most alarming statistic is the loss of our most pristine water bodies, of which we have lost almost a third in the last 10 years. Things are not looking good for Ireland's biodiversity and waters.

Prescribed function

2019 was another busy year for aquaculture, while Minister Creed delivered on his promise to clear the backlog of aquaculture applications which had accrued since the European Court of Justice action against Ireland in 2007. We had a large number of aquaculture applications in early 2019, and a slew of decisions later in the year, upwards of 250 decisions in the space of a couple of months. Appeals to aquaculture licensing decisions go to the Aquaculture Appeals Board (ALAB). To challenge a single aquaculture decision costs €152, with an additional €76 should you wish to have the right to an oral hearing. The Department of Agriculture often approves a slew of aquaculture licences at a time, potentially with 10 or 20 licences granted per bay or estuary. For An Taisce to challenge these would be prohibitively expensive. We have been lucky enough to have some very experienced legal advice in developing a potential strategy for addressing this road-block, and we are currently investigating potential legal options.

We've been fortunate to have had 3 very able interns in 2019, Kieran Flynn who left us early in the year to commence work with the NPWS, replaced by by Daniel Vise who completed an internship as part of his MSc



in Environmental policy from UCD before returning to the States, followed by Conor O'Neill who joined the team in September having completed a MSc in Environmental Science from Trinity. The year round constant flow of forestry applications could not be processed without this vital help, and An Taisce are very lucky to attract such qualified and dedicated candidates to work on a voluntary basis.

Policy work

An Taisce continued to be a strong advocate for nature throughout 2019, with detailed submissions on various government policy consultations, meetings with ministers and government officials, in addition to collaborative work with other eNGOs.

The natural environment officer was elected as an environmental representative to the Water Forum, a statutory stakeholder forum established to advise the Minister on issues related to water. It includes representatives from the large farming organisations, IBEC, tourism and rural dwellers, which provides for some robust discussions in relation to pressures on water quality, with the production of policy submissions for various public consultations, such as on the Nitrates Derogation Review and the Ammonia Code of Good Practice.

There were several important public policy consultations which the NEO responded to in 2019, all of these are uploaded on the An Taisce website. They include, amongst others, the Agri-Food strategy to 2030, the Ammonia Code of Good Agricultural Practice, the Nitrates Derogation Review 2019 and several sectoral and county level climate adaptation plans

Media

The natural environment officer released a range of press releases in 2019, many of which were picked up by the national media, leading to radio interviews, the highest profile one being an appearance on RTE Drivetime to discuss Minister Madigan's welcome



decision not to allow for burning of scrub in March of 2019. Others included interviews on Kildare FM, Radio Kerry, and Connemara Community Radio, in addition to others. Elaine was also interviewed for an Ecoeye show on water quality, due to air in February 2020. The NEO also presented at the high profile National Biodiversity Conference in February of 2019

This is just a flavour of the work which was done by the Natural Environment Office in 2019. We're fighting a battle on all fronts, some of which we're winning and some which we're not. Regardless of the outcome, we punch far above our weight in terms of influence and output, and we couldn't do it without the support of our various committees, council, members and local associations. You help to amplify our voice in advocating for nature.



Natural Environment Committee (NEC) Report



Declan Murphy,
Chair Natural Environment Committee

The NEC meets approximately two monthly, and five meetings were held throughout 2019. Meetings are also attended by the Natural Environment Officer, Elaine McGoff, and generally by the Heritage Officer Ian Lumley.

The committee reviews issues or developments relating to the eight Natural Environment properties of An Taisce. Booterstown Nature Reserve is a pNHA and pSAC and is also part of the South Dubllin Bay SAC. It is overseen by the Dun Laoghaire local association of An Taisce, the An Taisce Heritage Office, and a local Friends of Booterstown committee which includes NEC member Veronica Heywood. A very populor open day is held there during Heritage Week each year. Its unique ecology of both fresh-water and sea-water habitat makes it a unique and important site for a wide variety of birds and wildlife. An Taisce has the site on a lease from the Pembroke Estate since 1970, and which is due to expire in 2020. Also the Pembroke Estate is scheduled to be wound down within the next couple of years. The Properties Committee and the Heritage Officer, together with the NEC, are working towards an arrangement that would allow An Taisce to continue as longterm lease holders or owners of the site, and an early resolution of this dilemma is vital. The owner of the adjoining Ash Castle site made a planning application for a development that we regard as inapporpriate. The An Tasice Planning Office therefore made a submission stating our objection to the development as planned. There is an ongoing complicated problem at our Burren property at Gortileka, relating to restricted access for grazing organic Belted Galloway cattle. We have a rental agreement with a local farmer as the cattle are essential in controlling the prolific growth of hazel between the limestone slabs. Fortunately it now appears that the issue will be resolved through local mediation. The Gort Weighhouse is also overseen partly by the Clare Association, and it has had window and other repairs completed through local initiatives. A problem of trespassing feral goats on our island property in Co. Donegal was resolved through action by the local An Taisce Association with the guidance of the NE Office. Mongan bog at Clonmacnoise has an on-going EU-LIFE restoration project, and our protected bat-house outside Kenmare is a protected



The Grove Morehampton Road

maternity roost for lesser horseshoe bats. Our wildlife porperty at the Grove, Morehampton Road, Dublin 4 is a unique site for native wildlife despite its busy urban surroundings. Birds, insects and small mammals are abundant as well as frogs as a result of restoring the small pond. Late in the year we discovered a small ridge tent in the site, being used by one of the many unfortunate homeless people. In conjunction with the Property Chair we decided that it was important to courteously advise the trespasser to vacate the site and a week later this had happened. We would very much value the input of local An Taisce members and supporters in overseeing and managing the site, and to this end we hope to make informal contacts over the coming year.

NE Officer Elaine's work remit is enormous, and her reports to the committee on the work of the NE office are comprehensive and absorbing. During the year she made a number of important submissions to government consultations, notably to agriculture related issues (the submissions are now accessible on-line at antaisce.org). These issues are very problematic, and are largely related to government policy for intensification of agriculture as prescribed in Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025. Adverse impacts from these policies affect water quality with appalling levels of river and lake pollution, increased nitrate levels arising from excessive application of fertisisers and slurry, increased biodiversity and habitat loss with catastrophic collapse in insect numbers, and others. In 2017 EU agriculture commissioner Phil Hogan gave a dramatic wake-up call to government about the inevitability of huge EU fines in the near future due to environmental and climate change impacts. There was little evidence in 2019 that his warning was being heeded. The An Taisce submission to the 'Heritage Ireland 2030' public consultation is a comprehensive critique by Elaine, in conjunction with Ian Lumley, to the expanding crisis in both natural and built environment. The proposed Heritage Bill 2019 (which aimed to relax restraints on hedge cutting and burning of scrub on uplands) attracted enormous opposition from environmental NGOs and supporters. Fortunately it was later dropped by the government in reaction to prolonged dry spring weather.

The year began on a positive note, when an excellent two-day National Biodiversity Conference was held in Dublin Castle in February at which there were numerous presentations by a wide variety of NE practitioners (including Elaine). President Michael D. Higgins made an inspirational speech that expressed the hope – and concerns – of all who view the ongoing damage to Ireland's vulnerable environment and wildlife. Near year-end another positive indicator was the surprise government declaration of a national climate and biodiversity emergency, making Ireland only the second country in the world to do so. We hope and trust that government policy will reflect this dramatic development.

Our committee meetings are always interesting, and we welcome new members. We can hold on-line meetings to facilitate those who cannot attend in person. We would welcome greater geographical representation, especially in relation to our NE properties. Do consider joining us!





The Grove, Morehampton Road, Dublin

Climate Committee (ATCC) Report



Ruaidhri O'Boyle,
Committee Secretary

The An Taisce Climate Committee (ATCC) continues to meet on the second Tuesday of each month, with between 10 and 17 committee members attending meetings throughout the year. 2019 also marked the fifth birthday of ATCC (more on that later).

From the perspective of climate change, you'd be led to believe that 2019 was a good year for action. In May, Ireland acknowledged our climate and biodiversity emergency - officially at least. In so doing, Ireland became one of the first countries to act in this way, following on from the Scots in April. Ireland published an All-of-Government Climate Action Plan in the summer, accompanied by much fanfare from those behind the plan. In truth, while these events should signify the step change needed to address our obligations under the Paris Agreement of 2015, the inactivity that followed each only served to reinforce the need for NGOs and civil society to engage on the level of climate action required and to tackle the vested interests that would hope to downplay Ireland's moral responsibility to act.

There were changes in some of the executive positions at ATCC in 2019. After his election as **Chair of An Taisce**, Phil Kearney stepped aside from the role of Chair of ATCC and Kevin O'Farrell was elected in his place in June 2019. The Committee also decided that deputy positions were needed to spread the workload attached to the executive positions. Ciara Beausang was elected Vice Chair in November and Phoebe Duvall, the An Taisce Planning and Environmental Policy Officer, was elected Deputy Public Relations Office in July. Ruaidhri O'Boyle continued in his role as Secretary of the Committee and John Gibbons in his role as PRO.

ATCC continues to set aside time each month for an '**Education slot**' to cover diverse topics that the committee may not have otherwise considered, or which could have parallels to work the committee is doing. In 2019, ATCC received a presentation from a group of progressive farmers; from James Nix as his role of director, freight and climate at the European eNGO, Transport & Environment; Éilis Ryan of Financial Justice Ireland; Sadhbh O'Neill of Stop Climate Chaos on the UNFCCC negotiations in Bonn; and used other slots to reflect on the work of the committee and how to map the way forward.

Five years of ATCC

At the kind invitation of Kilkenny native John Gibbons, committee members spent a weekend in the Marble County at the end of March. This allowed everyone to review the achievements of ATCC over the previous five years, to discuss their individual motivations for getting involved and to map out the future direction and work of the committee.

During 2019, the Committee decided to codify its policy in relation to **flying** while acting on behalf of ATCC. A modified Borda count ('MBC') was used to decide the members' preference from five options. Ultimately, the members decided that 'ATCC members shall not fly when representing ATCC'. While this exercise was a small step in itself, ATCC hopes this can set an example for other groups to follow, both within An Taisce and externally. The committee will review policy positions in other areas on an ongoing basis.

At short notice the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference, **COP25**, was moved from Chile to Spain, where it was held under the presidency of the Chilean government. Committee members Ian Lumley and Professor John Sweeney attended the meeting in Madrid. Prof. Sweeney produced a series of reports from the meeting, which were published on the An Taisce website during the event, while Ian Lumley presented at one of the side events (on the topic of Climate Heritage: Mobilizing the Culture and Heritage Sectors for Climate Action). Additionally Ian Lumley travelled as part of an Irish Environmental Network delegation to Brussels in October. The value



COP25 Madrid



Committee Chair - Kevin O'Farrell

to NGOs at these events is most keenly felt in the networking opportunities and the exchange of views with other organisations with a similar keen focus on climate action.

ATCC was supportive of the weekly **student climate strikes** and several members of the committee were involved in stewarding at the mass matches to Leinster House in March, May and September. The voice of the next generations, which are going to be impacted most by the climate breakdown, deserves and needs to be heard by decision makers everywhere.

ATCC continued to produce high quality **submissions** on all manner of environmental and ecological matters. The committee would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Natural Environment Officer Elaine McGoff in this area. Of note was the submission on the followup to the agricultural sector strategy Food Wise 2025. Other submission topics included the Gas Networks Ireland ten year development plan (in a consultation undertaken by the Utilities Regulator); a code of good agricultural practice for reducing ammonia; Ireland's long-term strategy on greenhouse gas emission reductions; the development of the Biofuels Obligation Scheme for the period 2021 to 2030 (consultation run by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment) and the future of the beef sector (run by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture), which led to an appearance in front of the Joint Committee itself. An Taisce was represented by Charles Stanley Smith and Ian Lumley.

Teagasc Engagement

In September, ATCC published correspondence with Teagasc, dating back to 2017, which centred around the need for State agencies to respond in defence of scientific consensus and its implications for Irish agricultural policy and practice. In a substantive letter issued in July 2017, ATCC had privately posed a number of questions to Teagasc. The committee was concerned that some of the climate action policy advice Teagasc was giving, regarding the potential mitigation in the agriculture sector, was notably insufficient to inform policy scientifically. In August 2019 these concerns were publicly re-iterated, in an article published by agriland.ie. ATCC received no response from Teagasc to any of this correspondence, but remains open to, and would very much welcome, a substantive, considered and constructive engagement on these important issues.

JOCCA report and All-of-Government Climate Action Plan

Two key developments in 2019 were the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) report, issued in March, and the Climate Action Plan issued by the Government in June. ATCC was active throughout this period, from starting the year with a press release consideration of what getting Ireland's efforts 'back on track' really meant, to cautioning that 'winning slowly will be the same as losing' when commenting publicly on the action plan itself, after it was published in June.

Movie screening: Nick Armstrong and Aideen O'Dochartaigh were involved in two screenings in March and June of Burned, a documentary which explored and discussed the accelerating destruction of forests and blatant greenwashing of the burgeoning biomass power industry.

These events were joint ATCC/Biofuelwatch efforts, hosted by the Patagonia outlet in Dublin city centre.

Media and communications

The previously observed upswing in coverage of climate-related matters by Irish media continued in 2019. This was best encapsulated by the staging in November of Climate Week by RTÉ across all its media channels. There was some excellent programming produced and it could well have been the best ever public broadcasting on the issue of climate breakdown in Ireland. This scale of coverage was not witnessed previously and, regrettably, has not been followed up on by our national broadcaster. ATCC remains hopeful that such events will increase demand for follow-up programming on a regular basis. What the mainstream media channels can do with a little focussed programming could have major implications for national and local appetite to address our climate obligations.

Throughout the year, ATCC issued press releases on many significant events. In addition to the aforementioned JOCCA report, Climate Action Plan and engagement with Teagasc, statements also covered the need for a just transition in the move away from peat electricity generation; commentary on the EPA's annual GHG inventories; the listing of the Shannon LNG project as a key infrastructure project; the National Parks and Wildlife Service's assessment of habitats in Ireland; inaccurate statements by Government ministers on climate balance and carbon sinks; commentary on the Climate Change Advisory Council's Assessment of Agriculture & Land Sector; and the perennial climate cul de sac that is biofuels and biofuel investment

These releases, and more are available at antaisce.org/news.

Properties Committee Report



Trish O'Connell,
Chair, Properties Committee

I was delighted to work alongside the following Properties Committee members in 2019: Ian Lumley, Charles-Stanley Smith, Peter Wise (Gort Weigh House and Burren Lands), Geoff Clarke (Boyne Navigation), Veronica Heywood (Booterstown Marsh Advisory Committee - BMAC), Declan Murphy (NEC Chair), Geoff Power, Susan Casey and Kate Chandler. Chartered Surveyor Nigel Bennett has been very kindly assisting the committee in its efforts to get the Booterstown Marsh lease renewed.

Howth Courthouse

In 2019 we handed the keys of Howth Courthouse back to Fingal County Council to coincide with their investment in the site and the ending of our 35 year lease. The property had been leased to An Taisce since Rosalie Andrews and many other An Taisce members restored the property from a shell 'with a tree growing inside' to a landmark hub on the Howth seafront used for a weekly book sale, art classes and home to the local Community Employment Scheme. The Council is currently renovating the building and making it wheelchair-accessible, and is also re-locating the Fingal Tourism Office there from a kiosk on the seafront. The renovation and accessibility upgrade of the property is a welcome development and An Taisce is glad to see that the great work carried out by our members in the 1980s is being built on to make the space accessible to more people and community groups. Fingal County Council will have full management and round-the-clock access facilities in place which means they are best placed to manage the property going forward.

Rosalie Andrews sadly passed away in June 2019 in her 96th year. We are sure she would approve of the renovated facility which will be re-opened to the public in the latter half of 2020.

Tailors' Hall

Several events were hosted at Tailors' Hall throughout the year including a wedding, the annual Liberties Blue Rinse Ball, and various music events and festivals. We also had infrequent uninvited visitors to the courtyard on the High Street side in the form of trespassers. Great credit is due to Louis McGee who has done sterling work in maintaining the outside areas in the face of this trespassing and arranging logistics in the building throughout the year for the various events that we hold.

Discussions have been steadily progressing with the developers interested in sub-leasing the basement for a coffee shop enterprise, with discussions currently focussing around terms and conditions for the lease agreement.

Booterstown Marsh

There was a sewage spill that caused an algal growth to spread across the reserve. Dun Laoghaire Association's TEE (Trees Environment & Events) committee contacted the EPA and Dublin City Council for assistance. Pollution Control in DCC said it was a misconnection from a premises upstream and the flow was stopped. There was a clean-up during National Spring Clean Week and another in October organised by TEE. BMAC (Booterstown Marsh Advisory Committee) arranged a







Tailors Hall



Sparrowhawk at the Grove, Dublin. Credit Gustavo Zoladz

field trip to welcome the Pale Bellied Brent Geese on their arrival from the Canadian Arctic in early November, with a field trip from Sean Hogan from Birdwatch. Sean leads field trips to the reserve on a regular basis and contributes his bird count - last year's included the rarely spotted Water Rail. BMAC Chair Veronica Heywood is representing the reserve on the Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere Stakeholder's Committee.

The developer, Paddy McKillen Junior, submitted plans into both the Dublin City Council and DLR Planning offices for an ambitious development on the adjoining site to Booterstown Marsh. Further to consultation with representatives of BMAC and Dun Laoghaire Local Association Executive, a response was submitted by An Taisce Planning Office to both councils objecting to the development.

A big priority for us at the moment is the renewal of the Marsh lease in September 2020. We have been working to see if we can renew or purchase the lease.

Gort Weigh House and Burren Land

The Burren Committee is calling for more volunteers to help the committee in 2020. It hopes to have a new management plan for the land and a long term grazing agreement in place so that the land becomes a working Burren farm as part of the Burren Programme in its next round, possibly 2023.



Fox at the Grove. Credit Gustavo Zoladz

Conservation of Gort Weigh House is now largely complete. The next job is replacement of the windows (which are not original having been replaced in the 1960s). This will be looked at in Autumn 2020 now that everything is weather-proof.

The Grove

Declan Murphy NEC Chair joined the committee in 2019 as he shares an interest in many of our properties, in particular The Grove at Morehampton Road. One of his first tasks was to visit The Grove with Ian Lumley to remove graffiti and overhanging branches in April. On a subsequent visit to the site late in the autumn, Declan noticed a tent on the property. The tent owner moved on after we left a courteous note asking if he/she could remove the tent.

Committee member Geoff Power produced a documentary called 'Will Ireland Survive 2050?' which was aired during Climate Change week on RTE in November. The documentary featured The Grove and listed An Taisce in the credits.

Boyne Navigation

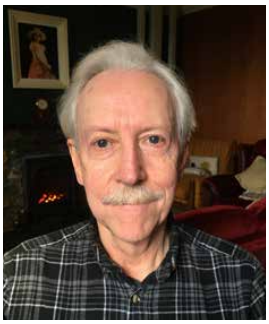
Much credit is due to the Boyne Navigation volunteers for the restoration of Staleen Lock near Donore. Much of the damaged masonry in the walls of the Lock has been restored and coping stones have been replaced. The gate contractor successfully installed the four lock gates in May. Final work in completing the gates including the fitting of the sluices, rack gear and bridging planks is nearly finished. Work remains to be completed on the earth bank along the north side of the Lock. IWAI Boyne Navigation havs applied for a grant from the Indaver Community Fund has the completion of this work

Discussions are ongoing with Meath County Council regarding the appointment of consultants to undertake the environmental and engineering design studies proposed on the Greenway /Boyne Navigation project. This work will feed into to the planning for the Greenway and the works to restore the Navigation.



Staleen Lock

Monuments and Antiquities Committee Report



Dr. Mark Clinton,
Monuments & Antiquities

Renewed development across the country has increased the threat to our National Built Heritage. A steady stream of reports and inquiries from both the membership and members of the public continued throughout the year.

Ringforts are particularly vulnerable, especially if the surface elements have been ploughed-out. The most that one can expect from the relevant agencies of the State is an insistence on a scientific excavation: their so-called “Preservation by Record” policy (or as we refer to it - “Destruction by Documentation”). An examination of a site with archaeological features unearthed as site clearance proceeds, seldom results in cessation of activities,even if it does turn up something significant. The justification given for noting and then continuing, frequently is that examples of the feature are widespread. The justification given being the multiplicity of the monument type. Examples dealt with arose at Marsh Road, to the immediate east of Drogheda, which lay in the ‘take’ of a housing development, and in the townland of Naul in County Meath, which is threatened by quarrying associated work. The reported ‘quite common’ ‘ringfort’, as it was described by the Minster for Heritage in media reports, on the former lands of the late Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave, at Knocklyon in south County Dublin, upon a close scrutiny of the excavation report revealed the site to be, in fact, a Secular Cemetery of Early Medieval date. This class of monument is much rarer in numbers and accordingly of greater significance than portrayed in the media. The membership of An Taisce came into its own by alerting us to the imminent destruction of a bivallate ringfort near Castletown in County Meath. A quickly prepared report was dispatched to the National Monuments Service and the illegal works were stopped. A file is being prepared for the Gardaí by the NMS.



Baltinglass Hill, credit David Halpin @CircleStories



Poolbeg Station with Pigeon House to the right of the chimneys. Credit Gabriel Ramos on Unsplash

Quarrying work is also posing a threat to the spectacular monument at Dún Ailinne in County Kildare. This hilltop enclosure is recognised as one of the four great sites of Early Celtic tradition in Ireland – Tara, Cruachain and Emain Macha being the other three. The enclosure functioned as a ceremonial site. It contains approximately 13 hectares. Many of the mass gatherings, functions and major ceremonial assemblies would have been performed on the surrounding hillslopes as opposed to within the enclosure itself, i.e. not on the inner sacred ground. Unbelievably, quarrying work is being conducted on these very hillslopes. This can only be described as a degradation of the integrated landscape, and thus, in effect, to the major monument itself.

Baltinglass in County Wicklow is at the heart of a remarkable necklace of hilltop monuments. The monuments in question consist of seven hillforts and three enclosures. This is a striking number given that there are only about one hundred hillforts in total in Ireland. The fertile valley of the River Slaney snakes through the complex. The five host hills dominate the landscape. An unimpeded horizon was obviously of critical importance in the genesis of these monuments. This is clearly not the appropriate location for a windfarm.

On an ultimately happier note, my An Taisce Antiquities associate Ruadhán MacEoin observed that the three cannons hitherto positioned outside the ESB plant at the Pigeon House had disappeared. A series of missives to the Dublin City Archaeologist, the NMS, and the ESB, finally established that the guns had been taken inside the complex 'for their own safety'. These guns probably date to 1798/1803 and very likely were originally positioned in the West Gatehouse of the Pigeon House Armoury. It is of paramount importance that these historic cannon guns be given a prominent public place of display in any forthcoming development of the site.

On the 6th of February a meeting was held in the Custom House with senior officials of the National Monuments Service. One of the main items on the agenda was the forthcoming Monuments and Archaeological Heritage Bill. As feared, the Bill in its current form, as verbally outlined, does not address the core deficiencies in the extant protective legislation as largely defined by the 2004 Amendment to the National Monuments Act. In 2006 the Supreme Court noted that the 2004 Amendment had 'removed a bundle of protections' from our built heritage. In a Dáil debate held on the 17th of June 2004 Eamon Ryan TD stated that the Amendment gave the Minister 'massive powers'. Sadly, the last sixteen years has witnessed the physical removal of a striking number of archaeological and historical monuments. Simply put, there are currently absolutely no restraints whatsoever on the relevant ministre du jour when it comes to issuing the order for the destruction of any given monument, including National Monuments. There are no checks and balances. No court of arbitration. No legal avenues of appeal. The 'bundle of protections' lost in 2004 must be restored by the forthcoming Bill. A balance must be struck. Otherwise, the endless official flaunting of 'our glorious history and heritage' will be well beyond the realms of hypocrisy.



Rathgall Hillfort - credit Kevin B Leigh unsplash



Baltinglass Hill, credit David Halpin @CircleStories

National Cycling Coordinator's Report



Dr Damien Ó Túama
National Cycling Coordinator

2019 was quite a fruitful year for cycling advocacy. The strategic partnership between An Taisce and Cyclist.ie - the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network (the all-island network of urban and rural cycling campaigns - see https://cyclist.ie/) remained in place, and campaigning work continued apace with the aim of challenging car dominance and re-establishing strong cycling cultures.

Raising the Profile of Cycling

Our network of cycle campaigning organisations expanded in 2019 to over 20. The new groups of Carlow Cycling Campaign and Wexford Bicycle User Group (Wex BUG) emerged, Kilkenny Cycling Campaign was revived, and Galway Cycling Campaign rejoined the network. Limerick Cycling Campaign grew into a really strong outfit and their motion that 10% of Limerick's road transport budget will go to cycling infrastructure was approved by the Council's Travel and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee. Additionally, by the end of 2019, there was a vibrant (nine-member) Executive Committee steering our work with reps on board from Cork, Clonakilty, Limerick, Galway, Sligo, Skerries, Maynooth and Dublin. With an active membership on board, we have well briefed spokespersons available for local and national media, and this has enabled us to make a big impact in keeping everyday cycling high on the political agenda.

Running Campaigns

The *#allocate4cycling* campaign ran throughout 2019 with the aim of prioritising investment in cycling through stressing its many benefits. Many PQs (Parliamentary Questions) were posed to TDs so as to help disentangle figures on the annual spend on cycling (in 2018 approx 2% of the land transport capital budget). Our pre-budget submission called on the Government to invest a minimum of 10% of that budget in cycling, with immediate effect.

Linked to the #allocate4cycling campaign, cycling advocates and affiliated bodies Love 30, Cycling without Age and Irish Pedestrian Network, teamed up with health advocates, Irish Heart Foundation, Irish Cancer Society, Irish Doctors for the Environment, Diabetes Ireland and Association for Health Promotion Ireland to co-sign an open letter to the Taoiseach asking for concrete measures to facilitate active travel to form an integral part of the Climate Action Plan. This culminated in an event in Buswells Hotel attended by Professor Donal O'Shea (National Clinical Lead for Obesity and Hon. President of Cyclist.ie) and some key members of the Oireachtas.

In May 2019, following similar campaigns at previous elections, cycling advocates ran the #ibikeivote social media campaign to encourage those registered to vote in the local and European elections to get on their bikes and vote - and opt for candidates serious about active travel. Voters were then encouraged to post photos online of their bikes parked at voting stations while displaying the logo. The ultimate aim is that more candidates who are sympathetic to our goals are voted in and this will create further change in the years ahead. We will see in due course if this plan bears fruit.

In regard to legislative changes, we very much welcomed the introduction of the new regulation on the dangerous overtaking of cyclists by Minister Shane Ross. This followed sterling campaigning work by Cyclist.ie member group Stayin' Alive at 1.5, spear-headed by Phil Skelton (now of the Wex Bug group) over a six year period. The essence of the new law is that An Garda Síochána has a new specific regulation regarding the dangerous overtaking of a person on a bike. Our hope is that this law helps to stimulate a wider cultural shift towards giving people on bikes more space.



Phil Skelton (on the bike) with Moyagh Murdock (CEO of the RSA), Minister Shane Ross, and Chief Superintendent Paul Cleary at the launch of cyclist specific dangerous overtaking legislation in November 2019



Irish NGO delegates attending Velo-city in the National Convention Centre, Dublin in June 2019 (Photo by Dr. Paul Corcoran, Dublin Cycling Campaign)

Submissions, Presentations and Meetings

In 2019 we made over 40 submissions to government departments, agencies and local authorities – e.g. to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on 'Personal Powered Transport' (i.e. 'micro-mobility modes' which include 'e-scooters'), and to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action. Additionally, we were invited to present to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport - along with Dublin Cycling Campaign and I Bike Dublin – essentially to make the case for investing in cycling. This was an important milestone for us and, again, we hope it will help to shift the priority given to active travel in future policies - including the new Sustainable Mobility Policy (under preparation in 2020).

The work on submissions was complemented by face-to-face meetings with officials from the Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, the National Transport Authority, and three separate sections of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Sustainable Transport, Road Safety and Tourism) - once again so as to push for greater attention to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, we held regular meetings with Cycling Ireland, including with their newly appointed CEO Matt McKerrow, exchanging information on cycling opportunities and developments.



Cycling advocates presenting at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on 20th November 2019. From left to right: Mairead Forsythe (Cyclist.ie and Love 30), Damien Ó Tuama (An Taisce and Cyclist.ie), Kevin Baker (Dublin Cycling Campaign), Ciarán Ferrie (I BIKE DUBLIN), Alan Downey (I BIKE DUBLIN) and Louise Williams (Dublin Cycling Campaign)

Velo-city Cycling Conference

A major highlight of 2019 was Dublin hosting the Velo-city conference - the largest global gathering of cycling advocates and policy-makers, organised annually by the European Cyclists' Federation collaborating with the host city. There was a massive effort expended by local campaigners to shape the conference and the many side-events around it. One of the stand-out presentations was by Philippe Crist from the OECD – his message was that we must not be bewitched by smart technology visions of cities of connected, autonomous and electric (mainly four wheeled) vehicles – where walking, cycling and enjoying public space play second fiddle. There were many other sessions around designing communities for people and on knitting cycling into high quality public transport systems. Details of the presentations of Irish delegates can be found on www.dublincycling.ie. Feedback from most of the 1373 delegates was positive in regard to how the conference was run, but there was abhorrence as to how car dominated Dublin still is. Delegates more used to higher quality cycling conditions, such as Klaus Bondam, the CEO of the Danish Cyclists' Federation, were not shy about making these views known to the Irish media. This candid feedback helps to keep pressure on decision-makers – and accelerate the development of high quality infrastructure such as the Liffey Cycle Route.

To conclude, and in regard to the funding of the National Cycling Coordinator position, we wish to sincerely thank Dublin Cycling Campaign, Cycling Ireland (the sports cycling body) and some generous individual donors from within Cyclist.ie who continued to fund the post in 2019. Equally, the office and broader organisational support of An Taisce has been vital since the post was established in 2013.

For more information on the cycling advocacy stream of work in An Taisce, please contact:
Dr. Damien Ó Tuama, National Cycling Coordinator – damien.otuama@antaisce.org, and check out www.cyclist.ie.

CARLOW Association Report



Eamonn A Moore
An Taisce Carlow Association

The River Barrow
A Recreational And Sporting Amenity

The River Barrow is a 'navigation' from Athy to St. Mullins with 22 locks (one double lock) currently controlled and administered by Waterways Ireland. As the Barrow Navigation was formerly a commercial waterway for movement of goods and passengers up and downriver, there were bye-laws, regulations and protocols to control this traffic, some of which are still in existence and observed, although many are now redundant and forgotten.

There are long established users of the River Barrow and its environs such as walkers and strollers on the track-line or trackway, and anglers from its banks. Swimming in the river was once widely practised, mostly near or at weirs, and while this activity is now advised against, nonetheless, swimmers still persist and can often get into difficulties themselves or cause difficulties for other users. There are also swimming club facilities established in favourite spots along the river. Afloat there are pleasure craft from Inland Waterways Association of Ireland to local sightseeing craft to larger hire-craft passing up and downriver.

Rowing Clubs have their premises on the banks and their craft are to be seen regularly practicing on the water as well as on regatta days which are water festival events. Small craft sports such as kayaking, canoeing and angling are also part of the established pattern of river users. Many of these activities date back centuries and many have developed practices and protocols to ensure the participants can pursue their particular activity or sport without interfering with the enjoyment of the amenity by other users.

In recent years, sporting speed boats and jet-skies have made their appearance on the river and pose hazards for other users, as well as breaking existing speed bye-laws. This behaviour is extremely dangerous as well as anti-social, and would need enforcement of regulations to control them, or even prohibit their use on the River Barrow altogether.

There is an obvious need for a review of bye-laws/regulations and protocols to ensure access and enjoyment of the river amenity for all users. An inventory of current users would give a picture of demands on the amenity. This would inform the LA/Waterways Ireland on drawing up suitable protocols for access and priorities. Proposals/applications for further use of the amenity could be required to provide an impact assessment and to propose how access could be accommodated.

CLARE Association Report

Anny Wise
Clare Association

This has been a difficult year as Climate Change has thrown storm after storm at the West of Ireland – and we changed our priorities to Climate Action and Biodiversity. We intend to continue on this theme for this year, working at community level in the hope that the authorities will start to realise the urgency of the situation.

During Biodiversity week last year, we ran a Bee Campaign in Shannon with the help

of the local community fund and gave information packs including seeds to Tidy Towns and all the hotels in the area as many have extensive grounds. We also managed to sell several of these packs throughout the county - enough to cover the whole year's administration costs.

Care of the Burren land caused some problems this year due to the storms and flooding, but the cattle kept the pathways clear without human assistance and we still managed to reduce the encroaching hazel scrub and enlarge the open grassy areas again early this year. The dedicated committee members were reduced due to injury (not acquired on the Burren) and the need for farmers have weekday jobs to make ends meet. So it was a rush to get this done by the time the Habitat Directive was due to cause restrictions. We are calling for more volunteers to help the committee this coming year. The Burren committee hopes to have a new management plan for the land and a long term grazing agreement in place so that the land becomes a working Burren farm as part of the Burren Programme in its next round, possibly 2023.

Things have worked out well on the Gort Weigh House as we have co-opted two new members both from Co. Galway. The first acts as key holder and caretaker and lives in Gort and the second Is an Architectural Heritage Specialist. Conservation is now largely complete. The next job is replacement of the windows (which are not original having been replaced in the 1960s). We will look at this in the autumn now that everything is weather-proof.

We held our Annual Bat Meeting for the 16th year and are very much involved with the Clare PPN, including representation on SPCs.

We have postponed our AGM from March until (at least) May due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Part of a work group on An Taisce's Burren Land, 13th February 2019, credit Peter Wise

DONEGAL Association Report







Glenveagh Nature Walk

Noel Foley
An Taisce Donegal Association

AGM: We held our AGM on May 7th 2019. This was preceded by a well-atended (53 people) illustrated talk titled "Habitat Restoration and Sustainable Access of Errigal" by Rosita Mahony of Donegal Co Council and the ASCENT programme. Our committee remains unchanged.

We had **7 committee meetings** during the year.

We have been concerned re works at Inch Level in **Lough Swilly SPA** and their impact on wading birds as well as on migrant bird populations. We have liaised with Birdwatch Ireland and met reps from a local group about this matter. We have been in contact with Planning Enforcement of Donegal Co Council re unauthorised development at Narin Portnoo Golf Club (Cahelgolan). Donegal Co Council issued a Warning Letter subsequently.

We have **representatives on the following bodies:** The Donegal Co Council Heritage Forum, Donegal Local Development Company and the Errigal Stakeholders Group/ASCENT project.

We were invited to and participated in the **Scoping Workshop re the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) for a Visitor Experience Development Plan for Glenveagh National Park**, the **Audit of Columban Heritage**, the **Environment Showcase on Climate Change** hosted by Donegal Co. Council as well the information meeting re the public consultation on **Draft Heritage Ireland 2030 Plan** (to which we subsequently made a submission).

Our calendar "Treasures of Donegal 2020" had a print run of 1,200. A strategic sales plan has resulted in increased sales.

DJ O'Sullivan Papers: Daniel James O'Sullivan, Lighthouse Keeper (1906 – 1994) contributed the feature "Land and Water" to the Irish Press, daily except Sundays, for 45 years without a break. He reEred to Donegal.

Members of our committee liaised with his family and discovered a considerable tranche (approx. 420 A4 sheets) of unpublished material. It seems they were on facs paper (facsed from Tory Island lighthouse). As such they were and are liable to fade when exposed to light so we had them scanned to pdf format to ensure their longevity. We subsequently contacted Dr. Niamh Brennan of the Donegal Archive, Donegal Council and facilitated the donation of the original papers and pdf files by Mr O'Sullivan's family to the Donegal Archive.

Guided Nature Walks: We had 8 events in the period May to July. Total attendance was 340, average attendance was 42, attendance per walk varied from 12 to 86 people.

Topics covered in these walks included bats, song birds, butterflies, machair, woodland, sea shore, beach and sand dunes, bogs and woodlands. These events were, for the most part, funded by a grant from Donegal Co Council under its Community Action Environment Fund 2019/2020 and a grant for National Biodiversity Week 2019.

We visited Oakfield Park, Raphoe during our survey of **Heritage Trees** in Donegal as part of the Donegal Heritage Plan 2016-2020. .

Sponsorship: We again sponsored the May McClintock Nature Friendly Garden competition run by Letterkenny Tidy Towns.

Rough Island (An Taisce property, Mulroy Bay): We monitor the small herd of 9, seemingly feral, sheep and goats that were introduced on the island about 5 years ago. We also take cognisance of the regeneration of Sitka spruce from the seed of the previous rotation of that species. We observed, late in March 2019, that greylag geese were nesting on the island and as a consequence, in order to avoid disturbance, we did not visit the island for the remainder of the year.

Butterfly Garden: We installed new signage, pruned and weeded as necessary.

Please **find us on Facebook** - "An Taisce Donegal" as well as **http://www.antaisce.org/local/** donegal for informaEon on our acEviEes.

DUBLIN CITY Association Report

Kevin Duff
An Taisce Dublin City Association

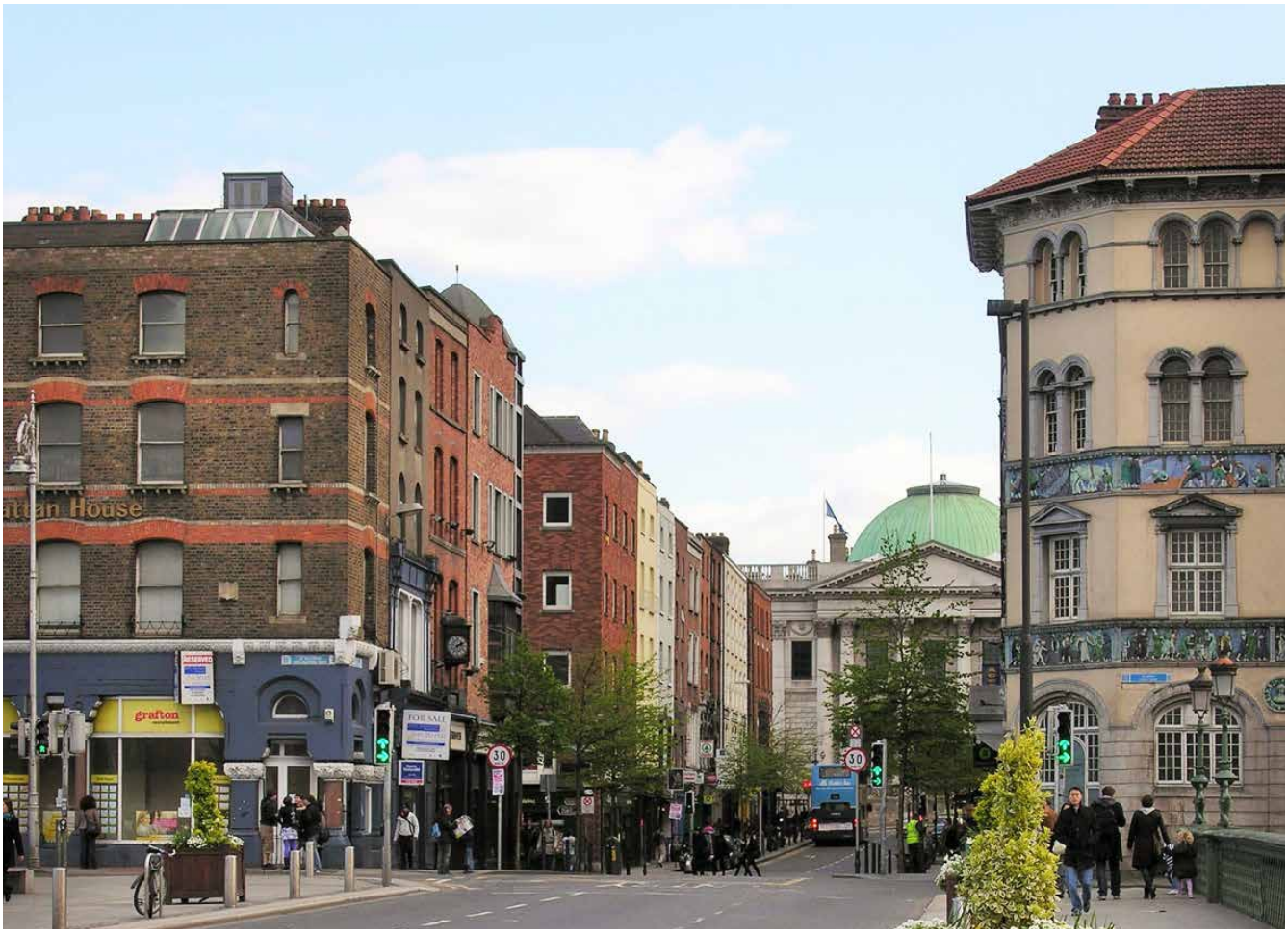
Planning monitoring work continued in 2019. The year was dominated by the fallout from the reckless scrapping by the Fine Gael-led government of long-established height protections for the historic centre of Dublin.

The 'Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines' introduced by former Minister Eoghan Murphy at the end of 2018 essentially opens up all areas of Irish cities for construction of high buildings, without adequate safeguards to protect architecturally and historically important areas, and without dealing with issue of the massive environmental costs around the construction and running of high buildings (with a Climate Emergency ironically declared by the same government in May 2019).

The hurriedly-passed guidelines resulted in the permitting on appeal in April of a 22-storey building at Tara Street which had already been refused three times over the course of two planning applications (once by the appeals board and twice by the local authority).

Then in October, an application was lodged for a 21-storey building at the site of Apollo House, also on Tara Street but closer to areas of outstanding importance and sensitivity like Trinity College and College Green, and despite there being already a very substantial development permitted for this location. Approved by the city council, the plan is currently under appeal.

These high buildings at Tara Street, if permitted / constructed, will constitute a massive intrusion on the established character and skyline of the city centre and on a number of important Conservation Areas including the Liffey Quays, O'Connell Street, College Green,



Grattan Bridge



Joyce House, Ushers Island

and Trinity College, and will seriously jeopardise the city's chances of achieving UNESCO World Heritage Site status for 'City of Dublin', which is included as an objective in successive Dublin City Development plans.

The Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines 2018 are in conflict with existing local and national heritage protection policy and will need to be revisited by the new government.

Also covered in 2019 was the proposal lodged in November for conversion of No. 15 Usher's Island, setting for James Joyce's The Dead, to a 56-bed hostel. No. 15 is a handsome redbrick Liffey-front house of the late-Georgian period with columned stone doorcase.

The principal importance of the house is its place in literary history as the setting for Joyce's The Dead, described by TS Eliot as "one of the greatest short stories ever written". Thus it has a cultural significance that few other Georgian terraced buildings of Dublin have.

Having sat vacant for several years previously, the house was successfully rescued and restored in the early 2000s as a Joyce-related visitor centre, but fell vacant again in the wake of the economic crash and was sold in 2017.

While reuse of the building is needed, conversion to a hostel would not be appropriate due to the associated extensive subdivision and changes required to the historic layout, the increased intensity of use which would result in deleterious wear and tear on the historic fabric, and the loss of the cultural use.

Also problematic is the proposed extension block at the rear which would block out the arched staircase windows. An Taisce has recommended that the precedent of No. 14 Henrietta Street be considered. In 2001 An Bord Pleanála refused permission for a similar proposal for a hostel here and the building is now a thriving and successful museum.

Keep up to date with planning issues etc. on our social media Facebook page: 'An Taisce Dublin City'

SOUTH DUBLIN Association Report

Gerald Tomkin
Chairman An Taisce, South Dublin Branch

It is with sadness that I report on the death of Norman Campion. A past chairman of our branch a past Vice Chairman of An Taisce and Chairman of the Education unit of An Taisce. He was National President of An Oige for 8 years, founder of the Industrial Heritage of Ireland and involved in the Railway Preservation Society..

Norman was one of these rare people who had intelligence, wisdom and common sense. When he asked you to do something you just willingly did it without argument! I had firsthand experience of this when he suggested that I take over the Chairmanship of An Taisce South Dublin Branch! Also an example of his humor!

Norman was full of ideas and enthusiasm. His last project was to organise a museum to celebrate the stonemasons and Quarry men who lived and worked in South Dublin and north Wicklow, the Museum to reside in Fernhill. The possibility of training workshops for stone mason apprentices and a place for artists working in stone to be attached. We hope to persue these plans to fruition.

Norman was a kindly, humorous and a gentleman who advised and helped so many people in so many walks of life. He is sorely missed.

We feel that the new administration and Council of An Taisce have injected new life into AT and we have so much more confidence in the future.

At branch level we struggle for new members and are dismayed at our advancing age profile. On the other hand, we have a loyal and enthusiastic membership and our organised events have been well supported.

Planning.

Our planning committee meets monthly under the expert chairmanship of Andrew Parkes. North side is managed by Patrick Leonard. Chief concerns are the houses built without planning permission and remain in spite of Court orders. The reluctance of the Council to implement removal is a worry.

The Hellfire Club and Massy Woods development of concern and, in particular, the plans to erect an interpretive centre in an exposed area on the hill. We have suggested an alternative.

On the South side David Rowe has an amazing memory of previous planning applications. We responded to the Dundrum Centre development by making a plea for retention of the streetscape on the main road and supported the proposal of the Imagine Dundrum group for a Civic Centre with open space.

We watch the Cherrywood development, the development around Shanganagh Castle /Woodbrook and the proposed development in Old Conna and comment on many of the proposals involving curtilage of protected structures.

Lecture series.

Eileen Collins again organised a remarkable platform of speakers. Alas most had to be cancelled because of Covid 19 but we did hear Peter Pearson on County Dublin and its disappearing heritage a history of Howth harbour given by Rob Goodbody.

Norman Campion, before his death had organised a Climate change meeting. The Lecture hall in The Goat was full and a very enthuastic audience heard Prof John Fitzgerald, Prof Frank Coveny and Dr Eanna Ni Lamhna give personal views of aspects of our changing environment. A very lively discussion took place and this year we hope to repeat the exercise as an annual, named event. Perhaps the Norman Campion Debate.

The highlight of our year was the 100th birthday party to celebrate David Rowe. David was past chairman of An Taisce and an amazing member now of our planning committee. The lunch party started with champagne kindly donated by a past chairman Dr Sylvia Dockery and ended with an amusing speech of thanks by David who had just driven up from celebrations in Wexford and after lunch was probably driving off to his place in Clare, no doubt to cut down trees with his chain saw in his plantation.

A Christmas Concert took place with the Rosney Choir, Kilternan Junior Choir and Kevin O'Sullivan Organist and director of Music Kilternan.

Our annual outing to the country side was very successfully organised by Norman Campion, then Patrick Glanville and Tom Kivlehan took over the reins.

Covid 19 has alas put a stop to our activities but hope to resume with added vigour when released from confinement.

DÚN LAOGHAIRE Association Report

Rebecca Jeffares
Hon. Sec. Dun Laoghaire Association

In March our annual tree planting to celebrate National Tree Week took place at the Educate Together National School Kill Avenue Dun Laoghaire. We were joined by Principal Anne Marie Kendrick, An Cathaoirleach Ossian Smyth, Rory Byrne Park Dept. and pupils. Many hands do make light work and it wasn't long before the autumn fruiting apple trees 'Spartan' were firmly in place blessed by a sunny morning. In May, our AGM, although poorly attended, was treated to a post business talk by the well known writer and member Leo Cullen. Leo spoke of the rich biodiversity of small farms back in the 60s long before the word biodiversity was spoken of. In July a local Trinity microbiologist raised concerns over the blanket of algae which was growing on Booterstown Marsh, an An Taisce property and SPA, part of the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere. The Environment committee requested Dublin City Council pollution section to investigate the source of pollution causing the growth. Within the month it was discovered that a premises upstream of the Nutley Stream had connected a sewer pipe which was transporting raw sewerage directly into the marsh waters. Thankfully with its nutrient supply cut off and the twice daily tidal changes the algae began to disappear. Our thanks to the Pollution section of DCC, Biodiversity officers and the EPA for their assistance. The Trees, Environment and Events committee was pleased that 22 volunteers turned up for the Booterstown Marsh and Beach clean up on Oct. 6th or maybe it was Margaret's homemade scones afterwards! However 25 sacks of rubbish were collected and we are especially grateful to the Volunteer Centre for their helping hands. DLRCoCo Biodiversity Officer Anne Murray, Councillor Barry Ward and our own Richard Curtain all participated. Birdwatch Ireland hosted a well attended bird walk later that month and Sean Hogan led a small group to welcome the arrival of the light bellied Brent Geese back from their long flight from their summer breeding grounds in the far north of Canada. Towards the end of October the Oratory in Dun Laoghaire celebrated its centenary which was marked by a seminar in the Lexicon. A fitting tribute to the stunning and inspirational work of Sr. Concepta Lynch who's Celtic Revival style artwork adorns the Oratory's interior. The Oratory's exceptional beauty was highlighted by our member Veronica Heywood when it was doomed to demolition for the construction of Bloomfield Shopping Centre. Today it is a vibrant visitor attraction which wows anyone who goes there. On December 3rd Veronica chaired an evening discussion on the Oratory and its Peace Garden designed by Markun Thonnott and restored by the Parks Dept.



Tree planting at Educate Together National School Dun Laoghaire pupil Lucia Bom and Parks supervisor Rory Byrne red beard



October Booterstown Clean Up volunteers

GALWAY Association Report

Derrick Hambleton
Galway Committee

Galway Association committee members continued to deal with a vast number of planning submissions throughout 2019. Our active numbers are small, so rebuilding the branch has been delayed while today we have continued to work through the Covid-19 period of restriction. Our intended AGM will be delayed until it is safe to have a grouped meeting perhaps, by September 2020. Our activities have over recent years been concentrated on our Statutory Consultee role. There have therefore been no social activities since our education committee disbanded a couple of years ago. The passing of its chairperson Dr Eithne McGee (RIP) and retirement of Christoir & Pauline Fitzgerald had left us with few active members of this important social element of An Taisces activities in Galway. Many submissions have been made through the year and appeals were made against permissions for increase in heights, particularly for two large hotels in the city. It was felt that permissions were out of step with the existing streetscape and appropriate building heights and would be damaging to the medieval streetscapes character of Galway. Both appeals failed however with permissions confirmed by ABP. There is a current application made for regeneration on public lands at Ceannt Station, which involve a number of separate retail elements with apartment blocks stepped up to 21 storeys, while many city centre shops continue to



Wolfe Tone Bridge

lie empty. There is still no news on a decision to be made on plans to build an extension to Galways Port, now 6 years after submission was first made. The fresh application for a bypass of the city – now called the N6 Ring Road where ABP began its oral hearing of evidence in early February with daily attendance for its first 3 weeks. Now postponed, to resume later in 2020. We are currently gathering together evidence which will show where the untreated sewage is still being allowed leak into Galway Bay an SAC. Several of our members continue to represent An Taisce on Galway City Community Network and through the GCCN, on Galway City Council SPCs. Mark Green represents An Taisces interest on the Galway County Council Heritage SPC. Derrick Hambleton long standing chair has stood down from this role, though remains on as a member of the planning committee. Our new committee will be returning to service at the next AGM hopefully in September. New members always welcome.



Galway Docks at night, credit Markus-Voetter-Unsplash

KILKENNY Association Report

Mary T. Brennan Ph.D.

Kilkenny City experienced a boom in tourism and growth as the economy recovered in 2019. The city has a legacy of central car parks mainly associated with hotels, and this combined with narrow medieval streets and lack of peripheral car parks contributes to traffic congestion and an unsafe environment for cycling. A public bus service has been provided during the past year but it is diesel fuelled, and without public car parks near the terminals it is little used, so it fails to take account of our responsibility to meet climate change obligations. The city is expanding at the periphery with small estates being allowed outside the ring road, while vacant premises continue to pop up in the centre where there is a proliferation of charity shops. Kilkenny County Council published a climate action plan that is largely aspirational, lacks measurable goals and does not sufficiently address biodiversity loss in a rural county.

Committee meetings were held monthly and dealt mainly with planning applications on developments within the architectural conservation areas of the city and around protected structures such as the Tholsel. Development continued at the Abbey Quarter in the City Centre where alterations are still underway at the Mayfair building and the Maturation Building. The proposed riverside garden along the Nore will also be addressed in this phase of the masterplan for the Quarter. Glanbia planned a number of expansions to deal with the increased supply of milk resulting from intensification of dairy production and we are not satisfied that they have taken the impacts of these development on climate change and water pollution sufficiently into account.

Our social calendar started with a trip to Altamont Gardens in February to view the snowdrop display. In Biodiversity week we held an IEN sponsored walk to look at 'Wildlife Refuges in an intensively farmed landscape'. It commenced in the Garden of Remembrance of what was previously a rose garden of the Bryan-Bellew Estate, now Jenkinstown Park, then continued on a looped walk along a road that allowed viewing of surrounding farms and returned though the woodland. Specific refuges for wildlife were observed in a farm pond, hedgerows, meadow, gardens and woodland. Pressure from intensive grazing, silage cutting, monoculture tillage crops, poorly maintained hedgerows and rural housing impacts were also noted.



Snowdrops in Altamont Gardens

We also held a walk in August along the River Barrow towpath from Graiguenamanagh to Clashganny. The route offered level walking in a delightful landscape with a rich biodiversity in river, woodland and pasture habitats, it was also of architectural interest with historical features close to the river. The local Association also enjoyed a Christmas lunch in December.

Engagement with the PPN continued in 2019 with input to Environmental Pillar meetings, workshops, plenary meetings and SPC meetings. We had three representatives on the latter over the past four years. Kilkenny County Council opened up the Environmental Pillar to tidy town groups for the end of year elections and 21 organizations with some environmental interest participated. The local An Taisce Association had one representative elected to the current SPCs.

Our colleague, Ann Gibbons, retired after many busy years of representing the local association on a broad range of committees, including Council who awarded her honorary life membership. We are very grateful for the service she gave us and wish her all the best.

LIMERICK Association Report

Michelle Hayes, Solicitor
2019 Chair

An Taisce Limerick Committee sharpened its focus on environmental justice when it was joined by two lawyers who are also scientists, adding to the expertise of the historians, architects, engineers and others on the committee. We generated considerable media activity and controversy, which increased An Taisce's profile and relevance and promoted An Taisce to a wider audience.

Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

In January, An Taisce National Council asked the Association to facilitate a public meeting on the proposed Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. The Committee was pleased to do so and to welcome Mr Ian Lumley who addressed the meeting on Friday 22 February at Ormston House, Patrick Street. Members of the Limerick Association and members from the Tipperary, Clare and Galway Associations attended, along with members of the public, some of who subsequently joined An Taisce. An Taisce Limerick subsequently made a significant submission on the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.
On joining An Taisce in December 2018, I was elected Vice-Chair of An Taisce Limerick. After the Limerick Chair Dr John Logan had to step down for personal reasons I was invited to become Acting Chair and was subsequently elected Chair at an Extraordinary General Meeting in May 2019.

Curragower House

Immediately, there was a media frenzy in relation to the Georgian building, Curragower House, Clancy Strand. This was in the context of an application by a developer for demolition of Curragower House, to be replaced by



Outside Curragower House

an apartment block, townhouse and café. An Taisce had lodged observations to the local council previously but planning permission was granted. An Taisce agreed to appeal that decision and we prepared an extensive appeal to An Bord Pleanala against both the demolition and the new replacement buildings which was submitted to An Bord Pleanala on the 2nd April 2019.

However, the matter did not end there. The developer made extensive responses and we were invited to make further submissions. There were 6 extensive submissions made, most recently on the 29th January 2020. An Bord Pleanala has unfortunately upheld the planning decision.

In order to protect Curragower House in the future, we attempted to have it listed as a protected structure. Communications with LCCC were not of assistance and a local Councillor was asked to raise this issue as the placing of a building on the Record of Protected Structures is a reserved function of Councillors. **A Motion was passed unanimously by Councillors in September 2019 but Council Officials have not put this into effect.** We also attempted to have Curragower House placed on the NIAH list. (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage) However, the NIAH has no plans to visit Limerick in the foreseeable future to assess properties.

There has been considerable interest throughout the process in relation to Curragower House and I have responded positively to all requests from print and broadcast media for both local and national media.

Opera Site Observation

Other significant submissions included that on the Opera Site, a Strategic Infrastructure Development Application direct planning application by Limerick City & County Council to An Bord Pleanala under section 175 for a 10 year permission to develop a 2.35 hectare city centre site known as the Opera site, comprising a 15 storey office tower block, smaller office blocks, an apart hotel, some small shop units and 16 residential units totalling 34 bedrooms. The latest date for appeal was the 30th May 2019 and the appeal submission contained contributions from each Committee member. Each member was credited on the Appeal submission with their contributions in what was a comprehensive appeal submission.

There were 36 separate appeal submissions lodged to An Bord Pleanala on the Opera site. However, media interest appears to have been confined to the An Taisce submission on the Opera site. There was extensive coverage in the national and local print and broadcast media including Irish Examiner, Irish Independent, Limerick Post, Limerick Leader etc. local radio, Virgin Media 1 News and RTE News.

An Oral hearing was held before An Bord Pleanala on the 26th and 27th November 2020. The initial An Taisce submission was very comprehensive. The developer had 6 months to respond to this submission but waited until the day of the oral hearing to do so. There were 18 experts from the developer at the Oral hearing. Arising from claims made by the developer on the first day of the Oral Hearing, we prepared an extensively revised additional submission overnight.

An Bord Pleanala made a decision to grant planning permission on the Opera site on the 27th February 2020 and participants were notified by post. The decision to grant permission is disappointing but is subject to a number of **conditions** including the requirement that the developer must apply for a licence in relation to the bats to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, no development on the exterior of the buildings is to occur between March and September, no groundwater or surface water discharge to Abbey River etc. Nonetheless, the grant of planning permission, particularly in relation to the tall building, now known as the Revenue building, is disappointing. It seems to me there is provision for judicial review of the decision of an Bord Pleanala on a number of points but that is a matter for Council.

Public Participation

During the year committee members attended consultation meetings as follows: Limerick Southside Master plan ‘stakeholder workshop’ at Strand Hotel, 31 January; O’Connell Street revitalisation project consultation, and Wickham Street revitalisation project consultation at the Mayor’s Office, City Hall, Merchants’ Quay, 15 May.

The Association submitted additional observations to the local authority as follows: Barry’s Cottage, Adare, 22 January; McEnery’s Shop demolition and replacement with shop and flats, 18 February; GPO, Cecil Street, 16 May; endangered Curlew habitats on Shannon estuary, 28 January. A statement on tree felling by the local authority at Boherbue was issued to the Limerick Leader on 4 January.

MEATH Association Report

Margaret Monaghan
Meath Association

The Meath Association held its 2019 AGM on 16th April at Annesbrook House, Duleek at which Dr. Clare Ryan spoke about the Athlumney Castle campaign.

The year's extensive and exciting interesting social calendar was organised by James McConnell and Timothy Smyth and venues visited were Drewstown House, Triermore Stud, Johnsbrook House during April, then in May the former Church of Ireland Church at Nobber, followed by a wonderful afternoon at Brittas House and Estate to view the rolling hills and lime tree formations. In June we visited An Tobar, Ardbraccan, a former Church of Ireland graveyard at Ardbraccan, followed by afternoon garden strolls and tea at Herberts' House and Gardens (Bloom finalist). July's social outing was to Saint Mary's Abbey, Trim former school of the Duke of Wellington and mathematician William Rowan Hamilton, then visit to the Church of Ireland Cathedral, Trim where John Arnold spoke about its recently restored Burne-Jones window, followed by afternoon tea at Kilgar Gardens. Visits outside the county included Moorhill House c.1815, Castlenugent, Longford and Turbotstown House, Coole, an early 1800s Greek revival style as designed by Francis Johnston. The Christmas party was hosted at Headfort House, Kells thanks to Mike Bolton and his team on 15th December. Timothy Whitley gave members a pre-lunch walk of Headforts' hidden gardens and George Williams later gave a talk on "Gargoyles and Griffins; An Explosion of Fashion. Methods and Meaning of Irish Cabinet Making Revealed".

Tailors' Hall continues to handle all planning submissions on our behalf and through them we made submissions in March 2020 to the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026.

NORTH WEST Association Report

Michael Kirby
Northwest Association

The seven members of the North West Local Association pictured below attended Prof John Sweeney's Climate Change presentation in Sligo last October. The successful public information evening was built around securing John as the keynote presenter (our suggestion). Ciaran Hayes, Chief Executive, Sligo County Council, also presented at this event. As previously reported last year, Alan Moran continues to represent the Environmental Sector on Roscommon LCDC, as an An Taisce North West Local Association representative, as I do here on the Sligo LCDC and PPN Secretariat. We continue to engage with and support the owners of Elsinore House, an At Risk structure in Rosses Point associated with WB Yeats, in their ongoing efforts to preserve the building."



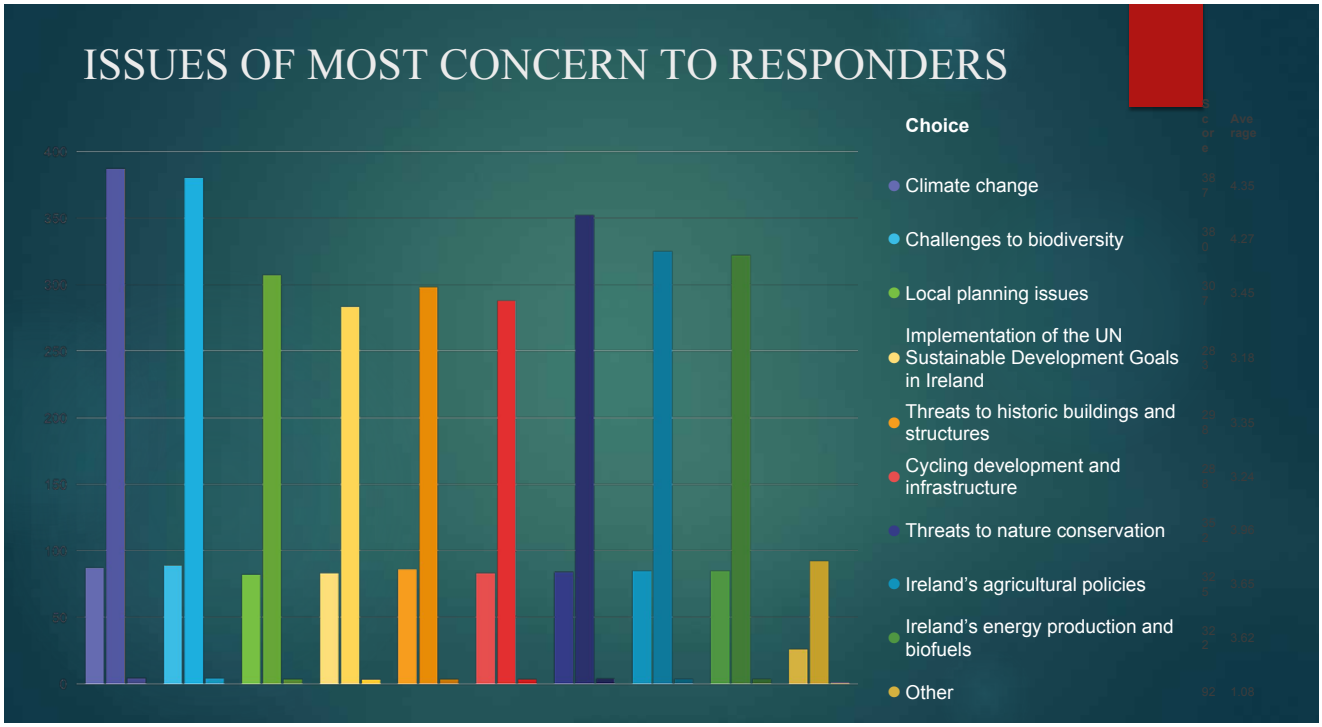
An Taisce North West Local Association members

MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

The mission of An Taisce would not be sustained without the support and engagement of you the members for which we are enormously grateful. Our shared mission, as you can see from the various articles in this report, is evolving all the time. Together we are moving from simple protection of Ireland's natural and built heritage to a more expanded remit, embracing climate change advocacy and biodiversity to name a few. From reading all the reports you will get a sense of a busy and energetic organisation, constantly raising awareness of the challenges faced by not just Ireland, but globally. As valued members of An Taisce our collective voice is needed to continue to highlight the urgency of these issues in an effort to preserve the world around us for future generations.

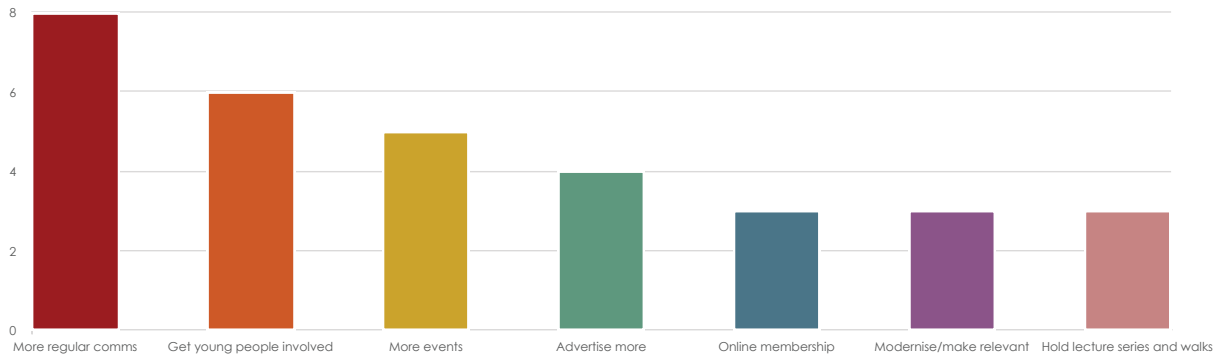
2019 Survey

Last year we undertook a survey of members. Many thanks to all who responded. We were heartened to see that our work continues to be relevant and important. Our members are concerned about a wide range of issues which shape our work in raising awareness with the general public as well as with policy-makers.



We also asked how we might improve as an organisation. Communications with you the members came top of the list. This is something we wish to address in 2020 and we hope that you will notice an improvement in this area. We at An Taisce would like to thank all our members for their patience at the end of 2019 and over the New Year as we had changes in both staff and membership computer system. This meant a delay in responding to queries and to the membership renewal process early in 2020. Some members have experienced inaccuracies with their member record and many have not been receiving An Taisce news. A new membership system will be installed, allowing you to join, renew and maintain your membership entirely online. Our records have been brought up to date with the help of Sinead Owens, Operations Manager, and volunteers Annette McCaul and James Leahy.

We are ambitious to expand our membership network, especially among younger people. Thanks to An Taisce Environmental Education Unit programmes a whole generation of Irish students has developed an awareness of, with some becoming active in, the areas of sustainability, biodiversity and climate change. Attracting the longer-term support of these young activists will be one of our goals for the future. As well as improving communications with members we will also be putting more resources into messaging for the wider public, making them aware of An Taisce's achievements.



HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMME?

Social Media Links

Twitter - **https://twitter.com/AnTaisce**

Facebook - **https://www.facebook.com/AnTaisce**

Each of the An Taisce Environmental Education Unit programmes are on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram under their own names.

How your Membership and Donations support us

With your help An Taisce is able to fulfil its function as part of its prescribed status, ensuring that building projects and programmes are reviewed for sustainability amongst other criteria. You will see from the Advocacy and Planning Report just how important its contribution is to policy-making at a high level, making submissions on large infrastructure projects and taking court cases where necessary to ensure planning and environmental laws are upheld. We are lucky to have highly-qualified and passionate staff, some paid and some volunteers, who not only work on behalf of the organisation, but also assist local An Taisce associations and members of the public with queries on a wide range of planning, environmental and heritage issues.

We are also able to maintain our properties around the country, most of which have been bequeathed to us in trust for protection and conservation.

We have active committees and local associations where you, our members can actively participate in seeing, and being part of, the change you want to see in the world.

The challenges are great, our resources are few, so your ongoing support is what sustains this great organisation. If you would like to learn more about the ways you can support An Taisce why not talk to us today on 01-7077076 or email us at info@antaisce.org or membership@antaisce.org.

Your Membership Team



Sinead Owens,
Operations Manager



Annette McCaul,
Membership Volunteer

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

COUNCIL OF AN TAISCE

Name	Position	Association
Fr Sean McDonagh SSC	President	
Prof John Sweeney	Immediate Past President	
Phil Kearney	Chair	Dublin City
Trish O'Connell	Vice Chair	
Stuart McCaul	Honorary Secretary	
Alan Price	Delegate	Carlow
Anny Wise	Delegate	Clare
Damon Matthew Wise	Deputy Delegate; Co-opted 2019	Clare
Kevin Hurley	Delegate	Cork
Anne McGowan	Delegate	Donegal
Gerald Tomkin	Delegate	Dublin South
Mairead Mehigan	Delegate	Dun Laoghaire
Rebecca Jeffares	Deputy Delegate	Dun Laoghaire
Derrick Hambleton	Delegate	Galway
Catherine McMullin	Delegate	Kerry
Tadhg Hanifin	Deputy Delegate	Kerry
Ann Gibbons	Delegate	Kilkenny
Mary Brennan	Deputy Delegate	Kilkenny
Margaret Monaghan	Delegate	Meath
Jean Carr	Deputy Delegate	Meath
Paul O'Brien	Delegate	Limerick
Dr. Breda Hayes	Co-opted 2019	Limerick
Kathleen Vandenberghe	Delegate	Tipperary North
Jack O'Sullivan	Deputy Delegate	Westmeath
Eileen Collins	Elected 2017	Dublin South
Charles Stanley Smith	Elected 2017	Tipperary North
Declan Murphy	Elected 2017	Kilkenny
Dr. Mark Clinton	Co-opted 2016, Elected 2018	Fingal
Geoff Power	Elected 2018	
Evelyn Murphy	Elected 2018	
Kevin O'Farrell	Elected 2019	
Patricia Oliver	Re-elected 2019	Meath
Eric Conroy	Elected 2019	
John Gibbons	Elected 2019	
Ruaidhri O'Boyle	Elected 2019	
Nick Armstrong	Elected 2019	
Eamonn Moore	Co-opted 2019	

Directors/Trustees as of July 2020

Philip Kearney, Chair, Joined Board in 2016
Trish O'Connell, Vice-Chair, Joined Board in 2019
Stuart McCaul, Honorary Secretary, Joined Board in 2019
Prof. John Sweeney, Joined Board in 2015
Nick Armstrong, Joined Board in 2019
Hugh O'Reilly, Joined Board in 2019
Olivia Rogers, Joined Board in 2019
Alison Hough, Joined Board in 2020

Representatives of An Taisce

Monuments and Antiquities Contact: Dr Mark Clinton
European Environmental Bureau: Attracta Ui Bhroin
INTO: Ian Lumley
Europa Nostra: Ian Lumley
Wexford Monument Trust AnTaisce Nominee: Ian Lumley
Alfred Beit Foundation: Ian Lumley
IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch Committee: James Leahy
Coalition2030: Charles Stanley Smith
Irish Environmental Network: Kevin O'Farrell
ELIG Bureau: Alison Hough
Stop Climate Chaos: Theresa O'Donohoe

Key Employees and Volunteers

An Taisce Head Office
Interim CEO - Gary Freemantle
Operations Manager: Sinead Owens
Membership Volunteer: Annette McCaul

An Taisce Advocacy
Head of Advocacy: Ian Lumley
Planning Officer: Phoebe Duvall
Natural Environment Officer: Elaine McGoff
National Cycling Coordinator: Damien Ó Túama

An Taisce Properties
Caretaker: Louis McGee

An Taisce Environmental Education Unit
Education Unit Director: Michael John O'Mahony
Development Manager: Anthony Purcell
National Green-Schools Manager: Cathy Baxter
National Manager Green Schools Travel: Jane Hackett
Clean Coasts Manager: Sinead McCoy
Education Unit Finance Manager: Colin Sloan
Business Administration Manager: Dawn Parkinson
National Spring Clean Manager: Emlyn Cullen
Green Campus Manager: Dara Dever
Blue Flag Manager: Ian Diamond
Green Flag Award for Parks Coordinator: Robert Moss
Learning About Forests (LEAF) Coordinator: Rachel Geary
Neat Streets Officer: Stephen O'Reilly
Green Home Officer: Susan Vickers
Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) Coordinator: Adele O'Connor
Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) Officer: Eoin Heaney
GLOBE Officer: Sabrina Moore



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

For an information pack please contact **info@antaisce.org** or call **(01) 7077076**

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