

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

Annual Report 2021

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.

Statement on non-political affiliation

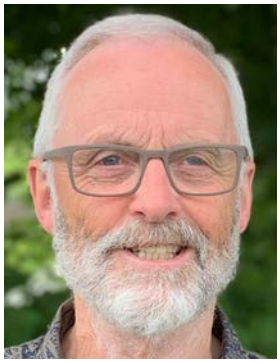
Our members are all ages and come from all walks of life. The one thing we have in common is our concern for the environment and a shared passion to protect nature and our natural heritage.

In accordance with the guidance note (Feb 2018) issued by the Charities Regulator under section 14 of the Charities Act 2009, An Taisce has a charitable purpose only. An Taisce engages in political activities or promotes a political cause only where that relates directly to the advancement of our charitable purpose. An Taisce does not endorse any political party or candidate.

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

Chair's Report

Philip Kearney,
Chair



I am pleased to welcome the many new members who joined us in 2021, some of whom became members in the wake of our involvement in the cheese factory case which absorbed a great deal of time and energy during the year. It was clear that there was significant support for the position taken by An Taisce.

Although ultimately the Supreme Court did not decide in our favour, they also acknowledged that we raised issues of general public concern. It is probable that another legal approach to the core issue of upstream and downstream environmental effects of major industrial developments will have more success in the not too distant future - perhaps through intervention from Europe.

The process of engaging in a series of court cases like this is time-consuming and stressful. Much of this responsibility was borne by Dr Elaine McGoff, our Natural Environment Officer, who was the public face of An Taisce in many media outings. She was courageous, always balanced and relied on the science. We couldn't have had a better flag bearer.

2021 was the first full year completed by Gary Freemantle, Interim CEO. The Board's decision to proceed with the creation of this long overdue post was vindicated entirely by the range and significance of the changes he has brought to the organisation's operations. Amongst other achievements he has successfully found a tenant who will establish a restaurant and bar in the lower floors of Tailors' Hall. This will both help to preserve the building and provide an income stream to An Taisce.

Gary assisted the Hon. Treasurer, Aoife O'Gorman, in a radical reworking and updating of An Taisce's finances. This included an extensive internal review by Aoife, an experienced forensic accountant, of the funding of all programmes going back many years. The treasurer will describe this process and its outcomes in more detail in her report. Most importantly, audited accounts for both 2019 and 2020 were approved in 2021.

The Interim CEO has overseen substantial recruitment in the areas of membership, communications, advocacy, and admin. support. There has also been a significant injection of new funds into the Environmental Education Unit (EEU) as a result of Programme for Government commitments to expand the Green Schools Travel programmes. These programmes were managed very ably by Jane Hackett under the leadership of Dr Michael John O'Mahony, EEU Director. The EEU continued to thrive in spite of the many constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and was very creative in sustaining most of its activities in online formats.

Another significant development in 2021 was the successful application for an EU LIFE project. John Sweeney and Ian Lumley were the initiators with John then doing a huge amount of drafting work to get it across the line. It involves three work packages - promoting ponds as biodiversity reservoirs, advancing the Farm to Fork programme through promoting organic farming and establishing Green Flags for Communities. It has led to the recruitment of a well-qualified and enthusiastic team who will implement these projects over the next two years.

The approval of the new Constitution by the membership at the 2020 EGM has resulted in some important structural changes. The Board of Trustees now hold more decision-making authority consistent with both Company and Charity Law. The Board is still appointed by and is accountable to Council but issues like overall financial responsibility, strategic planning and policy making reside with the Board. Council's operation has also changed in some ways. Two Co-Speakers, Anny Wise and Mark Clinton, were elected by Council. They step in whenever the Board and/or Chair are compromised or under scrutiny. The format has changed to a one-hour business meeting and an hour-long Council Forum where external speakers are invited to present on current environmental and heritage issues followed by debate. The Forum is open to all An Taisce members.

Communications, both internal and external, have been greatly enhanced. There are regular meetings of senior staff across all programmes. This is highlighting greater coherence and identifying synergies. Dearbhla Ryan, Marketing & Membership Officer, re-established quarterly newsletters for members and initiated a series of very well received online webinars. An Taisce's social media presence has been expanded significantly using Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

The Advocacy Unit continues to process a huge caseload of planning applications and related queries all managed by Phoebe Duvall, Planning and Environmental Policy Officer. Phoebe has been nominated as An Taisce representative to the Planning Review being undertaken by the Office of the Attorney General.

The Board conducted a skills audit and it was decided that extra members should be sought. A rigorous recruitment process led by Hugh O'Reilly and an external chair resulted in Olivia Rogers returning to the Board as chair of the Governance, Risk and Compliance committee and a new member, Rónán O'Brien, joining. Both were approved by Council.

In summary, much progress was made in 2021 across a range of fronts - financial, membership, structure, governance, advocacy, education and litigation. The following pages include detailed reports from the various operational units, the committees and the local associations. All involved, staff and volunteers, deserve great credit and thanks for their commitment to advancing the mission of An Taisce - addressing the escalating environmental crises currently facing Ireland, most particularly climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse, and promoting and preserving cultural and built heritage.

Philip Kearney
Chair

Interim CEO's Report

Gary Freemantle, Interim CEO



2021 was a busy year for An Taisce. Whilst the pandemic is not over, we are successfully navigating through.

Our work to restructure An Taisce was a primary focus as in 2020, we continued to move forward with purpose and grow the organisation. Our leadership on climate advocacy was at the forefront of our actions throughout the year. We were kept busy with a very significant Court case challenging the planning decision of the Glanbia Cheese Factory case ultimately to the Supreme Court.

An Taisce weathered the impacts of the pandemic well despite it threatening many organisations' viability and sustainability. Despite the dreadful impacts of the pandemic (both economic and human), An Taisce worked proactively to ensure we were able to continue to deliver on our commitments under our various programmes and to continue to show leadership on environmental issues. The Environmental Education Unit led by Michael John O'Mahony continued to run successfully online. The dedication, determination and creativity of the Programme Managers and their teams to deliver as they did under such trying circumstances is a credit to the unit.

Advocacy and Head Office services continued to work from home but managed a skeletal presence in Tailors Hall to ensure planning obligations and related matters were delivered upon. I am pleased to report that An Taisce operated and continues to operate within budget and that we are trading on a sound basis.

A significant challenge addressed during the year was the falling number of members. A concerning issue for us all, we focused on slowing and ceasing the loss of members and then faced the task of growing membership again. Members are at the heart of An Taisce and I am pleased to report we have responded well to both challenges and membership growth is increasing strongly. This is due in part to our involvement in the cheese factory case and the spotlight it shone on our work at a national level. I am pleased to note the recruitment of a membership development officer. We are working hard to develop the cohort of Student membership and we are developing strong ties with a number of colleges and universities including NUIG, Trinity and DCU.

We have added a number of new employees to the staff team. These additional resources will allow us to continue to stabilise and develop our membership offering in terms of acquisition and retention and to allow us to communicate clearly and consistently to members and non-members alike. These new appointments in addition to above include a Marketing development Officer, Administrative support for the Advocacy team, and a Philanthropy Officer to assist us to generate more funding to further develop our work. I would like to acknowledge the work and support of the Board, Michael John O'Mahony, Sinead Owens, Ian Lumley and all the senior team during the year. My thanks to each of them.

A great deal of work was carried out to allow us to prepare and deliver accounts for 2021. I am delighted to say that our audited accounts are available and details of this will be shared within the treasurer's report. An Taisce's accounts are SORP compliant and are audited annually. SORP regulations determine the requirements for restricted funds, that is funds that are provided specifically to run those individual programmes. Our Programmes, which are funded largely by Government, are subject to regular audit by Government and/or external auditors on behalf of the funders. Agreements with our Funders also detail the arrangements for oversight, monitoring and reporting in compliance with Government regulation and governance requirements (e.g. DPER Circular 13/2014, Public Financial Procedures, etc.) I am delighted to report that this continues to be the case with no issues arising.

A great deal of work continues to be done to reintegrate the organisation into a single fit for purpose entity, There is still much to do but we continue to build clear structures and collaborations within the organisation. During the pandemic, and subsequently, it has become abundantly clear to me that Advocacy and Education can coexist on an equal footing within our organisation, with clear communication and organisational understanding. We are committed to developing clear reporting linkages between the Board, Committees and Operational Units. We will deliver transparent, compliant and efficient processes that meet the Charities Regulator's Governance Code as we determine policy to face the many challenges ahead. As we face an uncertain future, An Taisce's determination to be a force for positive change means we must work together to protect our environment, to educate and advocate for all elements of the biosphere and protect our natural and built heritage.

So in conclusion, we all know there will be other challenges ahead, but we will continue to be fearless, to stand up for what is right using science, sound judgement and firm action. We continue to build a strong team capable of withstanding current and new challenges, while also planning for the future.

I look forward to working with you, our members and our staff to secure a strong future for An Taisce in the years ahead.

Gary Freemantle
Interim CEO
gary.freemantle@antaisce.org

Treasurer's Report 2020

Aoife O'Gorman,
Honorary Treasurer



I can best describe 2021 as a year of stability for An Taisce's finances. We started the year with a long to do list, all of which we managed to deliver.

This included completing;

- A Board-level review of An Taisce's financial policies and procedures and implementation of An Taisce's accounting policies in March 2021
- A Board-level review of An Taisce's reserves, with specialist Charity Law legal advice, in May 2021
- Appointment of Browne, Murphy and Hughes as Auditors in April 2021
- The 2019 financial statements in May 2021
- The 2020 financial statements in August 2021

This was achieved due to the huge effort by a large number of people, including the Board, Audit and Finance Committee, the Interim CEO and senior management and the members of An Taisce's finance function. As is usual for An Taisce, this is a combination of staff and volunteers all contributing to a common aim.

All of this work meant that we approved the 2021 financial statements in April 2022, the earliest the financial statements have been completed in many years.

An Taisce's funders are a key strength of the organisation and they have remained supportive of our activities throughout the pandemic restrictions. 2021's income is significant in a number of ways;

- the increase in members who contribute to the organisation in many ways, not least their membership fee and ongoing donations. Both these income sources increased in 2021.
- the commencement of funding for Safe Routes to Schools, an ever-increasing element of the Green Schools Travel programme and representative of a significant increase in our funding income in 2021.
- The stability in funding for our other programmes given the turbulence caused by Covid-19. Funding for some activities has increased for initiatives deliverable during the Covid-19 restrictions and in others funding decreased reflecting the changing costs of delivering activities within the parameters of restrictions.
- The significant income recognised for the pro bono legal services provided by a dedicated group of solicitors and barristers. This is a notional figure as no funding is received for nor fee paid to these lawyers for the work they do on An Taisce's behalf.

The second strength of An Taisce's finance function is the management of this income, ensuring that funding is utilised for the purposes for which it has been prescribed across more than 40 different funding arrangements. Increases and decreases in specific programme funding is represented by corresponding increases and decreases in expenditure.

In addition, An Taisce operates a general fund which contributes to the central support expenses of the organisation. Expenditure in this area increased in 2021 utilising funding received in prior years, particularly the generous legacies received in both 2020 and 2021. All expenditure is budgeted with funding identified prior to commencement of the related activity.

Ongoing support of our funders, members and individual donors will allow the organisation to continue its work in pursuit of its mission and objectives. I hope that we can continue to positively report on future years while maintaining the strong, stable financial base established over the last few years.

Aoife O'Gorman
Honorary Treasurer
treasurer@antaisce.org

Honorary Secretary's Report

Stuart McCaul,
Honorary Secretary



An Taisce's Council held five meetings in 2021 as well as the AGM. In addition to overseeing and providing feedback to the Board, Council became an important forum for collaboration with external and internal experts on a wide array of topics.

This included an Aarhus Centre for Ireland, the NPWS, the cheese factory case, our new LIFE programme, a Just Transition for Irish society, our Clean Coasts programme, sustainable energy systems modelling, and the European biodiversity crisis. Many members were able to join the Council meetings to hear the discussion on these topics, which were curated by our chairman, Phil Kearney.

2021 was a very busy year for the Board of Trustees of An Taisce, who took on full responsibility for running the charity following the adoption of our new constitution. It was gratifying to read through the year's minutes to remind myself of the Board's business. There were 14 formal Board of Trustee meetings in 2021. The Board meetings were well informed by invited staff, volunteers and supporters including: Gary Freemantle, Interim CEO; Michael John O'Mahony, EEU Director; Ian Lumley, Head of Advocacy; Elaine McGoff, Natural Environment Officer; Attracta Ui Bhroin, Law Officer at IEN; and our lawyers, FP Logue & Co., and our auditors, Browne Murphy and Hughes; and many others.

This was the first year for charities to have to prove compliance with the Charities Regulator's Governance Code. As a result, 2021 was an exciting year for our volunteers with a background in compliance and risk. An Taisce is a complex organisation for the purposes of the Governance Code. We were delighted to be in a position to declare compliance on time and produce the necessary policies and backup documentation to prove it. Olivia Rogers and Sinead Owens did the heavy lifting here, supported by the members of our Governance, Risk and Compliance Committee, Audit Committee, and others.

The government extended to mid-2021 the annual reporting date for 2019 activities for all organisations, including charities such as An Taisce. The audited 2019 accounts and the 2020 accounts were submitted to the Revenue Commissioners and the CRA, and laid before members at the 2021 AGM, thanks largely to the hard work and skill of our treasurer, Aoife O'Gorman. Members can see audited accounts up to and including 2021 on our website.

Notwithstanding the government's flexibility on some deadlines, the compliance burden for charities like An Taisce continues to grow and there is still no state support for the associated effort. Additional statutory filings which fell due last year, all of which were made on time, included the annual submission to the Charities Regulator (CRA), a submission to the Register of Beneficial Owners, quarterly updates to the Lobbying Register, the EU Transparency Register.

Relying heavily on volunteerism, An Taisce managed to keep compliance costs to a minimum again in 2021. As a result, An Taisce's members, donors and programme funders, who regularly audit our programmes, can be assured that their money overwhelmingly goes to support our frontline efforts for environmental education, advocacy and conservation.

Stuart McCaul
Honorary Secretary
secretary@antaisce.org

Environmental Education Unit

Dr. Michael John O'Mahony,
Environmental Education Unit



Introduction

The Environmental Education Unit (EEU) has been operating since 1993. 2021 was another busy year for the EEU in spite of the continuing unprecedented and difficult circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2021. The Swift's Alley office was either closed or operated with very restricted access throughout 2021. All Swift's Alley staff (c.25) mostly worked remotely from home in line with public health advice. In 2021, all programmes continued to adapt and operate in line with all public health advice and requirements.

In 2021, the EEU employed over 80 staff and operated 13 national and international environmental education and management programmes and a number of associated projects. The programmes are funded, supported and partnered by a number of Government Departments (e.g. DTTAS, DECC, DHPLG, DFA, DRCD) and Agencies (e.g. NTA, EPA, SEAI, Irish Aid, NPWS), Local Authorities, Utilities (e.g. Irish Water) and Foundations (e.g. Mars-Wrigley Foundation, JS Greene Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation).

Blue Flag & Green Coast Awards 2021

In 2021, over 5,000 beaches, marinas and sustainable tourism boats were awarded the Blue Flag in 48 countries around the world (see www.blueflag.global). In 2021, 83 beaches and 10 marinas in Ireland achieved the award (beachawards.ie). 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 (beachawards.ie). In 2021, 63 beaches in Ireland were awarded the Green Coast Award.

The 2021 Blue Flags and Green Coast Awards were presented at an online event in May 2021.

National Spring Clean Report 2021

2021 was the 23rd year of National Spring Clean (www.nationalspringclean.org), Ireland's largest and most popular anti-litter initiative. In 2021, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the programme took place in June, July and August instead of the typical April timing of the programme. This was similar to 2020.

In Summary for 2021:

- There were 5,543 clean-up events nationwide.
- An estimated 2,800 tonnes of litter were collected.
- Approximately 35% of the total amount of waste collected was recycled.
- 125,00 refuse bags, 125,00 Clean Bags for Recycling, 40,000 Hi-Vis vests and 16,000 pairs of gloves were distributed.

Green-Schools Report 2020-2021 academic year

During the 2020-2021 academic year, 3,706 schools and education centres in Ireland were registered for the Green-Schools programme (www.greenschoolsireland.org). 3,398 of these have been awarded the Green Flag. During the academic year 2020-2021, a total of 522 schools renewed the Green Flag and 54 schools were awarded their first Green Flag.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions most in-person aspects of programme delivery were moved online for certain periods during 2021. This resulted in a c.25% increase in traffic on the Green-Schools website during the year. 124 teacher-training seminars were delivered online to a combined audience of over 800 teachers. Green-Schools also held two five-day EPV approved teacher-training online courses for teachers in July and August 2021.

During Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, Green-Schools Officers around the country continued to develop new and interactive activities under each of the Green-Schools themes that students could take part in from within the home environment. These included the Life Below Water Workshops, Seakeepers Project, Global Citizenship International Linking Project and the Water Ambassador Porgramme.

Due to the year's highly unusual circumstances of 2020-2021, there were impacts and limits on the capacity of the programme to perform in the same way as in previous, more typical years. However, despite these challenges, there were significant accomplishments in raising awareness:

- 73% of litter and waste schools noticed an increase in awareness of litter and waste issues. 70% took part in awareness raising action days with the remaining 30% of schools participating in a community clean up.
- 94% of energy schools saw an increase in awareness throughout the programme with 29% saving energy costs despite the extra challenges this year.
- Schools participating in the water theme increased their awareness by 74%. 86% of schools ran an Action Day despite school closures. 67% of schools installed a water butt or rainwater harvesting system to reduce water waste. 93 secondary school students raised awareness in their community by taking part in the Water Ambassador programme.
- Over 2,140 trees were planted, 248 bird feeding stations erected, 153 organic gardens developed and 107 native wildflower areas were managed.
- 386,782 students learned about the Sustainable Development Goals. 86% of children understood what climate change is and were able to give examples of action to reduce it.
- 82% participated in community cleans ups. 89% of children gave unwanted items to charity shops and 65% of children were aware they had something to eat or drink from a less developed country in the past week.
- 88% of schools investigated the sources of Marine Litter and promoted an action to reduce it.
- 82% of schools took part in a #2minutebeachclean.

Green-Campus Programme – Annual Update Academic Year 2020-2021

In 2021, the Green-Campus programme (www.greencampusireland.org) continued to grow with four new sites registering and five campuses awarded the Green Flag for the first time. Due to public health restrictions, most Green-Campus activities continued online during 2020/2021 academic year.

The four new sites that registered on the programme in 2021 were; Cope Foundation (Bonnington Training Centre), Ballyhaise College (Teagasc Agricultural College), Dublin Business School and Law Society of Ireland. This brings the number of registered campuses to 40. Kinsale College, Sligo University Hospital, Mary Immaculate College (Thurles Campus) IT Sligo and Munster Technological University (Cork Campus) were successfully assessed and awarded. This brought the number of awarded campuses to 18.

The 2021 Green Campus Network Meeting was held virtually in March. 70 delegates from participant sites joined the virtual event that included presentations from participants in IT Sligo, Ballsbridge College, University College Cork and the Climate Ambassador Programme. A workshop looking at what has happened in the Green-Campus Network over the past year and what we would like to Stop, Start and Continue was held.

In March 2021, the first National Green Week for third-level campuses in Ireland took place. 20 campuses participated. Three events were hosted by Green-Campus including a fast fashion workshop, a biodiversity and food workshop and a student panel. A social media competition was organised via Instagram. Campuses organised and promoted numerous talks, workshops and competitions to their students and staff as part of the week. The planning of Green Week was a collaborative process between a number of third-level campuses and coordinated by Green-Campus.

The Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) is an international programme that empowers young people to take an informed stand on environmental issues that concern them and gives them a platform to articulate these via written articles, photography or video. In 2021, five third-level campuses signed up to participate in the Young Reporters for the Environment third level pilot. The overarching theme was Climate Action. During 2020/2021, there were a number of Green Campus webinars. These included a Climate Action Week Webinar with Carina Mutschele (UN Environment Programme), Samantha Fahy (DCU), Dermot O'Donovan (ATU) and a Biodiversity webinar with Dr. Úna Fitzpatrick (National Biodiversity Data Centre), Stephen Seaman (NUIM) and Professor Jane Stout (TCD).

National Climate Change Action and Awareness Programme 2021

The programme continued to develop and grow during 2021 despite the challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. New and innovative methods of engagement were developed, and participant engagement was high, which demonstrated the desire by the public to learn more about climate science and climate action. The key outcomes for 2021 can be summarised as:

- 198 Climate Ambassadors accepted into the programme.
- 5 Introduction training sessions for Ambassadors were carried out virtually.
- 8 climate training series for Ambassadors were completed virtually.
- 20 Network Gatherings for Ambassadors were carried out virtually.
- 15 Public outreach (webinar/campaigns/ external talks) were carried out virtually.
- 20 Public outreach (external talks) were carried out virtually.

- Series 2 of the Climate Ambassador podcast was developed in 2021 www.climateambassador.ie/podcasts/.
- 482 events were held as part of Climate Action Week 2021, reaching over 66,352 people.
- 50 teachers completed the EPV approved Online Climate Action Teacher Training Course.
- 50 teachers completed Primary school CPD climate change course.
- 50 teachers completed Second level teacher training.
- 9 global challenges in campuses were carried out.
- 1 international event was carried out with Green-Campus.
- 255 students participated in the YRE Programme.

Green-Schools Travel Report 2021

2021 saw participation levels in walking, cycling, scooting and other sustainable modes continue to grow. Despite the difficult circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent schools' closures, schools on the Travel and Global Citizenship Travel themes continued engaging in the programme and promoting active travel by participating in different initiatives, even from home.

- 136 Schools were invited to participate in the Travel themes in 2021.
- 140 Schools were awarded the Travel or Global Citizenship Travel Flag in 2020.
- Teacher Training seminars were delivered online in Autumn 2021.
- 831 School visits were carried out nationally by Travel Officers in 2021;
- 150 walkability audits and 17 cycleabilty audits were carried out by Travel Officers in 2021.
- 954 scooter parking spaces were installed nationally in 2021..
- 4,700 cycle parking spaces and 248 bike shelters were installed in 2021.
- In 2021, 3,456 primary and 60 secondary students across the country took part in Green-Schools subsidised CYCLE RIGHT training.

2021 also saw the development and introduction of the Safe Routes to School Programme (SRTS). SRTS is an initiative of the Department of Transport and is supported by the Department of Education. The new programme is developed in partnership with the National Transport Authority and Green-Schools as a response to the need to support schools to increase walking and cycling





to school. The programme aims to create safer walking and cycling routes within communities, alleviate congestion at the school gates and increase the number of students who walk or cycle to school by providing walking and cycling facilities. The improvements to the school commute could range from an upgraded footpath or new cycle lane to a complete reworking of a school's entrance. All schools are eligible to apply and in 2021, 931 schools expressed an interest in the programme. SRTS has been rolled out to an initial 170 schools in Round 1 with the remaining schools coming onto the programme on a rolling basis.

Green Flag for Parks Award 2021

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 16 countries where over 2,300 sites were accredited to Green Flag Award status in 2021.

In 2021, 103 public green spaces in Ireland received the Green Flag for Parks Award. 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 2020 with 19 sites accredited. This has extended the programme to community gardens, community parks, allotments, and other community run green spaces. In 2021, 7 Irish Green Flag sites were accredited with the Green Heritage Accreditation standard. Green Heritage Site Accreditation is awarded to public green spaces of historical and cultural significance. This award is supported of the NPWS and the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage.

Since 2017, the Pollinator Plan Award, in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre, has also rewarded the best efforts of our Green Flag Award Scheme sites in delivering on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. In 2021, Kilbarry Nature Park in Waterford took the Pollinator Plan Award.

Clean Coasts Programme 2021

Clean Coasts volunteer groups numbers have continued to grow in 2021 with c.1,860 groups registered with the programme. This is an increase in registrations of c.400 Clean Coasts groups in 2021.

As with all EEU programme activity in 2021, public health restrictions required a lot of the Clean Coasts work to be delivered via online platforms and formats.

13 Clean Coasts Roadshows (virtual and in person) events took place in 2021. Over 400 clean-ups took place around Ireland as part of the Big Beach Clean in September 2021.

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 2021, over 1,260 entries were received, and the 40 best shots were shortlisted. Given the fact it was not possible to host the usual award ceremony in 2021, the shortlisted and winning photographs were printed in a 16-page pull-out section in the Irish Examiner on 13th November 2021.

The Ocean Hero Awards did take place in 2021, however these took place in an outdoor setting with the Clean Coasts Team visiting awardees and presenting them with their award. Awards were given in the categories such as of Group of the Year, #2minutebeachclean Award and Individualof the Year. The other Clean Coasts Campaigns of 2 Minute Beach Clean, Think before You Flush, Think

before You Pour all continued to develop very succesfully during 2021. Further aspects were added to the Clean Coasts programme during 2021 inculding Plastic Free July, Break Up with Plastic, Enjoy and Protect Guides and Clean Coasts Obersvers.

Young Reporters for the Environment Report 2020- 2021

The Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) is a four-step programme sponsored by the Mars Wrigley Foundation and the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications. 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 2021, the programme was expanded on a pilot basis to include 15 additional Green Schools and 5 Green Campuses in addition to the 30 Litter Less Campaign Schools. Despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, over 80 entries were submitted from more than 120 students all over the country working in teams or by themselves. The winning video on rural litter was from Shane King of Mercy College Kilbeggan and was broadcast by RTÉ News2Day. The shortlisted and winning entries are available to view on the YRE Exposure website. (https://yreireland.exposure.co/)

GLOBE Report 2021

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, with support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

2021 continued to pose challenges due to restrictions around the global coronavirus pandemic. There were prolonged school closures, restrictions on visitors to schools, modified classroom layouts and activities, and increased pressures on schools and teachers in response to the above events. Despite the circumstances, schools continued to engage with GLOBE to a very high level.

As part of the GLOBE programme in Ireland, the EEU organises and coordinates a national Air Quality campaign at schools and supports primary and secondary schools who wish to participate in GLOBE measurement protocols in their local environment. 191 schools have taken part in GLOBE Air Quality campaigns, 3,703 observations have been uploaded to the GLOBE website relating to atmosphere and biosphere protocols. 73 GLOBE members have been trained in GLOBE protocols.

During the 2020, a total of 165 schools participated in a GLOBE Air Quality campaign, with 25 schools taking part in both the autumn (2020) and spring/ summer (2021) campaigns. In total, schools collected over 400 nitrogen dioxide (NO2) measurements over the two campaigns.

Clean Air Together (CAT) 2021

Clean Air Together (CAT) is a citizen science project in which people voluntarily sign up to measure levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) pollution in their local area. NO2 is a traffic-related air pollutant that can cause negative health impacts. Clean Air Together is a joint project between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce.

The first Clean Air Together campaign took place in October-November 2021. Approximately 1,000 citizens across Dublin successfully measured NO2 near their home, business, or school. The higher results (30 µg/m3 – 40 µg/m3 and 20 µg/m3 – 30 µg/m3) were found near the M50, in the city centre within the canals and along some of the national and regional roads. In October 2022, Clean Air Together will be undertaken in Cork City.

Leaf (Learning About Forests) 2020-2021

The aim of the international 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.

The public health restrictions in 2020 required the programme to move online and a number of events and workshops had to be postponed until 2021. During 2021, Green-Schools and LEAF Ireland continued to collaborate on a new Investigate Forests project (Investigate Woodlands), funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to deliver c. 20 workshops to schools working on the Green-Schools Biodiversity theme, across Ireland. During 2021, 1,200 students actively participated in the programme. 2,400 trees were to be planted in 12 Coill Bheags in 2021. However, this was undertaken in early 2022. An Choill Bheag is an Initiative of LEAF Ireland. Choill Bheag is a small, dense, biodiverse native woodland habitat on the school grounds.

SEAI Workshop Programme 2021

The Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce administers the Schools' Energy Workshop Programme on behalf of the SEAI, the purpose of which is to drive awareness and engagement around energy use. Workshops are delivered by both An Taisce facilitators and a network of Science Foundation Ireland education centres throughout the country.

In response to the challenge presented by Covid-19, a broad suite of workshop options was developed with ongoing restrictions in mind, providing for indoor, outdoor and online workshop options at all levels. These were offered from the September to December academic term during which time over 4,500 students and teachers participated in the programme. Collaborative work was undertaken with teachers' groups via the Féilte conference 2021 and liaison work with the Institute

IN 2021:

18,063 SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOOK PART IN NEAT STREETS

5,543 NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN EVENTS TOOK PLACE

198 CLIMATE AMBASSADORS JOINED OUR PROGRAMME!

83 BEACHES AND 10 MARINAS WERE AWARDED BLUE FLAGS

of Physics teachers' group. Furthermore, workshops were delivered as part of the Cavan / Monaghan Science Festival during Science Week to over 700 participants as well as the over 200 at the Mayo Youth Climate forum.

Neat Streets Academic Year 2020-2021

Neat Streets is a Litter and Waste education and action programme for secondary schools across Ireland. The programme is funded by the King Baudouin Foundation United States (KBFUS) and the Mars-Wrigley Company Foundation.

By June 2021, 274 secondary schools had undertaken the programme since its inception in 2011. During the 2021/21 academic year, the Neat Streets programme (https://neatstreets.org/) worked with 36 secondary schools. This represents a student body of 18,063 individuals. The Annual Neat Streets Conference took place online on March 21st 2021 with c. 300 students and teachers from 36 participating schools.

Contact details for each EEU programme can be found here: https://www.antaisce.org/contact





Photo credit Naoise Culhane

Advocacy Unit 2021 Report

Ian Lumley,
Head of Advocacy





Dr. Elaine McGoff, Natural Environment Officer



Phoebe Duvall, Planning and Environmental Policy Officer



Kevin Keane,
Climate Advocacy Officer



Katlyne Armstrong,
Advocacy Assistant

The challenges of the Covid pandemic persisted into 2021, but the Advocacy Unit continued to work across a broad range of areas and issues. The majority of advocacy staff continued to work remotely, with a partial return to in-office working throughout the year.

Our role as an independent statutory consultee for planning applications, infrastructure proposals, forestry licensing, aquaculture licensing and other projects continued to be a cornerstone of our work, as did our policy advocacy. Our priorities in all of this work included:

- Addressing the climate change and biodiversity loss emergencies;
- Improving and protecting water quality and air quality;
- Creating a sustainable food system that improves the wellbeing of both people and environment and is compatible with local ecosystems;
- Creating more sustainable communities by enhancing access to safe walking and cycling routes, green spaces, services and amenities;
- Shifting from dependence on private car use to more sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking;
- Protecting our built and cultural heritage, particularly through the planning process;
- Advocating for the sustainable and sensitive use of heritage buildings;
- Ensuring compliance with national and EU environmental law such as the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Habitats and Birds Directives, Water Framework Directive, national climate mitigation policy, etc

Big changes in the Advocacy Unit

2021 was a year of major positive change for the Advocacy Unit. We were very fortunate to welcome two new staff members in 2021. Kevin Keane, who joined us as a volunteer in 2020, took on a part time role as Climate Advocacy Officer in March 2021. Kevin's work primarily focused on air pollution and air quality policy. He played a key role in ensuring that the four Dublin local authorities honoured their obligations to develop a Clean Air Plan for the city, and engaged with the drafters throughout the consultation process. He also worked on a transboundary project with Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland, focusing on the air pollution effects of intensive agriculture and animal waste. In addition, he represented An Taisce at COP26, and challenged Alok Sharma (COP President) on the lack of civil society access to the conference, as well as the disproportionate representation of the fossil fuel lobby at the negotiations.

Katlyne Armstrong, who previously contributed greatly to our social media and fundraising committees as a volunteer, was hired as Advocacy Assistant in August to manage key day-to-day operations of the Advocacy office. Working closely with Phoebe, she focused on transforming and streamlining our systems and procedures, particularly with regard to the high volumes of planning application referrals and email correspondence that we receive. Her work has been instrumental as the Advocacy Unit and our workload continue to grow.





Photo credit R. Moss

Also joining us in 2021 were several highly capable interns. Marc Cahill, Niamh Delanty and Ellen O'Hora interned with Phoebe over the summer as part of their Masters in Environmental Policy. They made an excellent team and contributed very significantly to both planning and policy submissions. Cait Gleeson and Andrew Lynch continued to intern with Elaine for the first part of the year, and were replaced by Aislinn O'Se who also undertook the internship as part of her Masters in Environmental Policy, and continued on with us until the end of the year. They did excellent work on our forestry licensing submissions and other ad-hoc support work for Elaine. We are very grateful to all our very dedicated and skilled interns.

Over the course of 2021, An Taisce successfully applied for a €0.5 million EU LIFE project (the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action) for a two-year programme which aims to develop community-based supports for Ireland's natural environment, with a focus on biodiversity enhancement, environmental protection and climate mitigation. The programme kicks off in 2022, and we're very excited to see how it progresses.

Prescribed functions

Our planning work continued apace in 2021. We made over 500 planning submissions encompassing proposals of all shapes and sizes - from small private developments, Strategic Housing Developments, electricity infrastructure, data centres, agriculture, quarrying, commercial buildings, road developments, etc. We are very grateful for the dedicated work of our Local Associations' around the country who contribute greatly to this work.

One of our key submissions concerned Shannon LNG - the proposal for a liquid natural gas (LNG) import terminal in Co. Kerry. We argued that the proposal is incompatible with the Climate Act as well as government policy on the importation of fracked gas. The application also did not meet key obligations with regard to EU law on environmental assessment. More broadly, gas is not a climate solution - it is often touted as a "clean" fossil fuel, but that is highly misleading. While it burns cleaner than oil and coal, it has significant life cycle emissions which erase any climate benefits. Moreover, Ireland is already heavily dependent on natural gas, and increasing that dependence via this proposal would not solve the security of supply or climate mitigation problems.

Forestry submissions continued apace as well, with An Taisce making over 300 submissions on afforestation licence applications, and progressing 13 felling appeals, including a two-day oral hearing. We also responded to dozens of aquaculture licence applications in 2021.

An Taisce action on cheese factory planning decision

In late 2020, An Taisce started the process of taking a judicial review of An Bord Pleanála's decision to grant permission for a new cheese plant in Co. Kilkenny. The case, heard by the High Court in early 2021, centred around the need to assess the impacts of the proposed milk supply on water quality, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution as part of the planning application for the factory. Over half of our rivers and lakes fail to reach the legally required standard and the EPA has shown that agriculture is the main pressure on these water bodies, in particular in the south and south-east of the country where nitrogen pollution is very prevalent. Agriculture generates 99% of Irish ammonia emissions, which has serious biodiversity and health impacts, damaging our most sensitive bogs and heaths, and resulting in the highly toxic PM 2.5 air pollution. Agriculture also accounts for approximately 37% of our greenhouse gas emissions, mainly methane from livestock, and nitrous oxide due to the use of nitrogen fertiliser and manure management. Additionally, agriculture impacts on biodiversity, with over 70% of protected EU habitats impacted by

agricultural pressures Nevertheless, the High Court ultimately upheld An Bord Pleanála's decision to grant permission.

However, the ruling cast doubt on what the correct standard is under European law for the assessment of indirect environmental impacts, such as those caused by the production of the milk needed for the proposed cheese plant. In light of that, we appealed the ruling and eventually ended up taking the case to the Supreme Court.

Though the case lost in the Supreme Court in the end, we very much appreciate the attention that both Courts gave to what was clearly recognised as an issue at the heart of environmental law and the planning process. As the Supreme Court stated in their judgement:

"Although An Taisce has lost its appeal and its challenge to the grant of planning permission in respect of the factory has been dismissed, it has nevertheless raised important and practical issues regarding the development consent process."

We also are pleased that the case opened up a much wider national conversation about the environmental impacts of intensive agriculture. These issues have not gone away, and we will continue to advocate for a just transition to a sustainable system of food production that guarantees a viable agriculture sector and a healthy environment.

The workload brought on by this case was very intense and required much time and energy from the Advocacy staff, board and legal team throughout the year. However, the significant groundswell of support from our members and members of the general public in light of the negative political discourse on the case was instrumental in raising the profile of the organisation and shining a light on the issue of the environmental impacts as a result of our intensive agricultural model. We couldn't have done it without that support, and we are extremely grateful for it - thank you.

Highlights from our policy work

An Taisce made two separate submissions throughout the year on the public consultation for the Nitrates Action Programme, highlighting the rapidly deteriorating water quality as a result of past policy failures, and the need for far more rigorous measures and farm specific measures.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) underwent a review, and An Taisce took part in stakeholder bilaterals and submitted our views in writing, outlining the need for a much stronger agency, one which was properly resourced and independent.

A new agri-food strategy was drafted, by means of a stakeholder committee established in 2020, with just one environmental NGO representative (Karen Ciesielski- CEO of the Irish Environmental Network). Karen kindly agreed to represent three different coalitions as others were refused seats at the table: the Environmental Pillar, the Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) and Stop Climate Chaos. An Taisce was heavily involved in the input to that committee, and early in 2021 a collective decision was taken to withdraw from the process as it was so flawed, and none of our detailed input was being reflected in the final document. An Taisce reviewed the final strategy and environmental assessments and were very critical of the adequacy of those assessments. This strategy is now the subject of a legal challenge by Friends of the Irish Environment (FIE).

Multiple cities and counties were in the midst of creating new development plans over the course of 2021. An Taisce is a statutory consultee in the development plan process, and we made extensive submissions on multiple pre-draft consultations and draft plans. Some of

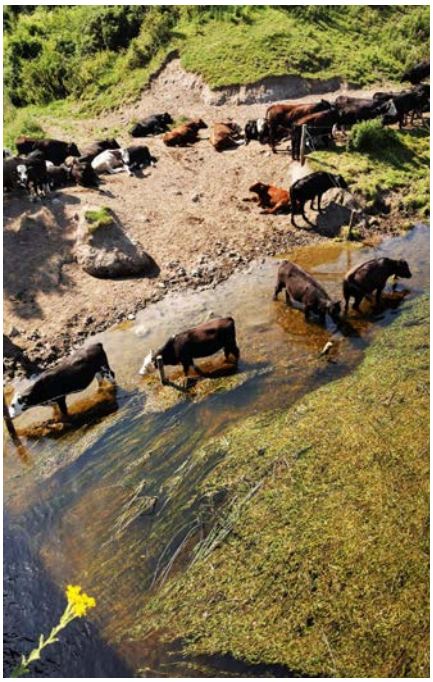




Photo credit D. Morandotti



the key issues we focused on in these submissions were:

- Creating vibrant and sustainable communities through the promotion of compact development served by public and active transport networks;
- Ensuring that climate mitigation and biodiversity loss are addressed at all levels of planning;
- Protecting our water bodies, ecology and protected habitats through the implementation of relevant EU and national law;
- Conserving the quality of the landscape, archaeological monuments and built heritage, particularly protected structures.

In May, An Taisce was invited to appear before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture and the Marine to discuss the implications of the Climate Action Plan for the agriculture sector, the impacts of farming practices, carbon sequestration in farmland, investment risks for farming in light of climate action, and opportunities arising from the European Green Deal. We were expertly represented by Ian and Ruaidhri O'Boyle, Secretary of the An Taisce Climate Committee.

We also continued and expanded our long-running work on data centres. The issue of energy use and the resulting climate impacts became particularly acute in 2021 following warnings of severe electricity grid constraint issues and possible rolling blackouts, due primarily to the largely unchecked growth in the data centre sector. In our policy work, including media interviews and an informational webinar, we drew. attention to the issue and highlighted the need for all data centre proposals to be assessed cumulatively with regard to the energy demands and climate impacts.

Development of the new planning regime for the marine area proceeded rapidly, yet without legal provisions for the creation of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). In light of this, the worsening biodiversity loss emergency and the ongoing overexploitation of our seas, we made a detailed submission to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the need to develop a robust MPA network.

The planning system is demonstrated to be ineffective when architecturally significant Protected Structures are allowed to become neglected and vacant. A number of Irish country houses and their associated buildings are of particular current concern, including Knocklofty and Kilcooley, (Co. Tipperary), Carriglass (Co. Longford), Lough Glynn (Co. Roscommon), and Castlemacgarett (Co. Mayo). In all these cases, An Taisce is seeking the application of the provisions of the Planning Acts to intervene to prevent endangerment as well as stronger provisions in County Development Plans.

An Taisce representation

Elaine continued to represent An Taisce on several fronts, including:

- Member of the Water Forum, a multi-stakeholder forum, set up to advise the relevant Minister on water quality issues;
- Member of 'Project Woodland', a multi-stakeholder group set up by Minister Hackett to chart a way forward to fix the forestry licencing process;
- Steering Committee member of the Environmental Pillar for 2020-2021, and 2021-2022;
- Member of the Board of Directors of the Sustainable Water Network (SWAN);

Ian also continued to represent us on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) planning group and the Peatlands Council.

Phoebe was nominated to the Planning Advisory Forum (run by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) as part of the review of planning legislation to be carried out by the end of 2022.

Kevin took up An Taisce's position on the marine spatial planning forum (which covers all aspects of the marine and coastal areas).

This is just a whistle stop tour of the Advocacy Unit's work in 2021. Many thanks to An Taisce's various committees, Council, members, volunteers and Local Associations. You help us punch far above our weight as a small organisation advocating for nature and heritage. advocacyqueries@antaisce.org.

City Planning Reports

Kevin Duff ,
Dublin City Planning

Cases dealt with in 2021 included a plan to demolish an attractive 1930s house adjacent to the protected early-1800s Congregational Church, Kilmainham and construct a new development.

Following submissions by An Taisce and others, Dublin City Council refused permission, saying that the existing house made "a positive contribution to the special historic and architectural character of the area" and that "the demolition of this fine building would therefore contravene the policies of the Dublin City Development Plan, and said that the new development was "of poor architectural quality and unsympathetic to the character of the Protected Structure, its historic curtilage and its setting". The decision was appealed by the applicant but the planning authority's refusal was upheld. The Congregational Church Kilmainham is a building of cultural significance in an area of rich heritage character, and was successfully converted for residential use in the 2000s. The simple, pared-back, Georgian style of the church is in contrast to the ornate gothic styles of Irish churches later in the 19th century.

Also reviewed was a proposal to increase surface car-parking in the grounds of the early 19th century former Fever Hospital, now Brú Chaoimhín (a protected structure), Cork Street by thirty-four spaces. It was pointed out that the proposal was not compatible with local and national transport and land-use policy which promotes active transport and seeks to reduce the modal transport share of the private car, and with greenhouse-gas emission reduction targets signed up to by the government. Brú Chaoimhín features beautiful mature grounds with broadleaf trees, acting as a valuable 'green lung' in the built-up Liberties area. The proposal required removal of areas of vegetation or other soft-landscaping for conversion to hardstanding for car parking, and the widening of the vehicle entrance to the street. It was considered that these alterations would be damaging to the amenities and environment, resulting in increased air and noise pollution in the locality, loss of biodiversity in the grounds of the premises, increased vehicle entrance and egress disturbance and safety risk, and was not justified in view of the availability of good public transport links on Cork Street (refused; ref. 3626/21).

2021 also saw a new plan put forward for the long-awaited regeneration of the Carlton Cinema site on Upper O'Connell Street, which includes the National Monument at 14-17 Moore Street, a retreat point following occupation of the GPO in the 1916 Rising. A previous bid to redevelop the site in 2008 had fallen victim to the economic crash. In relation to the previous scheme, the current application by Hammerson plc places a reduced emphasis on large retail floor plates and an increased residential component, and is designed around open routes and spaces between the existing streets, which is a welcome core feature. While the development and enhancement of this key inner-city site is much needed on an economic and regenerative basis, it is essential that its national civic character and key relationship to the GPO is respected, and that it be acceptable to the relatives of those who partook in the Rising in respect of how the development impacts on the National Monument and the wider "battlefield site" in the streets and lanes around Moore Street. The plans currently await a decision (refs. 2861 to 2863/21).

Contact the Dublin City Association at dublincity.planning@antaisce.org - Follow our social media Facebook page: 'An Taisce Dublin City'





Much of An Taisce's work is unseen. The image on the left shows the initial roof design for a proposed renovation of the Victorian former Dockrell's building on South Great George's Street as a hotel, featuring large boxy dormer windows (ref. 2546/18). The windows were revised following the recommendations of An Taisce to provide for a more sensitive design (right), and the hotel as completed in 2021 sits very well in the Conservation Area streetscape.

Cork City Planning

By Colm Desmond

An Taisce Corcaigh, the Cork City association, is active on planning developments, mainly in the city centre and inner docklands where project proposals can adversely affect sensitive settings.

The extended city boundary has seen a rise in requests from outer suburban areas. We endeavour to assist where we can, but regrettably this is not always possible within our volunteer resources.

In 2020, we supported approval for an appropriate reconfiguration of the historic Queen's Old Castle retail building on the Grand Parade. To our dismay, this was followed by a revised application in 2021 for a new development within the site, incorporating a 7-storey office complex and part-demolition of the classical-style retail frontage onto Grand Parade. The southern end of the frontage was added in the 1970s and its removal is being justified to restore a previous building form. The proposed office fronting onto Grand Parade is a broad steel-framed structure in dark glass, rising 5 stories behind the existing facade. This would destroy the vista from the top of St. Patrick's Street and overwhelm the historic vernacular setting, which is bounded by two architectural conservation areas. It is difficult to accept how Cork City Council could justify approval for this particular building in this setting. We appealed to An Bord Pleanála in early 2021 seeking redesign and height reduction.

Observations were made on other significant proposals, including:

1. A large new research facility for UCC/ Tyndall Institute, on Distillery Fields off North Mall. A riverside site with rich biodiversity, which also contains a bottling plant of distinctive mid-20th century modernist design. Revised proposals were requested by the Council for part-retention of this structure and other site adjustments, and the applicants have appealed.

2. An Taisce Corcaigh was among a number of parties who made observations to An Bord Pleanála on an SHD proposal to convert the historic Hewitt's Mill, Blackpool as part of a large apartment development on a wider site. We strongly supported housing on the site, but the proposed adjustments to the Mill building would effectively destroy the visual and structural integrity of one of the remaining buildings of its type in the city. The board refused the overall application based on its inspector's recommendation on this aspect.

3. We welcomed a new residential proposal on Sharman Crawford Street but requested the Council to consider whether the height and design was appropriate adjoining the South Parish ACA. Our views were in line with discussions at pre-planning stage and the matter is currently before An Bord Pleanála, the Council's grant with amendments having been appealed by the applicants.

4. A new hotel development behind the former McKenzies/Circuit Courthouse on Camden Quay, where the height and scale fronting the quayside is excessive. This was approved by the Council.

Overall, the scale of development in the city requires greater local input and we would welcome interested local volunteers with making planning submissions. Cork Local Association can be contacted at: corcaigh@antaisce.org









National Cycling Coordinator's Report

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama,
National Cycling Coordinator



The collaboration between An Taisce and Cyclist.ie, which commenced in 2013 with the creation of the shared role of National Cycling Coordinator (NCC), continued into 2021.

My NCC position in 2021 owed its existence to a very generous donation by Dublin Cycling Campaign and a funding success with Rethink Ireland. These provided the lion's share of the funding to enable me to concentrate on advancing the six strategic priorities of my NCC work. These are as follows and I comment on each of them below:

1. Develop a vibrant and resilient all-island cycling advocacy community
2. Influence the national conversation on mobility and quality of life
3. Seek to ensure public policy embraces cycling
4. Advocate for more effective institutions and new legislation
5. Seek to ensure there is ample funding spent on cycling
6. Seek to secure high quality routes and infrastructure

The increased funding for active travel, arising from the 2020 Programme for Government, and the willingness of some local authorities to reallocate road space for walking and cycling as part of their Covid Mobility Plans gave a morale boost to the cycling campaigning community in 2021. At last we were beginning to see progress on the ground. The vibrancy of the community was further enhanced with the election of a new Executive Committee of Cyclist.ie and the creation of distinct Action Groups to enable more volunteers to contribute their energies.

2021 was another busy year on the airwaves as we sought to reshape the discourse on mobility and put everyday cycling to the fore. Both An Taisce and Cyclist.ie made many contributions at national and local levels in this regard. They included, for example, interviews the NCC gave on the Ray D'Arcy show on RTE Radio 1 and contributions to a spread in The Sun newspaper on enabling more women to cycle.

On campaigning to ensure that public policy embraces cycling, we spent much of 2021 meeting officials from the core transport departments and agencies, drafting over 40 submissions on major public consultations, and forging partnerships with other advocacy bodies. A major success was seeing the funding commitment for active travel set at 20% of the transport pie embedded into the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030. Additionally, I presented at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action on the topic of electric vehicles in November 2021.

On advocating for more effective institutions, the big success in 2021 related to shaping the government commitment to create almost 250 additional Active Travel staff in Local Authorities countrywide. Additionally, Transport Infrastructure Ireland was given new responsibilities to advance a National Cycling Network as per the NDP.

On funding for active travel, the challenge was to ensure that Local Authorities spent the increased allocations on the right active travel schemes and built them to a high standard.

On seeking to secure high quality infrastructure, the work continued through our engagements with officials on standards for cycle design and on seeking to ensure that the three main design documents (NTA Cycle Manual, DoT Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, TII Rural Cycle Design Guidance) are aligned and improved. This is still a work in progress in 2022.

In 2021, my second term on the board of the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) came to an end, but we continue to be actively involved with the ECF. In October 2020, I was appointed to the Board of Transport Infrastructure Ireland, which has been mandated to have a more involved role in the development of active travel.

As always, I am happy to hear from An Taisce members with an interest in active travel and transportation with any questions or offers of help.
Email: damien.otuama@antaisce.org.



Natural Environment Committee (NEC) Report

Declan Murphy,
Chair National Climate Committee
nec@antaisce.org



The NEC met on five occasions in 2021, and all were on line Zoom meetings. Online meetings have the familiar advantages and disadvantages.

At our first meeting we were delighted that the newly appointed Minister of State for Heritage, Malcolm Noonan TD, had agreed to make an important presentation to the committee. He said that the terms of reference for a review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) were finalised, and that submissions will be invited from all stakeholders, including the general public. He spoke about preparation for a new national Biodiversity Plan, and a Citizens Assembly to follow. The procedures for investigating and prosecuting wildlife crime will be strengthened and upgraded, vacant wildlife ranger posts will be filled and many new posts created. A wide range of other proposed actions were also mentioned. His presentation was warmly welcomed as a significant response to the government-declared Biodiversity Crisis. NE Officer Elaine McGoff made the An Taisce submission to the NPWS review, and some members of the NEC made individual submissions in a personal capacity.

Elaine reports in person to each meeting on her work and activities as NE Officer. She represents An Taisce on other eNGO umbrella groups including the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) and the Environmental Pillar (EP). The government announced a public consultation for its draft Agri-Food Strategy 2030. It was strongly criticised by the EP NGO group, which produced an alternative Agri-Food policy document that took account of environmental and climate serious concerns. Their issues were ignored and the group decided to exit the process. Elaine's submissions to government policy consultations are formidable and authoritative documents, reflecting her expertise and experience. She appeared frequently in media interviews on a range of environmental issues, and was a leading figure in the An Taisce legal action over the proposed cheese factory case.

The NEC arranged for a NUIG based zoologist, Elaine O'Riordan to present a Zoom illustrated talk on the Irish Hedgehog Survey. She gave a fascinating account of the history, ecology and habits of the Irish hedgehog to over 60 An Taisce members attending. She is the lead organiser of the online survey, which recruited a huge number of enthusiasts submitting data from their local areas to the national survey.

An Taisce owns (or manages) an important group of NE properties. NEC member Veronica Heywood reported regularly on the Booterstown Nature Reserve. An adjacent site is owned by the McKillen property development group which submitted a planning application for a designed park incorporating new landscaping and some sculpture. The NEC had mixed views on this but a submission advocating rejection had been submitted by the Heritage Officer. Conservation work and major woodland restoration work is ongoing at Sliabh Beagh under the local cross-boundary group. The problem of access to our Burren site at Gortileka for our tenant farmer's organic Belted Galloway cattle is ongoing despite mediation. The cattle perform an important role in controlling overgrowth of hazel by grazing.

The Grove 'pocket wilderness park' in Dublin 4 has a recurring problem with overhanging branches causing some nuisance to pedestrians. Declan and Ian have been able to control it with the use of loppers or clippers. An expert amateur photographer has taken magnificent photos of sparrowhawks at their nest in the trees.

During 2021, the committee gained one new member (Anto Kerins) and the return of a former member (Eric Conroy). It is a small committee with a wide remit, and meetings are never dull! We welcome new members and hope to make new recruits to the cause of saving and enhancing our natural environment.



Photo credit Gustavo Zoladz

Kevin O'Farrell,
Chair Climate Committee
climatechair@antaisce.org

An Taisce Climate Committee Report



The committee continued to meet monthly virtually via Zoom from March with strong attendances. Throughout the year, guest speakers and observers from both across An Taisce and external allies also joined the meetings.

For the Education Slot, the committee hosted a wide range of external/internal contributors including: Stan Nagle on greening the Irish film industry; Brendan Dunford of Burren Natura; Sinead Mowlds on 'Sustainable Food Systems: steps Ireland can take to become a global leader'; Damien O'Tuama on Cycling and Transport; and various on COP26 Glasgow observations and insights.

Kevin O'Farrell continued as Chair, Ciara Beausang as Vice Chair, and Ruaidhri O'Boyle as Secretary of the Committee. Some new members were attracted to join later in the year.

Climate Law and Climate Action Plan

The first quarter of the year saw the publication of the Climate Action Bill, which appeared to herald a significant step toward tackling Ireland's Climate and Biodiversity Emergency. The bill was vastly improved with amendments. The Climate Committee recognised the positive role of the Joint Oireachtas Committee in influencing this. The expanded Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) in setting the two 5-year carbon budgets and prompt responses of Ministers in agreeing on their sectoral allocations will be crucial signals of intent.

When finally passing a Dail vote in June, a series of later amendments altered the character and ethos of the Bill, radically shifting the emphasis from the scientific to the political. This change could potentially undermine the independence and objectivity of CCAC, and reverse the direction of advice and information, with the Government giving the CCAC advice instead of the other way around.





Photo credit Jamie Quirke

The long-awaited Climate Action Plan was published on 4th November with the purpose *"to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting us on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021"*. This was not a finished plan but a clear statement of intent that, if delivered, would position Ireland among the most active nations of the world in addressing the climate action agenda.

Prof Kevin Anderson appearance at ATCC meeting

We invited climate scientist Prof Kevin Anderson, of the University of Manchester, to speak at March's virtual meeting on November's COP26 meeting in Glasgow and also on Ireland's Climate Bill legislation drawing from his UK experience. Previously Kevin was a guest of ATCC in Dublin back in 2016 and also co-authored a study on Ireland's energy security.

COP26 Glasgow

With the conference being held so geographically close by, a number of ATCC members and Advocacy Unit staff made the trip to Scotland. The resulting output and media appearances included - blog series by Prof John Sweeney, podcast guest spots and a reflection on the conference by An Taisce President Sean McDonagh.

Media and communications

The climate-related press releases over the year mostly focused on the aforementioned climate legislation. These releases and more are available at antaisce.org/news

To close the year, in December, Kevin O'Farrell hosted a webinar on Carbon Budgets focusing on community energy, with Dr. Aideen O'Dochartaigh, Assistant Professor in Accounting at the DCU Business School and Dr. Orla Nic Suibhne, SEAI Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) County mentor for Mayo and Galway. This was part of the An Taisce Talks series.



Monuments and Antiquities Report

Dr. Mark Clinton, Chair Monuments & Antiquities Committee



Throughout the year, a steady stream of notifications regarding monuments under threat was received from both the membership and the public. These cases were immediately brought to the attention of the relevant authorities.

To give but a few examples, a probably Prehistoric, mound or barrow at Gernonstown in County Meath was located in a field where bulldozing work had just commenced whilst the remains of a Tower House ('Meelick Castle') in County Clare had undergone a similar threat. The castle remains, which probably belonged to the O'Gradys, had, reportedly, already been largely destroyed. Both monuments were brought to the immediate attention of the National Monuments Service. Other monuments were threatened by imminent developments. Examples included the Souterrain at *Báile na nGall Mór* in County Waterford and the Ringfort at Hawthorn Lodge in County Mayo. In the case of the former monument, no allowance had been made for a possible extension of the subterranean structure or for the possibility of an associated enclosure. At the latter site, the proposed development was in the close environs of the monument. Both relevant County Councils were notified.

Finally, after 18 years of labouring under the anti-heritage consequences of the 2004 Amendment to the National Monuments Act, we are on the verge of receiving The Monuments and Archaeological Heritage Bill (2021). An Taisce was invited by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Heritage to advance our views on the proposed legislation. On 3rd February a three-person delegation, headed by interim CEO Gary Freemantle duly appeared before the committee. After a detailed analysis of the heritage legislation, past and present, three key proposals were presented:

1. The 'Valetta Convention', ratified by Ireland in 1997, is a valuable instrument that affords proper protection to many aspects of landscape archaeology, not least complexes such as the *Brú na Bóinne* tombs, and historic battlefields such as Aughrim. We asked how can the introduction of the new Heritage Bill not be the perfect



Photo credit R. Moss 2021



Photo credit James Leahy

context and opportunity for the long awaited implementation of the 'Valetta Convention' into law?

2. The Bill should adopt a policy of 'Monument Destruction Prevention' as opposed to one of 'Monument Destruction Prosecution'. This would simply require availing of the technological database already compiled by the Land Commission to issue official notification to all landowners with a known monument on their land. The notification would make it clear that the ground upon which the monument stood, even if the monument itself was destroyed, would be protected by a Preservation Order. Thus, the sub-surface features of the monument and the associated archaeological objects would be preserved, and the 'ground gain' achieved by destruction negated.

3. The Bill should reactivate the Monuments Advisory Council as established by the original National Monuments Act. This Advisory Council would introduce checks and balances into the system. The fate of an ancient monument, potentially of great cultural value to the Nation, should not rest on the decision of one individual, i.e., the Minister of the day. National resources must not be frittered away. The current draft of the Bill is encouraging but anaemic. It would not be robust enough to restrain the actions of another minister.

The year did bring some positive results. On 21st August, An Taisce wrote to the Minister responsible for Culture, Catherine Martin, urging her to make resources available to the relevant institutions to purchase items of National importance that were included in the auction of the contents of Howth Castle. 'The Great Sword of Howth', allegedly of 12th century, but actually of 15th century date was acquired by the National Museum, and the rare portrait of Dean Jonathan Swift was acquired by 'an Irish buyer'. The Hillfort at Kilranelagh in County Wicklow, part of a unique cluster, was saved thanks to the decision by *An Bord Pleanála* to reject a development application.

Profiles and Activities of Active Groups

Local Associations

Donegal

Our activities for the year 2021 were heavily curtailed and halted again by Covid-19. For example, we had 3 committee meetings and, unfortunately, we were unable to organise any Nature Walks. Throughout the year we undertook the following activities:

- We sponsored and formed part of the judging panel for the May McClintock Wildlife Friendly Garden Competition in association with Letterkenny Tidy Towns.

- We part-sponsored the initiative "Ogham – the Healing Language of Trees" by the Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Committee-Donegal. This consisted of an art exhibition by forty pupils from two primary schools, Gortahork and Murroe in Donegal. It featured the twenty Native Trees of the Ogham and formed part of a symposium in Ards Friary and the publication of an associated booklet "Ogham – the Healing Language of Trees".

- We applied for and received grant aid from the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO)- Donegal Co Council – Community Water Development Fund 2021 for 2 projects. Both projects involved classroom presentations and visits to their local river by the children of local National Schools. The concepts of a catchment, a nature corridor and water quality (Q values) were explained and explored. The purpose is to reach a wider audience in the communities outside the schools through the influence of what the school children learned and experienced.

- The project, River Lennon – A Nature Corridor, was led by Aengus Kennedy from NatureNorthWest. Students from Scoil Mhuire, Ramelton, Co. Donegal monitored water quality, riparian vegetation and invertebrate life at three points along the river and explored the course of the river as a nature corridor. This field day and classroom work are recorded in a film published on YouTube, entitled 'River Lennon- A Nature Corridor', and available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCMvzwI3gH8

- Another project, Caring for Drumhome's Rivers - Habitats for Nature, was led by Keith Corcoran. This included a Community Guided Nature Walk, the production of a community awareness booklet 'Drumhomes Living Rivers' as well as the involvement with the local National Schools.

- We published a calendar, "Treasures of Donegal 2022" with a print run of 1,000. The primary focus of these calendars is to celebrate the landscape, biodiversity and local history of Co. Donegal.

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

- We continued to maintain the An Taisce May McClintock Butterfly Garden in Letterkenny.

Dun Laoghaire

The *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland* in 1846 described Dun Laoghaire as *"a Maritime Barony– it contains the beautiful and brilliant sweep of coast from Blackrock round by Dalkey and Killiney to Bray"*. At that time largely rural, it is fast changing under a huge development imperative. Its desirable location is a development haven which has seen a huge rise in build-to-rent schemes and SHDs - not to mention purpose built Student Accommodations. Keeping up with planning applications is more like trying to keep up with Usain Bolt. We have lodged ten appeals and a number of planning submissions. We have to choose the applications carefully as they are now numerous and voluminous. We thank Victor and Mairead and Phoebe and Ian in Tailors' Hall. We made detailed submissions to the forthcoming Development Plans on Biodiversity and Heritage of Dun Laoghaire and Dublin City.

To all our volunteers, we express our thanks. Our successful clean ups in Booterstown were oversubscribed maybe tempted by Margaret's homemade scones. Without Clean Coasts and Richard Curtin, our 88 metre-long mural on the Trimleston culvert would not have been possible. Thanks must also be given to our funders: The Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and Dublin City Council. Further, our sun-scorched mural artist, Shane Ha, and film-maker, Sarah Lordan, who have created beautiful works, featuring.... deserve particular thanks. Two August mural art workshops were booked out and thanks to clement weather, it was an enjoyable day. Heritage Week was supported by our artist colleague, Veronica Heywood, who submitted a wonderful slide show of her Booterstown Marsh artworks.

Our drone films were made possible by our sponsors the Local Authority Waters Programme and the Biodiversity Officer, Anne Murray. The overwintering birds' films were featured on the World and Irish Wetlands websites and Heritage Week. The films show, for the first time, the thousands of waders and wildfowl that feed, rest and roost there. The two islands are clearly refuges for them as the tide rises in the bay and are hugely important. The sponsors also funded a study Assessment of the Benthic Fauna of the Booterstown Marsh Nature Reserve. This was carried out by Dr Roisin Nash and her GMIT Galway team. Secured by ropes and wading suits, they entered the marsh to carry out work, finding a ten metre long biogenic mussel reef colony, which was a surprise. The the abundance of molluscs,



Babe's Bridge, the remains of a 13th Century bridge over the River Boyne near Navan, Co Meath.

crustaceans and worms that provide food for thousands of birds was reassuring but the pollution readings around the Nutley stream inflow are worryingly high. The Booterstown Marsh drone footage can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsaeid4NZOt5uEj11HvxaFQ

Clare

In 2021, we ran five lectures and webinars during the year on the subject of either biodiversity or climate change.The first, on climate change and presented by Dr. John Sweeney in January, had an online attendance of over fifty. The second, on pollination and in line with our Bee campaign, had an attendance of twenty four. This was followed in May by John Gibbons and was, again, the important topic of climate change, which was well attended by thirty-four people. The next covered biodiversity in wetlands and was shared with the PPN.

Anny followed this with her presentation to a County Committee in September on 'Heating our Homes', which covered not only fossil fuel emissions but also particulates, bringing attention to health problems.

This coming year, we are to have a series of both face-to-face and Zoom lectures. Following the consultation at the National Environment Committee, we are helping with the Old Irish Goat project as we appear to have many on the Burren.

Kilkenny

During 2021, our committee of six committed members, Declan, Mary, Brian, Ann, Maria and Geni, continued monthly meetings via Zoom, in line with Covid restrictions. No events or outings were held during the year. Our work focused mainly on local planning and discussion of environmental issues. We closed our bank account in October and were kindly facilitated by HQ who will hold our small savings.

We joined online consultations by Kilkenny County Council on the County Development Plan, the Local Area Plan for Graiguenamanagh, St Canice's Hospital masterplan (transfer of HSE land to the County Council) and a Recreational Park on Dunmore Landfill. There was much discussion of An Bord Pleanála's decision to grant planning permission for Glanbia's Cheese Plant in Belview and its wider implications for agricultural intensification and increased water pollution.

Other developments included works by the OPW to improve universal access at Kilkenny Castle. There was a trend towards inner city densification involving demolition of old buildings and replacement by blocks of flats. We supported this where dereliction was advanced and the proposal was sensitive. Planning permissions continued to be granted for hotel development in the city centre at Walkin Street, Wolfe Tone Street and Lower John Street. We were critical of the poor quality designs, materials and the projected increase in traffic.

Rural estates with protected buildings like Kilfane applied for commercial developments on their grounds. We accept that it is not always practical to preserve historic landscapes, and proposed uses of estates that enable the historic buildings to survive must be reasonably considered. Continued developments on estates such as Mount Juliet, which has a hotel and golf course, and doesn't come under general planning for settlement patterns, are of greater concern. There were several applications for small building projects on the estate. A large housing development has evolved incrementally with high maintenance fees and urban generated traffic which may not be sustainable long term.

Kilkenny City continues to expand. Work progressed on the Abbey Quarter and a new skate park was opened. There were planning applications for new housing estates and two new schools in the western environs. Tourism in

the city virtually ceased during Covid restrictions and the number of vacant premises increased. A temporary one-way traffic system was introduced in High Street, adding to existing amenities for pedestrians such as the river side walks and the Castle Park. Furthermore, the County Council provided outdoor dining spaces and proposed a 'Watergate Urban Park' in Parliament Street.

Our Local Association continues to engage with the PPN and has representation on two SPCs. We lack young members, the chairperson has been in place for over 20 years and the secretary for over 10 years so change is needed. We held the Local AGM online in June and it was attended only by Committee members. On a positive note, environmental issues are being addressed by Tidy Town Committees, the Nore Vision Project and community groups.

Limerick

Despite the on-going restraints in 2021, committee members continued to communicate by email and telephone. The annual general meeting for 2020 was due to take place before the end of May 2021 but the poor public health outlook required its postponement. It was eventually scheduled and took place on 10 Dec

During the year the Association had to deal with allegations of corruption in planning matters. These and other matters were referred to An Taisce Council who appointed a complaints committee to examine the issue and report back to Council. In October 2021, those directly concerned received a copy of the report and it is now available to any member of the Association through Council. The report is now subject to review.

During the period, the Association pressed on with its prime mission in heritage and environmental advocacy and submitted a number of significant observations to the planning authorities. At various times, each member of the committee provided constructive and well-informed input. In addition to observations on specific planning projects, submissions were made to Limerick City and County Council on the Limerick Development Plan 2022-28 (Draft) and on the King's Island Flood relief project, and to the National Transport Authority on Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy. We also made a submission to the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform advising the grant of protected status to an early nineteenth century tollhouse at Corbally.

The Association continued its policy of engaging constructively with print and broadcast media which resulted in interviews and statements to the Limerick Leader, Limerick Post, Irish Examiner, Limerick Live 95, and RTE Radio 1. Members of the Association met - at their request - with media and journalism students at University of Limerick and the Limerick Institute of Technology.

Notwithstanding the adverse environment in which the Association had to function, its membership, standing at 33 at the previous AGM in March 2020, now stands in December 2021 at 50. Thus, the Association can look forward to a year of energised, mutually supportive collective responsibility, intensifying its efforts to protect threatened public places and spaces, and responding with greater vigour to the crisis of our climate.

Meath

The business of An Taisce continued unabated and much work has been done on a National basis through our Statutory role in the Planning System. The professional staff in the planning and advocacy sections of An Taisce continued to be very busy throughout 2021.

Social events and the AGM continued to be suspended but we did manage one small get in late summer at Herbert's Garden, Navan. Against the backdrop of





Photo credit Gavin Sheehan, Finavarra Martello Tower

ripening orchards, abundant geraniums and chirping crickets, Jean Carr gave a talk on the Old Silk Road.

During 2021, there was continued destruction of hedgerows, fields and old gardens. That house or garden that you passed to photograph disappears overnight, the chewing bulldozers move in or the remains of earthworks. I am increasingly worried about the streetscapes of our villages and towns, the unique shop fronts and carriage arches. Is An Taisce making enough of an impact in alerting people to these losses? On the other hand, there are good things. The continuing development of the former M.G.W.R. line to Kingscourt as a walkway for one. Numerous small houses are being restored sympathetically and people are working on removing litter from the bogs, which have become delightful places for children to explore nature.

So let us strive yet again with you, the members, to throw off the stuffy patronising label that we seem to be stuck with. It is still a beautiful country in spots, but it is more important than ever that we do not lose any more of it.

Boyne Navigation/Greenway Report

Covid restrictions meant that all work by IWAI Boyne Navigation volunteers had to be suspended until mid-2021 when clearing of fallen trees and branches and of scrub along most of the canal sections forming the Navigation commenced. The Ramparts walks along the Canal have been a blessing over the last two years as people have found them to be ideal and popular walking routes. Under pressure from the public and the influence of An Taisce, Navan Urban Council allocated funding of €50,000 to the resurfacing of the Ramparts walk between Navan and Stackallen, which was carried out February 2021.

Quite a number of important planning applications regarding the Boyne Navigation and proposed Greenway required regular detailed inputs by An Taisce. Meath County Council and their consultants continued work on the feasibility studies for the Boyne Greenway and the restoration of parts of the Navigation between Oldbridge and Navan. The Council expects to undertake a major public consultation process, on their route selection proposals for the Greenway, towards the middle of 2022. An Taisce has submitted their preferred route while reports from consultants appointed by MCC are awaited. Meetings will then be held with the council, landowners and stakeholders affected by the project. Government have already indicated that funding will be available for greenway proposals throughout country. Hopefully they will favour the Boyne project.

In 2021, it was discovered that the remains of the historic Babe's Bridge along the Navan Ramparts, also known as Ferganstown or Robber's Bridge, had become the property of An Taisce during the transfer of Boyne Navigation lands. It was built by the Normans at the beginning of the 13th century and originally had 11 arches. The location was chosen to provide access from the Barony of Screen to Donaghmore Church and Monastery, i.e. at the Round Tower sited on the present day Slane Road. Today, the last remaining arch is one of the oldest surviving authenticated bridges in Ireland. The stability of the bridge arch structure is, at present, threatened by tree growth and general neglect. An Taisce engaged Consultants to undertake a Conservation Study on the Bridge and successfully applied to the Communities Monument Fund for funding to undertake the conservation work. Through the work of An Taisce, together with the County Meath Heritage Officer, the bridge is about to become a National Monument.

South Dublin

2021 was a difficult year for our association, like many others, because of the COVID pandemic. The relief when the government decided we could all go out together was enormous. Some of our group, felt like hugging each other when we first met, and indeed there were a few hugs. The Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Andrew Parkes, has been working tirelessly, reviewing the applications for planning - most of which seem to be ignoring our traffic problems and the already overcrowded Luas. The 22-storey apartment block in Carrickmines, which recently got planning permission, seems to us perhaps the most inappropriate of all the inappropriate developments we looked at. However, we struggle on and are so delighted when some of our observations have been accepted. Long live the Cranes!

The lecture series arranged by Eileen Collins included our first meeting after the pandemic, with a talk by myself on Diabetes and the environment. The second talk was on DLRC, given by the new Heritage Officer Deirdre Blake. We are so lucky to have such a dynamic leader in this position. We had little success in drumming up interest for a stone mason's workshop but are still pursuing this and the museum, which we hope will be in the Fernhill estate. We were delighted to support Katie Holland financially in the Kitchen Garden revival and will remember the late David Rowe by the placement of a bench in the garden.

Properties Committee Report

Geoff Power,
Chair Properties Committee
propertieschair@antaisce.org



As I took over the role of Properties Chair, on a temporary basis in September 2021, I can't speak with authority for the entire year. I am grateful for the support of the committee during my first months as chair.

By way of a brief introduction to members who I have yet to meet, I am a documentary producer and I took over the role of Properties Chair permanently from Trish O'Connell in February 2022.

It has been an informative and eye-opening experience to visit An Taisce properties over the last number of months. I have yet to visit all of the 15 properties under An Taisce's care but I am, of course, eager to do so. A definite priority would be the most recent property to have been acquired by An Taisce, in 2020, courtesy of Paddy Rossmore; Sliabh Beagh. The blanket bog landholding comprises an astonishing 2,200 acres, approximately two thirds of which are in County Monaghan and the remainder in County Tyrone.

Over the past year, a handful of our properties have featured more prominently in our meetings and discussions. This is mostly because there is no one on the Committee who can update us on the following properties: Corlican Graveyard (Co. Wexford): Crocnafarragh (Co. Donegal); Gortlecka (Co. Clare); Kanturk Castle (Co. Cork); Killaha West (Co. Kerry); Mongan Bog (Co. Offaly); Oweninny Bog (Co. Mayo); and the Gull & Rough Islands (Co. Donegal).

The Grove has received a lot of attention in recent years: it featured in an RTE1 documentary (produced by me, in 2019); it is currently the focus of an art exhibition by John Roch Simons, that will be staged at a location near the venue later this year. An exhibition of Estella Solomons, a close friend of Kathleen Goodfellow, will also take place at the National Gallery this Autumn, and a plaque will be inserted on the gateway and unveiled in October by relatives of the late artist; and Gustavo Soladz continues to monitor activities at The Grove using trail cameras that show how the site continues to provide peace and tranquillity for native wildlife.

In relation to Booterstown Marsh, there has been no update on the lease and, in addition, the planning application for the site that adjoins the reserve has still not been decided. However, there has been some good news in that LAWPRO has approved two grants: the first is for an insect study on the marsh; and the second is for a survey of the Borrer's Saltmarsh or Puccinellia fasciculata. Both projects received insufficient funding, but additional support from Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown County Council means the studies can now proceed.

Sadly, Veronica Heywood, Chair of Booterstown Management Advisory Committee as well as an active and most valued member of both the Natural Environment Committee and the Properties Committee, has decided to step down from these roles to concentrate on other projects. Veronica worked tirelessly for the protection of the marsh and her contributions will be greatly missed.

Gort Weigh House suffered a little damage when the council removed bollards surrounding the building without permission. The council had decided that the house was an appropriate spot for a small monument; the stone bollards have been put away and will be restored. There are also some structural matters that need to be addressed.

Maintenance work has been carried out along the Boyne Navigation after serious flooding over the winter period. Meanwhile, Sliabh Beagh was the subject of the An Taisce Talks series, on 24th March 2022, which included the following speakers: Paddy Sherry, Rory Sheahan, and Fiona Connolly.

A Top 10 Most-at-Risk Buildings was again compiled by the Properties Committee and the list featured in local newspapers around the country. The full list can be found here: https://www.antaisce.org/news/irelands-top-10-most-at-risk-buildings-2021.

To conclude, we undoubtedly preside over a wonderful range of properties and landholdings. I would like to explore ways in which we can make the public more aware of this over the coming year, to provide where possible, and to extol the work that members do in monitoring and protecting them.



Photo credit Kevin Duff

Administration Membership and Donations

Sinead Owens
Operations Manager





Dearbhla Ryan,
Marketing and Membership Development Officer



Annette McCaul,
Membership Officer

Looking back at what took place in 2021, I'd like to take a moment to dwell, not on the negatives and the numerous challenges we face because of Covid, but more at the positives that these times have helped to create.

During lockdowns we got opportunities that would never normally have been afforded to us. Many of us were able to spend quality time at home with friends/family, took long walks, visited parks and ponds, saw the many beautiful heritage sites and monuments that have been preserved and protected over the years. We enjoyed all that nature, the environment and the country has to offer. The chaos of traffic and emissions was replaced with the beautiful tranquil sounds of the birds singing, wildlife running free, smog-free cities and towns, the smell of fresh air. All of this allowed us to appreciate what we have right here on our doorsteps.

In An Taisce, the work continued despite restrictions. Our many Educational Programmes ran successfully, and a new interim CEO was appointed, which in turn led to some very exciting development plans across the board in the Advocacy, Planning and Educational units. New appointments in Marketing, Membership, Planning and Administration helped to support the implementation of those plans.

Communications improved with the introduction of a new computer system, which allowed easier interaction with our members, creating a more user-friendly system which provided opportunities for you, the member, to correspond and be a part of the work of An Taisce by joining our Local Associations, participating in our programmes such as the National Spring Clean, Green Schools, Green Coast, and following us on our social media platforms. A quarterly newsletter was made available to all members with regular updates and news items. A Membership Benefits package was introduced to include free access to An Taisce members to the International National Trust properties in the UK and globally. Included too, are discounts at local zero-waste and eco-friendly stores. Be sure to keep an eye out for these emails as they keep our members up to date with our important work and new ways to stay involved. If you've yet to receive them, please let us know so we can update your contact details.

Young people are such a vital part of environmental activism. Recognising a gap in the age demographic of the organisation, we designed a Student Membership package, which has been piloted to three universities. Students are invited to join An Taisce for just €2 and will receive all the benefits of full membership - enabling them, in time, to form a student forum. This will allow representatives from individual colleges/universities to be elected to go forward to the National Council where they will have a voice on climate action, sustainability, bio diversity and general environmental issues along with working on the protection and preservation of our heritage. Most colleges are already actively involved in the An Taisce Green Campus programme and it's hoped to expand on that work by encouraging the students to sign up as members and get more involved with a view to retaining them as members when finished college. We are excited with this expansion and to work with our student members and a new and important part of our membership.

A new Marketing and Membership Development Officer was added to the Advocacy team. One of the many initiatives created includes our An Taisce Talks series, where members can engage on sessions covering topics on the environment, heritage and climate, such as 'Composting for Nature,' which was very well received by participants. As we welcomed new staff, we have found new ways to communicate and have enjoyed expanding our social media presence. We hope that you can follow us and see our activities day-to-day!

An Taisce would like to acknowledge the support of all our members, especially those who joined us to lend their support to the relentless work that was put in by our staff and board members on the Supreme Court cheese factory case. Although we were very disappointed with the outcome on this occasion, you gave us the motivation needed to continue to "fight the good fight" at a difficult time. The role of An Taisce is to protect and advocate for ecological resilience and the future viability of the natural environment and that is what we will continue to do - with your help.

We look forward to your continued support.

Thank you all.

Annette McCaul
Membership Officer

Keep in touch on social media:

AnTaisce

antaisce

AnTaisce

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

Further contact details can be found www.antaisce.org/contact



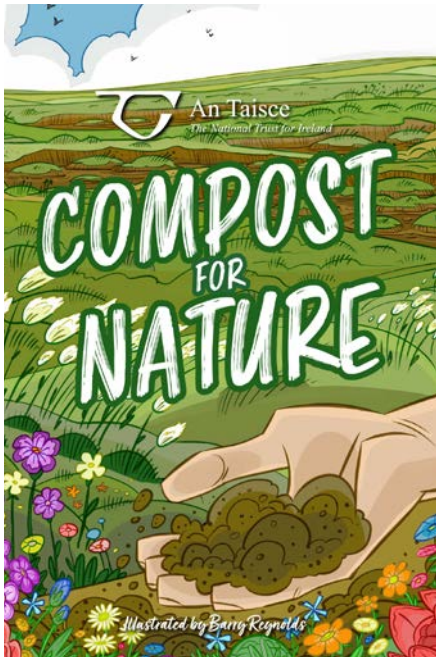






Photo credit R. Moss, 2021



NOTES

NOTES

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
Alan Price	Delegate	Carlow
Anny Wise	Delegate	Clare
Damon Matthew Wise	Deputy Delegate	Clare
Kevin Hurley	Delegate	Cork
Anne McGowan	Delegate	Donegal
Marie Mhic Globuin	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
Declan Murphy	Delegate	Kilkenny
Mary Brennan	Deputy Delegate	Kilkenny
Margaret Monaghan	Delegate	Meath
Jean Carr	Deputy Delegate	Meath
John Logan	Deputy Delegate	Limerick
Paul O'Brien	Delegate	Limerick
TBC	Northwest Local Association Delegate	
Charles Stanley Smith	Delegate	Tipperary North
Kathleen Vandenberghe	Delegate	Tipperary North
Jack O'Sullivan	Delegate	Westmeath
Gerald Tomkin	Delegate	Wicklow
Dr Mark Clinton	Elected 2018	
Geoff Power	Elected 2018	
Kevin O'Farrell	Elected 2019	
Eric Conroy	Elected 2019	
Patricia Oliver	Re-elected 2019	
Nick Armstrong	Elected 2019	
Ruaidhri O'Boyle	Elected 2019	
Eamonn Moore	Co-opted 2019	
Stuart McCaul	Co-opted 2020 (Honourary Secretary)	
Trish O'Connell	Co-opted 2020 (Vice Chair)	
Robin Mandal	Elected 2021	
Liam Murtagh	Elected 2021	
Gerry Crilly	Elected 2021	
Kate Carmody	Co-opted 2021	
Karen Mahon	Co-opted 2021	

DIRECTORS/TRUSTEES AS OF JULY 2021

Phil Kearney | Chair | Joined Board in 2016, Chair since 2019
Trish O'Connell | Vice Chair | Joined Board in 2019
Stuart McCaul | Secretary | Joined Board in 2019
Aoife O'Gorman | Treasurer | Joined Board in 2020
Hugh O'Reilly | Joined Board in 2019
John Sweeney| Joined Board in 2015
Olivia Rogers | Joined Board in 2021
Rónán O'Brien | Joined Board in 2021

REPRESENTATIVES OF AN TAISCE

Monuments and Antiquities Contact: Dr Mark Clinton
European Environmental Bureau: Attracta Ui Bhroin
INTO: Ian Lumley, Sinead Owens
Europa Nostra: Dr Paul O'Brien
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
Fingal Heritage Forum: Richard Williams

KEY EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

An Taisce Head Office
Interim CEO: Gary Freemantle
Operations Manager: Sinead Owens
Membership Officer: Annette McCaul
Marketing and Membership Development Officer: Dearbhla Ryan

An Taisce Advocacy
Head of Advocacy: Ian Lumley
Planning Officer: Phoebe Duvall
Natural Environment Officer: Elaine McGoff
National Cycling Coordinator: Damien Ó Túama
Dublin City Planning Officer: Kevin Duff
Climate Advocacy Officer: Kevin Keane
Advocacy Assistant: Katlyne Armstrong

An Taisce Properties
Caretaker: Louis McGee

An Taisce Environmental Education Unit
Education Unit Director: Michael John O'Mahony
National Green-Schools Manager: Cathy Baxter
National Manager Green Schools Travel: Jane Hackett
Clean Coasts Manager: Sinead McCoy
Finance Contractor: 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: Robert Moss
Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) Coordinator: Adele O'Connor
Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) Officer: Eoin Heaney
GLOBE Officer: Sabrina Moore

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