

AN TAISCE
THE WAY FORWARD

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2026

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland



WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1948, An Taisce is one of Ireland's oldest and largest environmental organisations. An Taisce is a charity that works to preserve and protect Ireland's natural and built heritage. We are an independent charitable voice for the environment and for heritage issues. We are not a government body or semi-state agency.

We are a member of the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Europe's largest federation of environmental organisations, with more than 180 member organisations. We are also the Irish member of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a global organisation of over 81 countries which is recognised as a world leader in education for sustainable development and environmental education.

EEB European Environmental Bureau

We support THE GLOBAL GOALS

INTO INTERNATIONAL NATIONAL TRUSTS ORGANISATION

EUROPA NOSTRA

FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FEE

IEN Irish Environmental Network

TE TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

An Taisce's role and responsibility as the National Trust for Ireland is reaffirmed in this Strategic Plan. Some years in the making, it restates An Taisce's commitment to the protection of heritage, sustainable development and environmental education.

All components of the organisation have contributed to this revisioning of the core aspirations, values and activities of the charity, underpinning our continuing relevance as the National Trust for Ireland in the 21st century.

Much of the inspiration provided by the founders in 1948 remains at the heart of what we do. However, there are new, overarching concerns and challenges that Robert Lloyd Praeger and his colleagues could not have envisaged. Specifically, the prospect of a future eclipsed by escalating climate and biodiversity crises was not in their world view.

We now have unequivocal science, from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and elsewhere, that details the existential threats posed by extreme weather events, biodiversity collapse, rising sea levels and consequent mass migration. The window of time remaining within which to address these escalating threats to vital ecosystems and to society is rapidly closing. This is the wider context within which this plan was formulated and will be implemented.

The imperative to live within the limits imposed by the planetary boundaries requires transformative change at all levels of society — economic, political, and environmental. An Taisce will seek to provide leadership in this transition through community engagement, environmental education, sustainable planning and robust advocacy.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals provide a roadmap for an equitable and ecologically coherent future at the global level. An Taisce commits to contribute to their implementation in the Irish context.

"We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action."
Martin Luther King.

We are in unprecedented terrain, moving from an era where a predictable future was assumed, to one where it is not. An Taisce, because of its history, wide breadth of concerns and special focus on ecological resilience, is critically placed to lead Ireland's response to this existential civilisational challenge.

Philip Kearney,
Chair (2019-2023)
President (2023-present)



A note from the Chief Executive

This document sets out An Taisce's strategic focus for the coming three years. This period is of historic importance for the organisation, due to both the increasingly urgent external context in which we operate, and the significant journey that we have been on internally, as we have brought the various parts of the National Trust together into a more integrated and aligned operation. Our strategic objectives have been conceived to take account of these developments, and to lay a path for the future.

The plan is an extension of our previous strategies, and starts by reasserting our vision, mission and values. However, to ensure An Taisce's ongoing relevance and resilience, it has been vital to revisit the core principles on which the National Trust is based.

In this process, we have consulted widely, with Board, Council, staff, and members. We believe that the resulting strategic direction will ensure the organisation can fulfil our mission in the most effective and meaningful way. We expect to engage in further consultation throughout the lifetime of this plan, so that it can evolve to reflect changes in external circumstances.

While the vision, mission, and values set our direction of travel, our strategic pillars lay out the areas of activity in which we operate. As you will see in the coming pages, the pillars are in three pairs, focused on the natural environment, the built environment, and the people who are so essential to our work. The shared nature of the pillars, and the goals that we articulate under each of them, reflect the increasingly integrated nature of how An Taisce operates.

This Strategy Statement empowers us to look forward. It is inspired by what we have learned in recent years: the steadfast support of our funding and programme partners; the resilience, dedication, and ingenuity of our employees and members; and the proud history of An Taisce as the National Trust for Ireland.

The years ahead will pose ever greater challenges, for Ireland and for humanity. In the face of these, An Taisce will continue to be a source of courage and brave work to protect what we cherish together.

Gary Freemantle
CEO



KEY COMPONENTS

This strategy statement uses a common framework, based on the following components for its structure:

01. **VISION**
The future that we want to help make happen, the ideal end state

02. **MISSION**
Our role in the realisation of that vision

03. **VALUES**
The principles that guide our actions

04. **PILLARS**
The categories of our work

05. **GOALS**
What we want to happen in each category

06. **OBJECTIVES**
What we want to achieve in the service of each Goal

07. **INITIATIVES**
The actions that we will take to achieve those Objectives.

08. **MEASURES**
The signs that our initiatives are successful or having the desired impact



STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION: An Ireland where our environment, natural and built, is actively prioritised and a lasting legacy of sustainability and resilience is ensured.



MISSION: To protect and celebrate Ireland's natural and built environment for present and future generations, and to ensure Ireland leads the way in defending a liveable planet.

An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

Protecting Ireland’s heritage, safeguarding its future.



VALUES

Acting with integrity, leadership, and courage

Relying on the best available science

Promoting inclusion and community participation at all levels



STRATEGIC PILLARS

An Taisce's work falls under six strategic pillars, or broad categories. The shared nature of the pillars and their goals reflects the increasingly integrated nature of how An Taisce operates. The work of our education and advocacy teams, for example, is in service of strategic goals that fall under multiple pillars.

The pillars are in three pairs, as follows:

Nature, covered at large scale by Climate & Biodiversity, and at a more local Irish level by Land & Water.

Built environment, with Heritage covering the importance of the past, and Planning addressing the present and future of our lived environments

People, with Community & Society covering how we work with external stakeholder groups, and Organisation covering An Taisce's internally focused operations



STRATEGIC GOALS

Climate & Biodiversity

An urgent and effective Irish response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies

Heritage

The safeguarding of Ireland's architectural and archeological heritage

Community & Society

Meaningful behavioural change driven by connections with nature and the built environment

Land & Water

Healthy ecology, prosperous rural society, and national food security

Planning

Sustainable and people-centred urban and rural communities

Organisation

A robust and secure long-term future for Ireland's national trust

Nature

Built environment

People

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY

Goal: An urgent and effective Irish response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies

OBJECTIVES

Raise awareness and understanding of the connections between biodiversity and climate, and highlight the urgency of the climate and biodiversity emergencies

Promote climate action, climate justice, and environmental literacy

Provide practical, tangible, meaningful solutions and actions from national to local levels

INITIATIVES

Influence, inform, and challenge environmental policy and legislation, through active engagement with national and local government

Refine educational and engagement programmes to reflect the increasing urgency of the climate and biodiversity crises

Support grass-roots mobilisation in coordination with other NGOs and the Environmental Pillar

Support public bodies in delivering climate action and biodiversity policies through education and community engagement

MEASURES

Increase in the impact of actions taken by programme participants

Better environmental outcomes as a result of our engagement with government and stakeholders

LAND & WATER

Goal: healthy ecology, prosperous rural society, and national food security

OBJECTIVES

Protect, enhance and restore Ireland's land, freshwaters and marine environment

Create and shape public conversations about how we use land and water in Ireland

Shape policy at community, local and national levels

INITIATIVES

Support programme participants who adopt, plant, restore and protect natural spaces such as coastlines, riverways, blue spaces, native woodlands and natural habitats.

Practical, sustainable tree planting

Provide simple, clear and solution- based environmental education initiatives to empower communities to make changes at a local and national level.

Advocate for, and engage in, national dialogue related to land use

MEASURES

Engage with 2,500 Clean Coasts Groups

Identify and plan 20 An Choill Beag sites

Establish An Taisce as a credible voice for land use and water quality issues

Improve environmental standards through our work with state bodies and government agencies

HERITAGE

Goal: The safeguarding of Ireland’s architectural and archeological heritage

OBJECTIVES

Enrich people’s lives through a sense of ownership of and individual experiences with their heritage

Protect and revitalise buildings and places that matter

Enhance local and national heritage policy, and ensure its effective implementation by responsible bodies

INITIATIVES

Future-proof An Taisce's official role in managing our heritage, for example as a prescribed organisation under the 2023 Historic and Archaeological Heritage Act

Highlight and promote initiatives to safeguard the nation's coastline, historic sites, countryside and green spaces

Establish a heritage committee, reducing our dependence on individual experts and broadening our network of expertise

MEASURES

Maintain An Taisce's position as the leading protective voice in heritage advocacy

Increase public knowledge about, understanding of, and appreciation for our heritage

PLANNING

Goal: Sustainable and people-centred urban and rural communities

OBJECTIVES

Ensure sustainable development for the benefit of both people and planet

Support volunteers, participants, members and the public in shaping our local and national environment

Improve the overall planning process and system

INITIATIVES

Monitor and respond to planning applications of national, regional and local significance in fulfilment of our statutory role

Provide hands-on consultations to local authorities in the design of safe and sustainable public infrastructure

Advocate for public infrastructure planning and investment that will serve present and future generations

Provide independent and trusted analysis on planning policies and decisions

Advocate for the improvement of planning and planning-related legislation

MEASURES

Engage all 31 Local Authorities in the delivery of active travel infrastructure for schools

Establish a Planning Committee

Increase the capacity of our Advocacy team to respond to planning applications and policy consultations

COMMUNITY & SOCIETY

Goal: Meaningful behavioural change driven by a societal connection with nature and the built environment

OBJECTIVES

Create dialogue with the public and stakeholders to build collaborative and inclusive local and national networks

Actively listen to our participants, volunteers, and members and promote An Taisce's values

Provide life-long learning opportunities that empower, inspire and support participants and members

Develop collaborative coalitions with other bodies, nationally and internationally, to better achieve our objectives

INITIATIVES

Execute external commununications strategy that showcases our positive impact and claims the voice / owns the space

Implement best practice inclusivity and accessibility in our programmes

Develop and implement a membership strategy that fits with our operational model

Work towards the development of an "all-An Taisce" stakeholder engagement plan that gives every group a voice in our work

MEASURES

Remain the leading voice in environmental and heritage advocacy

Materially increase our membership and participant numbers

ORGANISATION

Goal: A robust and secure long-term future for Ireland's national trust

OBJECTIVES

Establish An Taisce's reputation as Ireland's National Trust and leading environmental NGO

Embed inclusivity and celebrate diversity across all of our work

Value our highly skilled staff as part of one integrated organisation

Respect, value and support our participants, volunteers and members

INITIATIVES

Review internal comms and operations to establish a supportive and transparent culture

Draft and implement DEIA plan that addresses all stakeholder groups

Invest in more efficient operational systems and processes

Move operations to one unified site

MEASURES

Regularise staff survey

Develop and implement a robust policy on equality, diversity, and inclusion

Document whole organisation working practices

Move to a fully operational, integrated one-site workspace

An Taisce is a membership-based charity | Join us at www.antaisce.org/membership

Registered Address: Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin, D08 X2A3, Ireland | www.antaisce.org | +353 1 707 7076 | info@antaisce.org

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Directors: Stuart McCaul (Chair), Trish O'Connell (Vice Chair), John Conroy (Treasurer), Olivia Rogers, Rónán O'Brien, Finbarr Murray

AN TAISCE PROGRAMMES

Green-Schools An Taisce
neat streets
CLEAN AIR TOGETHER
LEARNING ABOUT FORESTS
Green-Campus An Taisce
NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN An Taisce
Clean Coasts An Taisce
Green Flag Award Community
An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland
CLIMATE AMBASSADOR An Taisce
Young Reporters for the environment
Legacy4LIFE An Taisce
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
The GLOBE Program