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An Taisce

The National Trust for Ireland

HERITAGE AT RISK

Articles include

The Boyne Navigation

A detailed map of
the route and history

**Climate Change and
Heritage impacts**

**Local Government
Reform
and the environment**

**Limerick
A Georgian Atlantic
Port City**

**Trees
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An Taisce

The National Trust for Ireland

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EDITORIAL

Judy Osborne

As austerity deepens the visual impact on our built heritage grows. Thank goodness in those years of apparent prosperity our main streets were better maintained and became more colourful but now increasingly shops are left vacant and once beautiful old buildings are left to rot. But surely this pales into insignificance when so many people are suffering personally? Well no. This does matter. The natural heritage is the foundation of the biodiversity on which we ultimately depend and the built heritage's contribution to a sense a place is still most important to people's well being. An appreciation of times past may even help us understand that times will change again...and change they must. To keep temperature rise below 2% by 2050 (which will in itself cause considerable change in our economies and life style) requires a cut of carbon emissions from around 12 ton per person to 2 ton per person. Just how are we going to do that? What form of government will lead us? Will local government reform take us in the right direction? The articles in this year's magazine deal with some of these issues. Mostly the articles raise more questions than answers but An Taisce continues to connect and inform people who share a vision of a future for urban and rural Ireland that can sustain us.



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Front cover photograph: © Simon Achilles. The Jump, One of the short listed entries in An Taisce's Clean Coasts Photography competition 2013.

Climate change, heritage and tourism



The frequency and severity of storms is predicted to increase greatly over the next 50 years. (Richard Nairn naturaconsultants.com)

Implications for Ireland's coasts and inland waterways



Beatrice Kelly

Beatrice Kelly

SO unseasonally low temperatures at the end of April? A Greater Horse-shoe bat found in Wexford? Are these more anecdotal evidence of changes to our climate? A report launched by the EPA in February of this year collated recent observations showing unequivocally how Ireland's climate is changing. Evidence of earlier changes are also to be found in the heritage record, for example, the submerged portal tomb at Rostellan, in Cork harbour, the eroded villages of Longnion Co Dublin and Rosslare, mushroom stones and raised beaches. All these show that the climate we have experienced this century is not necessarily that which Ireland and its inhabitants has experienced over past millennia.

While climate change has shaped our heritage we do need to consider the implications for heritage from the current situation. In

2009 the Heritage Council linked up with Failte Ireland to investigate the potential impacts on Ireland's coasts and inland waterways. The main issues relate to water – changing rain fall patterns, rising sea levels and increased water temperature will have implications for many aspects of our cultural and natural heritage. (The Principal manifestations to climate identified by ICARUS in the 2009 report are increased mean

New climatic conditions may be more favourable to species that currently do not live here, but which may become invasive

annual temperatures, increased mean annual rainfall with the likelihood of drier summers; more extreme weather including heavy downpours and more intense storms; higher sea levels due to melting ice and thermal expansion)

Ireland's wildlife, including all the plants and animals living in water or on land, thrive in Ireland precisely because our climate suits them. They have adapted to our current patterns of temperature and rainfall. As these patterns change

some of these plants and animals will not be able to adapt or move, or will be so stressed that they become extinct.

Additionally these new climatic conditions may be more favourable to species of plants or animals that currently do not live here, but which may in time become invasive at the expense of existing species. This is happening already for example on our inland waterways with the spread of Zebra Mussels and African Curly Waterweed causing expensive problems.

Rising air and water temperatures in many Irish waters will greatly magnify the existing problem of nutrient enrichment, thus putting greater pressure on existing species of invertebrate, fish and plants. Studies have also shown that the Atlantic salmon is likely to be greatly affected by a rise in water temperature. Salmon have long been

More frequent and violent storms speed up stone decay of historic structures and archaeological sites along the coast and inland waterways.

closely associated with Ireland, appearing regularly in our ancient mythology. Indeed the changes caused by water pollution in our inland waterways and the rising sea water temperatures are making it much more difficult for the Salmon to spawn, and are therefore reducing the numbers of young salmon. According to the National Parks and Wildlife Service - the future prospects for the salmon are poor (NPWS, 2008.)

The cultural heritage of our coasts and inland waterways is very diverse and includes, Martello Towers, harbours, promontory forts, historic houses, wrecks and a whole variety of archaeological remains, including ship wrecks on the sea bed. While many of these have been designed to be immersed in water, such as harbours and jetties, the predicted increase in storm frequency and storm surges, together with increased erosion, will inevitably weaken or remove them. More frequent and violent storms may also speed up stone decay of historic structures and archaeological sites along the coast and inland waterways.

Our navigable inland waterways themselves are also being affected by climate change. The principal effects will be as a



Late medieval fishtrap on the Shannon estuary. Sites such as these will be very vulnerable to rises in sea level and the changes in sediment movement. (Aidan O'Sullivan)



Grand Canal, Dublin. With a greater frequency of extreme rain events, and prolonged drought periods, the management of water levels on the canals and inland waterways will become more complex and important. (Failte Ireland)

result of changes in river flow and water supply, intense rainfall and flooding, the build-up of flotsam and bank erosion. Important archaeological sites along our

inland waterways may dry out due to changes in the water table caused by drought, or may suffer from flooding due to extreme weather events.



TOP LEFT: Doon West ring fort in Co Kerry offers a very spectacular example of coastal erosion. (Markus Casey); TOP RIGHT: Erosion of the cliffs north of Greystones. The location of coastal paths must be considered carefully in the light of increased rates of erosion. (Richard Nairn naturaconsultants.com.)

It is our coastal landscapes, however, that are at most risk from transformation by climate change. Rocky or “hard” coast lines will be more resilient to the rising sea levels and coastal erosion, but coasts made up of sands, clays and gravels are particularly vulnerable. Research carried out by Robin Edwards and Aidan O Sullivan (2007) identify the inlets of southern Ireland, the Shannon Estuary and the coast line of Mayo, Connemara and associated islands as vulnerable areas with high archaeological potential. Work carried out for the EPA in 2003 found that retreat of the coast line is happening fastest in Counties Down, Louth, Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford where much of the coast is made of soft boulder clay. In some places more than 3 metres a year are being lost (Fealy, R., 2003).

So what should we do ?

In proposing measures to deal with the effects of climate changes in general, it is important to consider any unintended consequences for heritage that might arise. For example, the construction of coastal defences and inland flood relief works can have negative impacts on aspects of our natural and cultural heritage such as beaches, sand dunes and historic town centres.

Likewise, where the coastline is allowed to

erode or, in some cases, is opened to coastal flooding and inundation by the sea, this can be beneficial to natural heritage by creating new wetlands or allowing coastal habitats space to advance inland, but it may also result in the destruction of archaeological sites along the coast. Examples of this have already occurs in East Anglia (UK) where

It is possible to design with natural coastal process and sea level rise in mind

sites like Blakeney Chapel in Norfolk have been recorded and excavated as the site would have been eroded by a “managed realignment scheme”.

Incompatibilities between the needs of heritage and tourism over adaptation strategies may also arise. For example, hard engineering works to protect coastal tourism assets or infrastructure must be considered in light of natural coastal processes and the potential long-term impacts on the heritage value, and indeed the tourism value of the area. It is vital that protection works do not exacerbate the problem, which may lead to the eventual undermining and possible complete loss of the tourism asset. These situations need to be assessed on a case by case basis and more detailed information will be required on the scenarios that are likely to arise.

However it is possible to design with natural coastal process and sea level rise in mind. For example the National Trust in

Northern Ireland has designed a “demountable” wooden building to house visitor facilities at Portstewart Strand, Co Derry, so it can be removed and relocated with minimal impact. Its activity centre on the North Norfolk Coast at Brancaster has been refurbished to cope with regular flooding from high tides.

A number of detailed recommendations are included in a report published by the Heritage Council relating to these measures:

- Further integration of climate change policies with heritage and tourism policies
- The need for heritage and tourism sectors to plan adequate adaptation measures
- More research & analysis on baseline knowledge of heritage, and the creation of monitoring programmes and vulnerability mapping
- Raising awareness of the impacts of climate change on the heritage and tourism of our coast and inland waterways
- Training for anyone planning adaptation measures for heritage and tourism
- Resources should be made available to ensure effective mitigation and adaptation by the heritage and tourism sectors

The Heritage Council has been working with local authorities to bring different types of heritage data together in a map viewer which should allow the identification of geographic areas at greatest risk of coastal erosion. It is intended to make this public in the second half of 2013. The Council will also input on the sectoral plans for heritage to be drawn up under the National Adaptation Strategy. •

Climate Change, Heritage and Tourism: implications for Ireland’s coasts and inland waterways (2009), edited by Kelly, B., and Stack, M. See www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications.

The European Climate Adaptation Platform (CLIMATE-ADAPT) aims to support Europe in adapting to climate change. It is an initiative of the European Commission and helps users to access and share information on expected climate change in Europe and tools to support adaptation planning. For an up to date look at climate change in Ireland see The Status of Ireland’s Climate, 2012 compiled by Ned O’Dwyer. Report 26 of the EPA’s climate change Research Programme www.epa.ie/downloads

HERITAGE IN SCHOOLS SCHEME

A VISION FOR EDUCATION A FOCUS FOR PUPILS

We are delighted to announce that the Heritage in Schools scheme has re-opened under the direct administration of the Heritage Council.

The Heritage in School scheme is unique in Ireland and provides a panel of over 165 diverse Heritage Specialists who work directly with children in primary schools throughout the country, at the request of the school. In 2012 just over 1,108 visits were made with over 87,770 children enjoying and benefitting from these visits, experiencing the cultural, natural and social heritage that is all around them.

Heritage in Schools Scheme: How it works

- Log on to the dedicated website www.heritageinschools.ie for full details of specialists and online booking system
- A visit can be a half day or a full day duration
- A small fee is paid by the school for the visit
- Teachers are always present during a visit

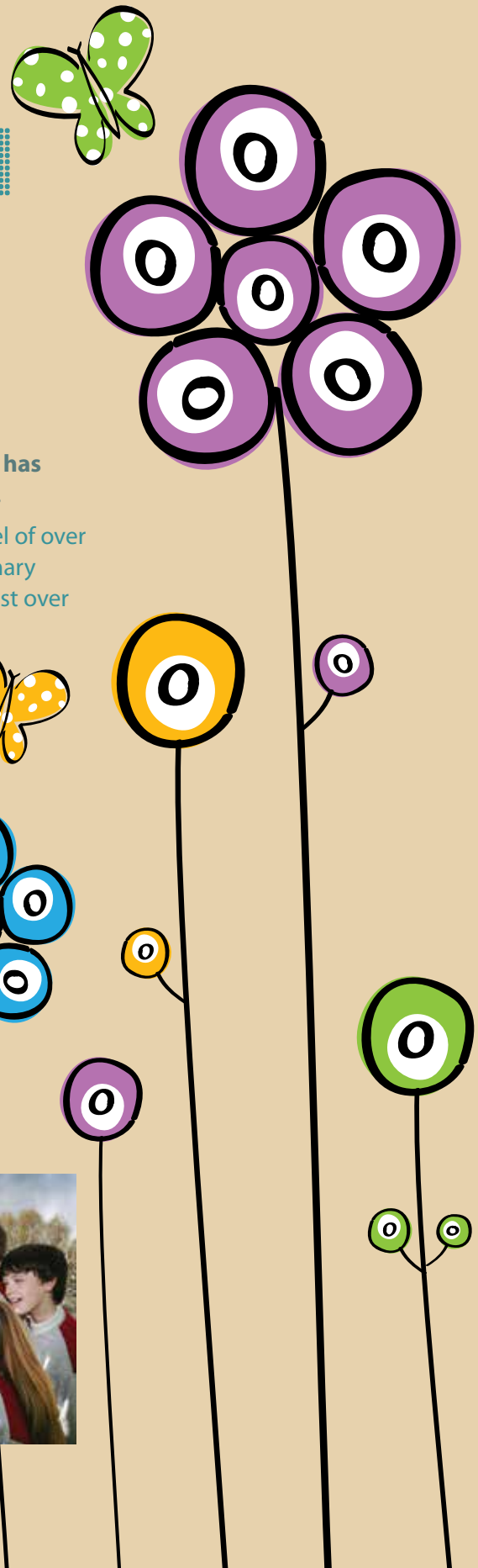
Heritage Experts offer a variety of expertise including birds and their habitats, tapestry, work horses, bees, flowers and pollination, biodiversity, capturing heritage using film and podcasting technology, creating school gardens, Ireland in the 1950s, our built environment, marine habitats, weaving and many more. Experts usually conduct their visits in or close to their own county, although many are prepared to travel.



If you have never used the scheme and would like to find out more, go to our website at www.heritageinschools.ie

Heritage in Schools Administrator
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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council





Thomas Street – An example of successful conservation. Old and new mix comfortably together to create a sense of place for a modern economy. (www.limerick.ie)

Limerick

An historic Atlantic port city



Ian Lumley



Dave Whittle

LIMERICK faces more significant problems than other Irish urban centres. The central core has been undermined by car based sprawl around the outer fringes, with retail and commercial decline particularly evident. Funding for the physical, social and economic regeneration of the high unemployment level areas around the city has largely stalled.

The high levels of vacancy of buildings in the central area are striking, with entire terraces empty of use and function. In many parts of the city, such as Catherine Street, Nicholas Street and Cecil Street this is having a very serious negative impact.

In other cases, entire streetscapes, in a good state of preservation otherwise, are undermined

by one vacant structure. A new shopping precinct, Cruises Street, developed in the early 1990's with tax relief is now experiencing significant retail decline.

This is not just a social and economic issue for Limerick but also for an architectural heritage of international importance which should be a key asset for reviving the city.

The medieval city of Limerick grew rapidly between the late and early 19th century as an Atlantic port at the head of the Shannon estuary. Like the new cities of North America, the expanded area was laid out as a grid with roughly square blocks.

It was a remarkable achievement in urban planning with larger houses on the main axis of what is now O'Connell Street, and a hierarchy of buildings of descending scale on the secondary streets. Mews and stables were laid out with warehouses and commercial activity to the rear and on Henry St. parallel to the river,

The terraces of Limerick's grid were laid out to a remarkable



An Taisce seeks to extend the Living City Initiative in Limerick

This is a pilot project providing tax incentives to generate interest in refurbishing Georgian houses and shops in historically and culturally important areas of Limerick and Waterford where the problems of urban areas are judged to be most urgent. The information note published by the Department of Finance states that “the objective is for significant societal benefits to be gleaned from increased residential occupancy which will

provide knock on boosts elsewhere for local service providers such as creches and cafes etc... as well as for tradesmen employed during the refurbishment phase.

Residents will be able to claim tax relief for substantial refurbishments at a rate of 10 per cent per year for 10 years against their income.

The project is set to apply to Georgian buildings built from 1710-1830 however, in a letter to the Minister of Finance An Taisce have pointed out that this would exclude key city centre buildings including Limerick’s old Post Office which was completed in 1903. An Taisce are proposing that eligibility for the programme be extended to include buildings up to 1914.

The old Post Office. Henry Street.

uniformity with handsomely proportioned facades. Clay from along the Shannon produced a mellow red brick which has weathered superbly. Local craftsmen adopted the classical idiom of the period with distinctively detailed columned and fanlight doorcases.

The grid pattern culminated in the laying of a double crescent in the early 19th century, though the ambitious layout of Pery Square stalled after the first terrace was constructed due to the famine and economic depression of the late 1840’s.

Limerick should be recognised as having a heritage of international importance as an historic Atlantic port city. While its American counterparts retain their grid layouts, they have been substantially rebuilt during the 20th century. Limerick is remarkable in retaining so much of its pre 1850 terraces and streets intact.

Limerick Civic Trust has played a major part in this through direct projects and promoting appreciation of the city.

The lessons from Dublin in the mid 20th century show that if urban dereliction is allowed to take root, it has a spiralling effect and becomes difficult to reverse.

When a building or group of buildings are left empty and if neglect is allowed to set in, there is a tipping point when dereliction takes hold. This has in turn a knock on effect on the surrounding area. Fortunately this point has not been reached as yet in Limerick but pre-emptive action is now needed. The level of vacancy and condition of buildings in Catherine Street and Mallow Street is a particular concern.

Fortunately, Limerick’s problems are now widely recognised and are being confronted. The impending merger of Limerick City and County Councils is intended to achieve better co-ordinated planning.

The Department of Finance has announced a new scheme of tax incentives prompted by the particular situation in Limerick and which are also to be applied to Waterford and other urban centres. Unlike previous schemes in the 1980’s and 1990’s which targeted new building, the new scheme is specifically targeted at refurbishment of older buildings and for residential use.

An Taisce has compiled a photographic record of over 50 empty

buildings in the city focusing on the main Georgian area and showing the scale of the challenge and effort needed in reviving Limerick.

A multi sectoral approach is now needed in which An Taisce is taking an active part. A vision is needed to renew the city as a place of life, work and social interaction. Limerick’s high level of vacant buildings are to be valued as an asset and opportunity to bring a new generation back to city living, provide business start-up locations and the location for social, community and arts development.

Improvements to the public realm also need to be considered. The part pedestrianisation of Thomas Street has been successful, and could be used as a template for other areas of the city centre. Reduction of car dependence and promotion of cycling would have multiple benefits.

New co-operative initiatives between Limerick City Council, University of Limerick, business and community voluntary organisations are needed to target new uses and activities in the city centre-and not in the periphery.

The recognition of the unique urban planning and architectural heritage of Limerick should be key to its revival as a vibrant living city.

Ian Lumley is An Taisce’s Heritage Officer and Dave Whittle is currently a valued intern in the Planning Unit.

BUILDINGS AT RISK

Many developers were reluctant to upgrade and restore old buildings during the recent decade of growth when there were easy pickings elsewhere. Some plans were made to conserve country houses as part of development schemes but now the property slump has created even more problems of dereliction and abandonment of many architecturally important buildings.

It is vital that new and innovative uses are found for these buildings if we are not to lose this valuable part of our heritage. In response An Taisce is compiling a visual record of **Buildings at Risk** throughout the country.

An Taisce is seeking involvement of members and others interested in the process to help build up a photographic database of **Buildings at Risk** where they live. You're invited to make this a participatory database by providing photographs and other information of abandoned, derelict or otherwise endangered buildings in your area to be added to the list. Any photos and/or information can be sent to planning@antaisce.org.

Hopefully, with enough time and volunteers, we will be able to build up an accurate picture of the status of Ireland's built heritage today, and the challenges it faces.

A sample of guidance entries for Dublin, Limerick, Waterford and nationally can be found on the 'Albums' section of An Taisce's Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/AnTaisce_photos.



The Grand Canal Hotel in Robertstown, County Kildare is a detached, seven-bay three storey over basement built in 1801. Some original timber sash windows survive. This imposing classical building was constructed in tandem with the Grand Canal and was one of the focal point of the village. Having operated as a hotel for many years, the structure was converted to a museum/gallery at the end of the 20th century but it is now vacant.



The late 19th Lough Rynn gatehouse is in the picturesque style and is of one of Ireland's leading late 19th century architects, Sir Thomas Drew. Drew carried out alterations to the main house at Lough Rynn at the same time. While millions of the tax write off money has gone into building new and now, in many places, empty houses in Co. Leitrim, this landmark building is falling progressively derelict.



Erry Mill in Clara, County Offaly is a seven storey, seven bay flour mill – the largest remaining flour mill in the country. Following refusal by An Bord Pleanála for the residential element of mixed use scheme granted by the Council, the developer has not continued with the commercial and retail development on the basis that it would no longer be financially viable. Serious fire has occurred and the roof seriously damaged and the owner is now indicated his desire to demolish the building following the refusal of the original scheme and the lack of funding from the Council to support its maintenance.

The Tailors' Hall

A history of alternative uses

James Nix

TAILORS' Hall, the HQ of An Taisce since 1984, has had a checkered history but this exemplifies how alternative uses may support the maintenance of historic properties, prevent their destruction and help link our futures to our past.

Built to accommodate the guild of tailors in Dublin, the foundation stone of the Tailors' Hall was laid in 1703, with the building completed four years later.

The building replaced an earlier wooden structure which had housed the tailors' guild since it moved to Back Lane in 1583/4. The guild, located on the nearby Winetavern St since the 1530s, was in existence by at least 1419 - but may have been founded as early as the 1200s.

Long before certification bodies, regulators, employers' representatives and trades unions were developed, these functions were to varying extents served by guilds. Between 1707 and the mid-1800s a great many guilds hired the Tailors Hall for their events, including apothecaries, barber-surgeons, brewers, butchers, curriers, dyers, glovers, goldsmiths, hosiers, joiners, saddlers, shearmen, shoemakers and smiths.

Since its earliest days the hall has also played host to balls, dancing, music recitals, weddings and other ceremonies, as well as seeing use by religious congregations, Dublin Corporation (now the City Council) and was at one point home to an insolvency tribunal.



James Nix

1792 (also known as 'Back Lane Parliament').

The reform sought by the convention was not delivered by Irish MPs of the day but the 1790s did see the passage of a Catholic Relief Bill, with some concessions. One of those enabled Catholics to join guilds, and while the tailors' guild was the first to grant admission, progress toward religious integration by guilds generally society remained slow (with history recording just one Catholic member of



the Tailors' Guild by 1835).

The Tailors' Hall saw fortnightly meetings of the Dublin Society of the United Irishmen between 1792 and 1794 but from then the hall served principally as a home to schools and as a meeting place for a number of early charities, before being condemned as an unsafe building in 1949. After falling into dereliction in the 1950s the hall was restored in the 1960s and more recently in the 1980s when it was taken on by An Taisce – the National Trust for Ireland. •

ABOVE: Tailors' Hall in the 1960's; TOP: Tailors' Hall today following extensive conservation and upgrading in the 1980's and again more recently for fire safety and sustainability.

James Nix was appointed director of Policy and Operations earlier this year.



Natural Heritage under pressure

Protecting our peatlands and resisting UK attempts to weaken EU environmental policy will be key challenges in the coming years

Andrew Jackson - An Taisce's Natural Heritage Officer

OUR natural heritage, which we have inherited from past generations and bestowed for the benefit of future generations, is under intense political pressure at the moment. Much of that pressure is downwards, seeking to weaken existing European and national environmental laws and dampen appetite for new rules."

Two examples of this are a joint letter sent to the *Wall Street Journal* in December 2012 by government ministers from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Germany, calling for a "constructive review of European horizontal policies that have an impact on industrial competitiveness," including environmental policy; and UK Prime Minister David Cameron's January 2013 speech - announcing plans to renegotiate the UK's relationship with the EU, to be

followed by an 'in-out' referendum - during which he commented, "we need to examine whether the balance is right in so many areas where the European Union has legislated including on the environment...Nothing should be off the table." As Tony Juniper, former head of Friends of the Earth, commented,

"This was no throwaway line."

There is a history here, of course: in 1993, in the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, two "hit lists" of EU environmental legislation were drawn up by governments, one by Germany, the other jointly by France and Britain. In the event,

all of the targeted laws eventually escaped unscathed, and, as Professor Andrew Jordan reflects, the period did not result in "the wholesale repeal of green laws that some environmentalists feared. Rather, events have shown that environmental concerns have a power of their own that will be difficult

We need to make it politically difficult for the government to row in behind any attempt to unpick environmental rules

to dislodge.”

Things could be different this time round, however. The European Commission’s most senior civil servant – Ireland’s Catherine Day, the Commission’s Secretary General – has reportedly intervened recently to block and delay various new EU environmental proposals. Such an approach would appear to reflect the sentiments of her boss, Commission President José Manuel Barroso, who commented in 2005: “I have three children: the economy, our social agenda, and the environment. Like any modern father, if one of my children is sick, I’m ready to drop everything and focus on him until he is back to health. But that does not mean I love the others any less.”

Unfortunately for EU environmental policy, the economy has been “sick” for some time, and shows no immediate signs of improvement. We should be in no doubt, therefore, that environmental policy has dropped down the EU’s agenda in recent years, and this leaves it in a vulnerable position to those who would willingly see existing rules unpicked.

The EU’s Habitats and Birds Directives - which protect our most threatened species and habitats - could be in the immediate firing line, with the UK’s George Osborne having accused the Habitats Directive of “placing ridiculous costs on British businesses,” prompting Sir John Lawton, then Vice-Chair of the RSPB, and one of the UK’s leading ecologists, to brand Osborne a “bloody idiot” on wildlife protection. There was some good news on this front recently when it emerged that France and Germany, in a calculated snub to David Cameron, decided jointly to boycott the UK’s “balance of competences” review, an exercise aimed at assessing the impact of EU laws on Britain and the rest of Europe.

Why does this matter to An Taisce, and what can we do? It matters, of course, because any weakening of EU environmental rules will inevitably flow through to Ireland, resulting in weaker environmental protections on the ground. We can help

Environmental policy has dropped down the EU’s agenda in recent years, and this leaves it in a vulnerable position



Andrew Jackson



to prevent this by engaging with political representatives at local and national levels to ensure that environmental and heritage issues remain on their agenda. Essentially, we need to make it politically difficult for the government to row in behind any concerted attempt to unpick EU environmental rules, and we need to encourage greater ambition and urgency in the creation of new environmental policy. A new website – contact.ie – is a good practical way to engage with councillors, TDs and MEPs.

Readers will hardly need a reminder of the urgency of the situation, but a recent Bord na Móna presentation revealed that, based on current usage, Bord na Móna has a sufficient supply of peat for only 40 more years. Forty years! Then these bogs will be gone, with huge climate change, biodiversity and water quality impacts. The significance of this cannot be overemphasised: a newly constructed map produced for the EPA shows that peat soils cover 20.6% of Ireland’s land area and contain more than 75% of the national soil organic carbon.

The conclusion: ensuring that existing EU and national regulations are properly applied to our peatlands is therefore one of the single greatest challenges facing An Taisce in 2013. Much of the existing peat extraction in Ireland is unregulated, carried out without planning permission, impact assessment, or licensing. And we are not talking merely about small-scale operations here, we are talking about vast industrial sites, operated by national and international

ABOVE: Stripped bogland beside Deravaragh Lough; OPPOSITE: Bog cotton in a wonderfully healthy bog on the Mourne Mountains. (© Gareth McCormack from County Sligo. garethmccormack.com)

...25 years ago

In 1987 The Union of Professional and Technical Civil Servants stated: “The need to safeguard as many midland (raised) bogs as possible before they are lost forever to peat extraction is the most urgent issue in Irish nature conservation”

Cited in Cross (1990) The raised bogs of Ireland: their ecology, status and conservation

companies, exporting peat for the horticultural market, amongst other uses.

We will be working in the coming weeks, months and years to address the issues highlighted in this article: first, to resist attempts to weaken existing EU environmental rules; second, to encourage ambitious new policy development; and third, to ensure that existing rules are rigorously applied in Ireland.

Speaking of EU nature conservation policy some years ago, Alistair Gammell, then of the RSPB, reflected, “[Tomorrow’s Europeans] will be grateful that a handful of people in the early 1970s had the foresight to act to try to protect...[special landscapes] and species and that a movement of European citizens...fought, in some cases successfully, to conserve them...Tomorrow’s Europeans will thank us for that.” If we can save some of Ireland’s disappearing peatlands, tomorrow’s Ireland will thank us too. •

The Boyne Navigation Restoration

A model for community led heritage



IWAI's junior members painting a fitted lock gate.

James Leahy

THE Boyne Navigation was built during the 18th Century ‘canal mania’ from the sea at Drogheda to Navan. It is a navigation rather than a canal; eight sections of canal bypass weirs and rapids in the river and combine with eight river sections to make the river navigable. There were unrealised ambitions to carry the navigation on to Trim and Longwood where it would connect to the Royal Canal. The map over leaf lists details and dates.

By the 1920's the Navigation was falling into disuse. Some sections were sold off to local landowners. In 1969 the remaining sections were sold by John Spicer and Co. to An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland for one pound. Since then An Taisce has worked in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including Meath County Council, the OPW and community groups to restore and maintain much of the towpath, and make it accessible to the public as an amenity. An Taisce also has a role in conserving the natural and built heritage of the navigation.



James Leahy

In addition to the work on the towpath efforts were made down the years to clean out the channel of the canal and restore the lock gates. These were hampered by the complexities of restoring and maintaining a navigation. For example stretches of canal, which were dredged, soon filled up with silt and vegetation, when they weren't actively used by boats. These problems have been successfully addressed in the last decade through a partnership with Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI).

IWAI is similar to An Taisce in being a largely voluntary membership based charity with branches across the country. It began from a

This project is being managed and delivered by two charities by volunteers. You can help:

- Join An Taisce or IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch
- Donate to IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch or send donations to An Taisce marked BOYNE.
- Consider leaving a legacy to the Boyne Navigation. The successful restoration of the Old-bridge section has taken a decade and restoring the remainder will take as least long again.
- If you have construction skills or are handy at DIY volunteer to help with IWAI's fortnightly work-parties.

Find out more at www.boyne.iwai.ie or www.antisce.org/properties



campaign to maintain the Shannon as a navigable waterway and to restore other canals, such as the Royal Canal. Since then Ireland's waterways have had a renaissance, helped since 1999 by Waterways Ireland. IWAI is now a mixture of branches which focus on the users of navigations, and branches which focus on restoration. In 2004 the Dublin Branch of IWAI formed the Boyne Canal Action Group, with the help of Ed Wheeler and Robert Law of An Taisce. In 2007 this became the Boyne Navigation Branch of the IWAI.

It is crucial to involve the wider community; including sponsors, landholders, residents, youth groups, the state and community organisations

In 2006 IWAI and An Taisce entered an agreement to progress the restoration, which was formalised in 2010. An Taisce is providing general support on legal issues and on consultations with public bodies, while IWAI is fundraising, planning and delivering the restoration. IWAI's wealth of contacts and specific experience of canal restoration has been crucial.

There are some lessons to be learned for heritage projects. It is crucial to involve the wider community; including sponsors, landholders, residents, youth groups, the state and community organisations. Understandably, this all takes a lot of time. However, this long project programme can suit the nature of the voluntary resources available. This type of delivery has a large role to play, especially in current times. The voluntary restoration of the canal at Oldbridge has proven the viability of the Boyne Navigation restoration; when a consultant's report for a government delivery body on a high-specification, short-programme restoration project might have considered the restoration unviable.

The successful partnership is continuing with IWAI now restoring the next canal section at Staleen. IWAI has also restored a 500 m stretch of canal at Athlumley with assistance from some new members from Navan & District Anglers Association, who are delighted with the improvement in the habitat for fish. •

James Leahy is An Taisce's Honorary Secretary and Boyne Navigation Property Coordinator for National Trust for Ireland Properties.



TOP: A small boat rally from Oldbridge to Staleen on the River Boyne. ABOVE: Signing of a 2010 agreement between IWAI and An Taisce to progress the restoration. Pictured left to right are: Maeve Brady, IWAI; Padraig Morris, An Taisce; John Sweeney, President, An Taisce; Mike McKeown, IWAI; Paul Garland, Former President, IWAI; Eugene Carbery, IWAI; Myles Brady, Chair, IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch; Donal Molony, IWAI; James Leahy, Honorary Secretary, An Taisce; Maire Molony, IWAI; Padraig Costello, IWAI. © 2004-2013 Seamus Costello IWAI

The project is being delivered in partnership with the OPW who own Oldbridge Estate / Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre and Meath County Council; with funding from the Heritage Council, Meath County Council and Meath Leader.

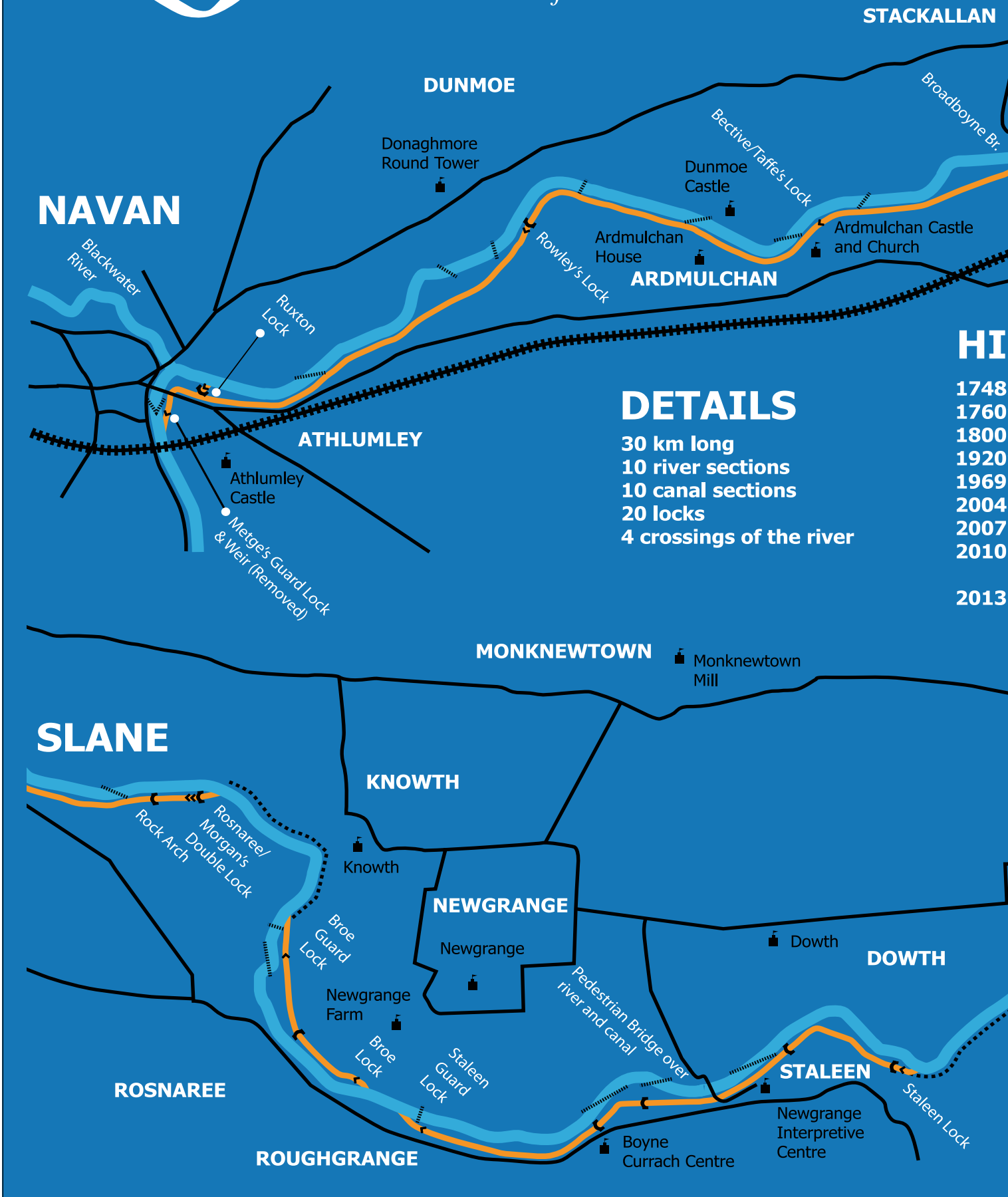
IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch's committee is: Myles Brady, Chair; Tommy McLoughlin, Vice Chair and Project Manager; Seamus Costello, Secretary; John Martin, Treasurer; Padraig Costello, Maeve Brady, Stephen Early, Donal Molony, Eugene Carbery, Ross Farrelly, Fiachra de Roiste and Paul Walsh. James Leahy, An Taisce Property Coordinator for the Boyne Navigation and Geoff Clarke, Meath An Taisce also sit on the committee.

IWAI's main sponsors include: Irish Cement, Costello Print, Murphy Environmental, John's Centra Drogheda, Halco Plant Hire, Beverage Business Solutions, Murphy Environmental, FloGas, Drews' of Donore Daybreak. Michael Campion and Co have kindly provided legal advice to An Taisce. Finally, thanks must be given to the local community, volunteers and landowners; without whose support on many levels such a voluntary project could not progress.



An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

THE BOYNE

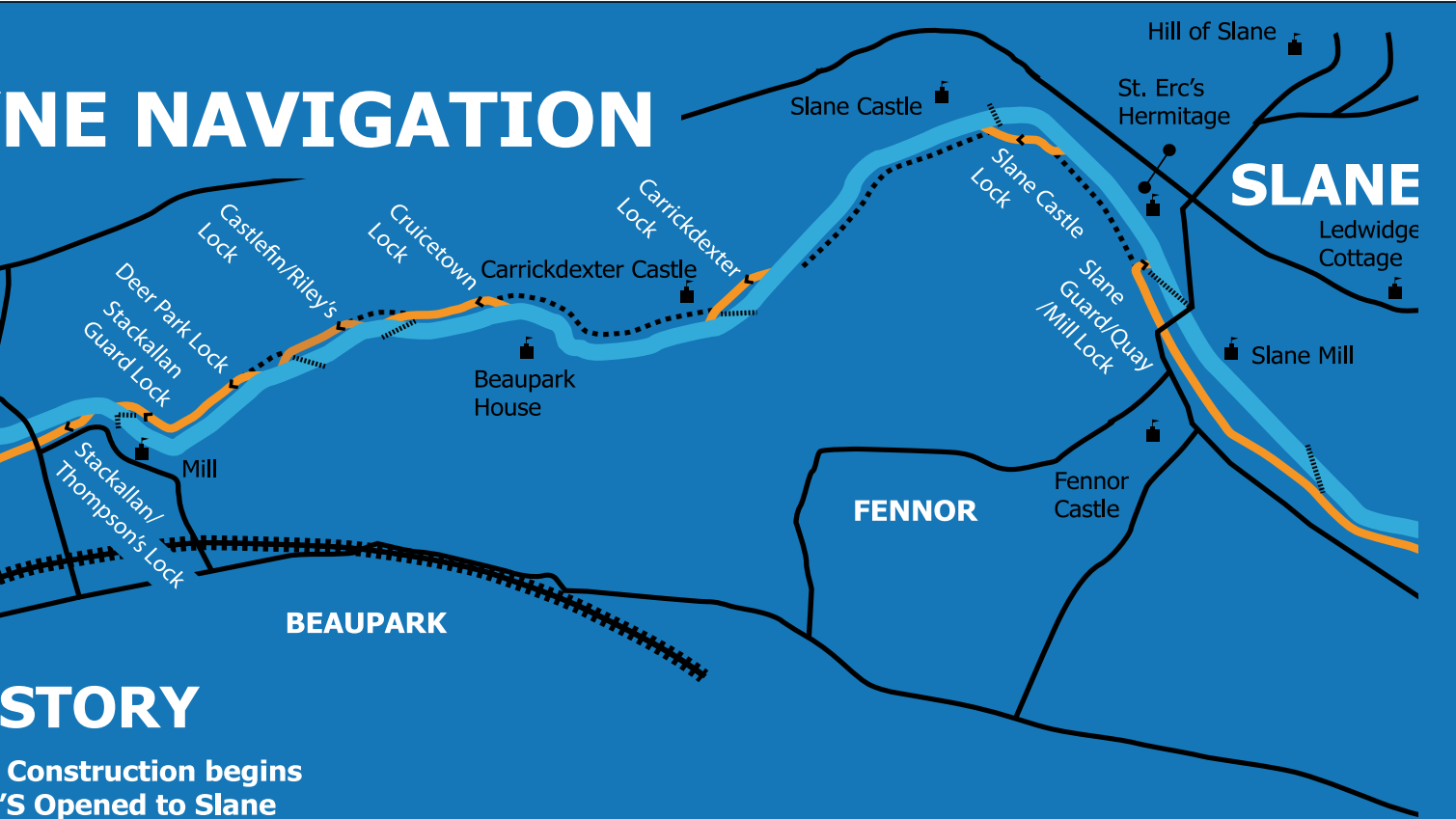


DETAILS

- 30 km long
- 10 river sections
- 10 canal sections
- 20 locks
- 4 crossings of the river

- HI**
- 1748
 - 1760
 - 1800
 - 1920
 - 1969
 - 2004
 - 2007
 - 2010
 - 2013

NE NAVIGATION



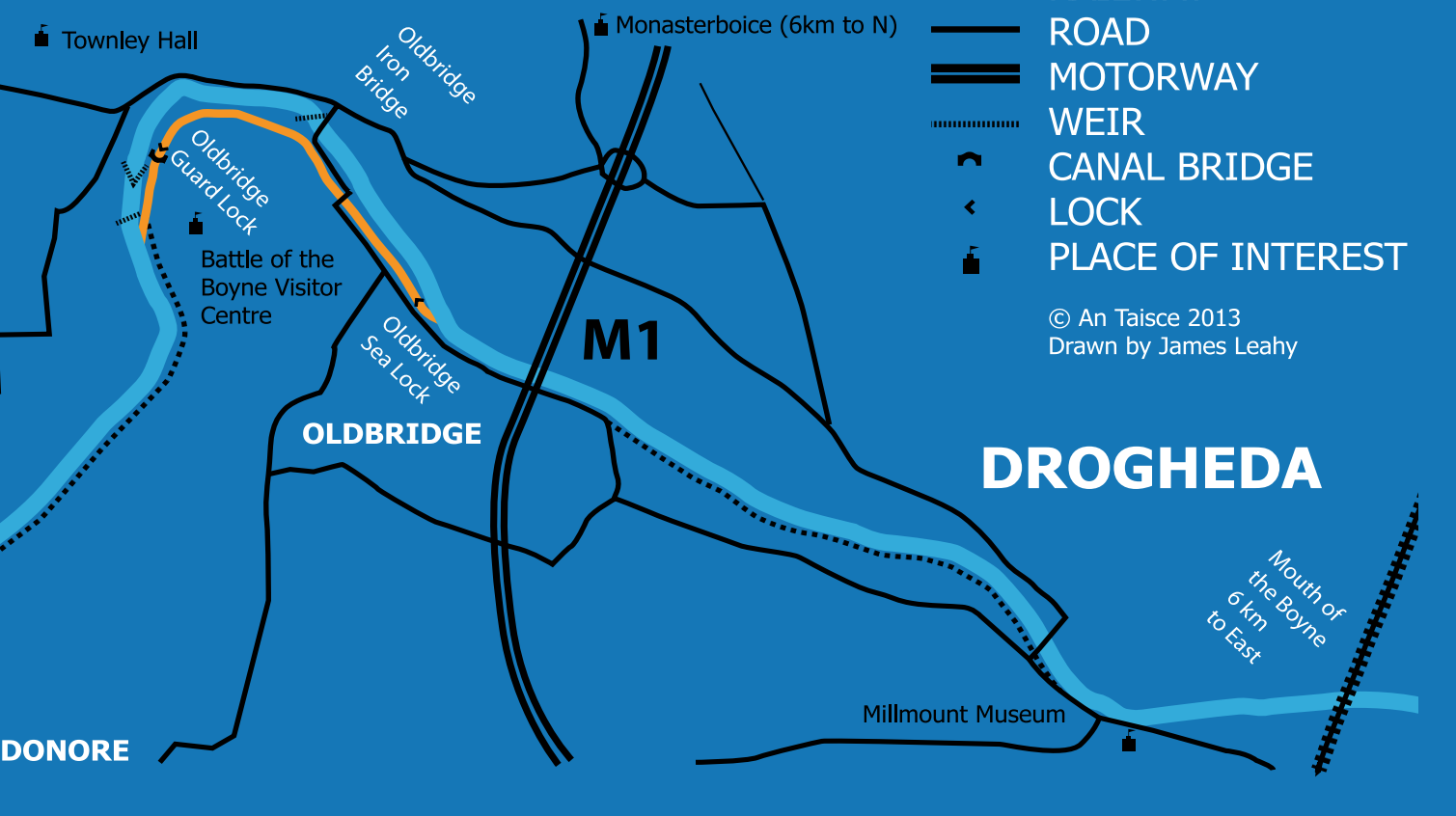
STORY

- Construction begins
- 'S Opened to Slane
- Opened to Navan
- 's The Navigation falls from use
- Ownership transferred to An Taisce
- IWAI Dublin Branch forms the Boyne Canal Action Group
- Boyne Navigation Branch of IWAI Formed
- IWAI and An Taisce sign partnership agreement to progress the restoration
- Oldbridge Sea-lock reopened to traffic

LEGEND

- RIVER
- CANAL
- TOWPATH
- RAILWAY
- ROAD
- MOTORWAY
- WEIR
- CANAL BRIDGE
- LOCK
- PLACE OF INTEREST

© An Taisce 2013
 Drawn by James Leahy



Restoration of the canal channel at Oldbridge

This first section will be navigable in 2013 including a 2 km section of canal, the sea lock and the 12 km of estuary to the sea.



- 1: Former IWAI President Paul Garland and An Taisce President John Sweeney on the restored canal.
- 2: The overgrown canal before restoration.
- 3: Removing rubbish, vegetation and trees from the canal.
- 4: Repairing the canal bank where it was eroded by deer crossing.
- 5: IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch Valentine's Day Walk 2011 along the restored canal.

Restoration of Oldbridge sealock



1: The Sealock at Oldbridge before restoration with the tidal Boyne Estuary behind.

2: Cleaning out the lock chamber.

3: Restoring the limestone walls of the lock where they were damaged by vegetation.

4: Making the lock gate beams.

5: Assembling the lock gates.

6: Fitting a lock gate.

7: Lifting in a lock gate.

8: The finished Sealock at Oldbridge filled for the first time.

All photos in this article are (c) Seamus Costello IWAI 2004-2013

Seeing the wood for the Trees

Éanna Ni Lamhna, President of the Tree Council of Ireland

TWENTY years ago when tree disease in Ireland was mentioned it was Dutch Elm Disease that was meant. Dutch Elm Disease struck in 1977 and spread with such virulence that all our field elm trees were destroyed. A huge amount of dead elms haunted our hedges until finally they were removed or fell down. They are coming back now, growing from suckers from the dead stumps. But tree disease is still with us and

it is greatly exacerbated in recent years by two things; unregulated imports and climate change.

New diseases come into the country

Take the latest disease to hit the headlines – ash dieback



Éanna Ni Lamhna

cause by a fungus *Chalara fraxinea*. This entered Ireland on seedlings raised for forestry in a nursery in Holland. It all started out with the best intentions. Trees from seeds of local native plants do better in Irish conditions than those sourced from

European countries. So it was that seeds of local ash trees were gathered and sent off to a continental nursery to be raised into saplings. These saplings of Irish provenance were then brought back to Ireland and planted in various sites around the country as cert worthy stands of native Irish stock ash trees. These would supply the hurley industry which is importing timber for hurleys because of lack of Irish stock. But what was not known then was that these trees were all infected with Chalara in their European nursery and so in planting them in several sites around the country

the disease was spread too. Eleven sites were planted with these trees and it was not until October 2012 that the disease was first noticed in Ireland. All of that imported stock was destroyed and an eye kept out for it everywhere else.

Ash die back spreads around the country

By February 2013 46 cases have been identified in counties as widely separated as Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Galway, Kildare,

Tree disease is greatly exacerbated in recent years by unregulated imports and climate change





Kilkenny, Leitrim, Longford, Meath, Tipperary, and Waterford. There are also 14 Horticultural Nurseries that have tested positive for the disease, three samples from roadside landscaping have tested positive as well as one Garden Centre, one private garden and one farm. Until the leaves come back in May and any dieback is evident, we won't be able to ascertain if the felling of all these contaminated trees has been enough or if like the Dutch elm disease the genie is out of the bottle. But certainly any suspicious looking die back on ash trees should be reported to the Dept of Forestry.

Other diseases have been identified

We have two other serious diseases here too, spreading with our warmer climate now that they have a foot hold here. One is the bleeding canker of Horse Chestnut trees and the other is Japanese Larch dieback.

As a result of the recent spread throughout Europe of the damaging bacterial disease identified as bleeding canker, an increasing number of Horse Chestnut trees are now being lost from the Irish landscape, with even young specimens succumbing. In the Botanic Gardens, director Matthew Jebb estimates that they're losing one tree

The UK's independent plant health controls have been sacrificed in the interests of EU membership

every year to the disease, while in the Phoenix Park (the first place in Ireland where the disease was confirmed, in 2010), several horse chestnut trees along Chesterfield Avenue have had to be felled. A further two-dozen of the park's infected trees have received tree surgery, while others are undergoing experimental treatments, all in the hope of arresting its spread.

Larch die back is caused by a new species of fungus-like organism named *Phytophthora ramorum*. The common name for the

disease, Sudden Oak Death, which was first assigned in the USA, is a misnomer in a European context, as to date European oak species have not been seriously damaged. The same organism had also been found in many European countries including Ireland, on the shrub species *Rhododendron* and *Viburnum* spp., particularly in garden centres and nurseries.

In July 2010 the Forest Service detected for the first time *Phytophthora ramorum* on Japanese larch, which was showing extensive dieback from the crown and down the stem. Japanese larch appears to be particularly susceptible to the disease, causing significant dieback and deaths. Noble fir, Sitka Spruce Beech and Spanish chestnut growing in close proximity to infected larch have also been found to be infected at a number of the sites. And of course the worry is that it will spread to more species of trees – perhaps even oak although that has not happened yet.

National plant security and free trade

Ask how this damaging disease spread through Europe might have been curtailed and you'll open up a can of worms that raises troubling questions about the nature of free trade and its potentially devastating consequences for national plant biosecurity. Prof Clive Brasier, the highly regarded British plant pathologist specializing in tree diseases, has summed up the dilemma by describing it as trade at any cost, arguing that the UK's independent plant health controls have been sacrificed in the interests of EU membership. Ireland's reaction to the discovery of *Chalara* has been exemplary with the absolute banning of ash imports both north and south. But fungal diseases can spread in the wind and once they become established in Britain is it only a matter of time before they arrive here? •

Any suspicious looking die back on ash trees should be reported to the Dept of Forestry

The Tree Council's History



IN the late 1970's concern was widespread in the conservation movement about the future of trees and woodlands globally. It seemed probable that in the 21st century the world would have no significant tree population and widespread rampant exploitation of woods would result in a world that was as denuded as Ireland had been by the beginning of the 20th century. In Ireland Dutch Elm Disease was killing overnight the tallest and most widespread tree. Elms were everywhere dying and there were daily horror stories of large trees collapsing on cars, people and buildings with fatal consequences. In the face of this county councils began issuing notices requiring land owners to cut down all trees on road sides whether they were healthy or not. This was of great concern to An Taisce as amenity trees were among the founding aims in 1948 along with the obvious habitat loss.

In 1980 An Taisce started a trees committee under the chairmanship of Richard Webb of An Foras Forbatha to deal with the many issues around trees. Developers typically clear felled all tree cover on development sites and frequently did not plant any new ones. In county development plans there was no protection required for trees. In addition the state was only planting alien conifers and granting others to do likewise and there was no legal protection for trees of any kind.

The committee rapidly expanded with representation from many like-minded organisations. Dr. John McCullen a lecturer in Horticulture and later Superintendent of the Phoenix Park, Dan Deasy of the Bee Keepers Association (who ran an arbor day), Dr. Jack Durand, former Director of The J.F.K National Arboretum, Ruairi Brugha, of The National Arbour Association and Jan Alexander later founder of Crann all spring to mind but there were many more.

All over the country since the 1940's there were held then, annual Arbour Days which had little impact outside a few ceremonial plantings. The committee decided to run/nominate a week when everyone could have their days so that maximum effect would be obtained in publicity. An Taisce Local Associations then got involved and started running trees events as well as part of this effort.

In 1982 the first National Tree Week took place under the auspices of the An Taisce National Trees Committee with a launch on St Patrick's Day by President Dr. Patrick Hillary in the grounds of Áras an Uachtaráin. In 1983 following a decision of the council of An Taisce to facilitate its formation along with that of the IPCC for peatlands, the Tree Council of Ireland was founded. The aim was to draw attention to conservation issues more effectively by getting maximum involvement from all sectors including those who would not or could not cooperate with An Taisce. In 1985 the Tree Council of Ireland was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee of its members with funding of £500 from the Department of Forestry. Dr. Christy Boylan was elected the first President and served from 1985 to 1990.

Today the Tree Council's main role is to promote the planting, care and enjoyment of trees and it does this through networking with its members and friends, the organization of events and tree related activities, the management of national tree records and through the provision of an information service to the public. They have undertaken many projects and published several books and reports over the past 28 years. See www.treecouncil.ie for a wonderful website. •

John Ducie, who put this account together, was one of the founders of the Tree Council and former Properties Officer of An Taisce. Ducie is a specialist in Conservation Management, Horticulture and Landscape Design. Board member of the International Trusts Organisation and of the Council of Europa Nostra.

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- Irish Times' godawful new website • State of TV and radio

Trees and their poetry



Compiled by John Ducie

ONE of the most notable things in the Irish landscape is the trees - the largest and oldest living things above ground in Ireland. Ireland is in a temperate wet climatic zone and was once covered almost completely by deciduous temperate rainforest before land clearances for economic development and political reasons began to impact on the landscape.

But still, in cities and towns, in the countryside, in farmland, mountains and coastal areas, everywhere sufficiently sheltered from the wind, trees grow naturally and are commonly found. Every Irish river, stream, lake and canal has wooded shores and many a lake island is wooded. It was actually such a lake islet that inspired W B Yeats in the *Lake Isle of Innisfree* in 1892.

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
 And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
 Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
 And live alone in the bee-loud glade.
 And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
 Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
 There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
 And evening full of the linnet's wings.
 I will arise and go now, for always night and day
 I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
 While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
 I hear it in the deep heart's core.

William Butler Yeats



FOLLOWING the last ice age, which ended 10,000 years ago trees, began to colonize the newly revealed landscape and birch and hazel along with oak would have been among these early arrivals. These are still among the widest distributed trees in Ireland. About 80% of the landscape would have become covered with woodlands in the next thousand years and it to this landscape that early settlers would have come, staying around the coastline and the mouths of rivers because the interior was heavily wooded. With the arrival of Neolithic man about 8000 years ago, tree clearance for farming would have begun on fertile lighter soils such as in the Burren and on the Ciede Fields in Co Mayo or clearing the land on hills such as Tara, Slane and at Bru na Boinne.

The anonymous 7th century poem *The Scribe* written by an Irish Monk in an early Celtic monastery shows illustrates how comfortable the Irish were in their woodland home.

THE SCRIBE

Over my head the woodland wall
 Rises; the ouzel sings to me.
 Above my booklet lined for words
 The woodland birds shake out their glee

THE English invader feared the Irish ability to hide the woods and to use them for ambush, often referred to the native Irish as the wood kearn or tree dwellers in medieval times. When the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland got under way with the Munster Plantation and the later Ulster Plantation one of the English Crowns objectives was to remove the vast tracts of wild wood as they saw it that offered cover to the rebels. They required the new settlers remove woods that might be a place of refuge to rebels. This coincided with a shortage of timber in England, due to an expansion of population and the use of wood as the main source of fuel. The first act therefore of the English and Scottish new owners of the land after the dispossession of the old English and Gaelic owners was to cut down the timber and sell it, much of it for charcoal making for iron smelting and glass works. There were literally 100's of small iron smelting works set up along the coastline especially in Munster at that time, which worked ore imported by sea that was then re-exported to England.

The feeling of the Irish to this turn of events can be summed up in the great lament for Kilcash the Hiberno Norman, Butler household in Co Tipperary by an unknown 17th century bard.

Lament for Kilcash

Now what will we do for timber,
With the last of the woods laid low?
There's no talk of Cill Chais or its household
And its bell will be struck no more.
That dwelling where lived the good lady
Most honoured and joyous of women
Earls made their way over wave there
And the sweet Mass once was said.

Cad a dhéanfaimid feasta gan adhmaid?
Tá deireadh na gcoillte ar lár;
níl trácht ar Chill Chais ná ar a teaghlach
is ní bainfear a cling go bráth.
An áit úd a gcónaíodh an deighbhean
fuair gradam is meidhir thar mhnáibh,
bhíodh iarlaí ag tarraingt tar toinn ann
is an t-aifreann binn á rá.

THE result of this destruction was that by 1700 – 100 years later, the island of Ireland had run out of timber and was almost totally denuded of trees. So alarmed by this turn of events was the Irish Parliament that it began to incentivize the planting of new trees and to regulate the sale of timber. No less than 19 acts of parliament between 1693 and 1800 concern themselves with the planting of trees and this in turn caused a great deal of planting to take place inside the walls of land lords demesne over the next 200 years. These are evident in the landscape wherever there was once a landlord's house. The all time record for planting was by the Duke of Leinster who planted one million trees in one year on his estates. Another large scale planting took place in Killarney at this time amounting to 100,000 of trees annually and this has created the wooded scenery that is so beautiful today.

The identification of the landlords with trees is such that a famous Irish 20th century poem by Austin Clarke called *The Planter's Daughter* has the refrain, "the House of the planter is known by the trees"

The Planter's Daughter

When night stirred at sea
And the fire brought a crowd in,
They say that her beauty
Was music in mouth
And few in the candlelight
Thought her too proud,
For the house of the planter
Is known by the trees.
Men that had seen her
Drank deep and were silent,
The women were speaking
Wherever she went -
As a bell that is rung
Or a wonder told shyly,
And O she was the Sunday
In every week.

Austin Clarke



Phil Hogan TD Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, with Eamon Gilmore TD Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade and the Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny T.D. (© Photocall Ireland)

The reform of local government

An unparalleled opportunity?

Seán Ó'Riordáin

IRISH local government has at times been described as neither local nor government but simply a local form of national administration. There are many reasons for this, but uniquely among member states of the European Union, the system in Ireland is largely the same as that bequeathed the State at independence.

This arguably reflects a history of ignoring local urban government while regional government, such as



Seán Ó Riordáin

it is, is largely the result of European driven initiatives. Even the current county and city structures have in the past suffered from limited levels of trust with little or no voice at national level. Long-standing issues such as boundaries,

A multiplicity of policies and plans and limited local government revenue has placed barriers to local government playing the role associated with systems throughout the EU

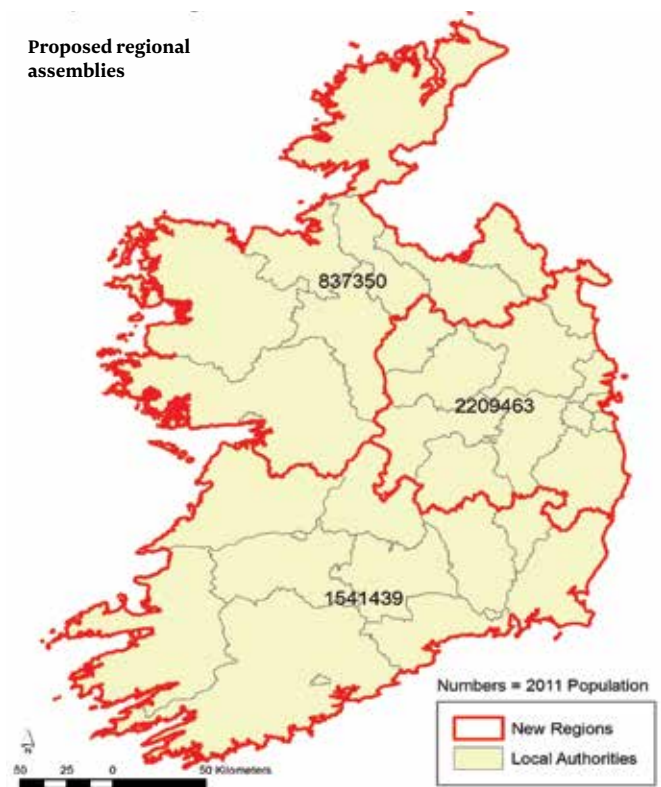
towns without municipal status, multiplicity of policies and plans have not been addressed while the on-going limited revenue of local government has placed real barriers to local government playing the sort of role associated with systems throughout the European Union and further afield.

Now in an effort to address these often competing issues, the Minister for the Environment,

Existing regional assemblies



Proposed regional assemblies



The number of regions will be reduced from 8 to 3 and they will be substantially empowered to produce regional spatial and economic strategies to implement Government policy. They will implement EU programmes and have oversight of other strategic functions

Community and Local Government has issued a substantial policy statement on the reform of local government. Arguably the most comprehensive statement since the foundation of the State, the policy statement indicates a clearly thought out understanding of the challenges confronting local government but in the absence of the expected legislation to underpin the reforms, there is much uncertainty regarding the detail in the reforms.

Clear vision and objectives

One of the most positive aspects of the reform proposals is that the Minister has, for the first time in the history of the State, set out a clear vision for local government. This vision is underpinned by a set of policy objectives. The vision sees a system which will be the:

“...main vehicle of governance and public service at local level - leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably”.

The primary responsibility for policy development will remain at national level but there will be a preference of delivery at local level

To ensure that this is the case the Minister has set out, again for the first time, a set of criteria to ensure that all new public service initiatives will primarily be driven by a reformed local government system. These criteria challenge the local government system and its supporters to create the conditions which would allow central government move towards a programme of delegation and new responsibilities for local government alongside a renewal of existing responsibilities. What this means is that while primary responsibility for policy development will remain at national level, including funding, functions should be compatible with the role of local government with a preference of delivery at local level through a local authority. This would mean that local authorities should have a coherent set of responsibilities rather than miscellaneous functions which are often the result of parent agencies simply seeking to off load “problems.

Resourcing, the statement sets out, will have to be a factor to avoid unnecessary cost shifting to the local authorities while

for many national services there has to be an explicit mandate for local government underpinned by service level agreements, setting of standards and performance monitoring and evaluation.

Duplication of activities or functions between local and central government and agencies or between the various tiers in local government must also be eliminated. What this means is that for the first time in the history of the State there is political commitment to advancing a programme of devolution which observers will be watching out for in the legislation expected to be presented to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the coming months.

A new municipal model

Much has already been written about proposals to re-structure the current system which essentially is one based on a variety of reforms undertaken between 1828 and 1925. These structures reflect an Ireland which is long past and while the efforts of the National Spatial Strategy may have been to try to re-orientate policy towards an urban perspective, it is the case that Irish local government still retains its largely Victorian structures. As such they are arguably ill equipped to confront the challenges of sustainability, community development



CAVAN TOWN HALL: The current 80 town and borough councils with widely varying powers and responsibilities will be replaced by a municipal district council structure across the entire country. Representatives will be elected for these districts and join together to form the county council. The system of dual membership will cease. The distribution of duties between county councils and municipal authorities is yet to be agreed but the principal is that power will be devolved to the most appropriate level, but focussed on the municipal level. (© Deadstar)

and an increasingly unstable economic environment.

The reforms envisage major re-configuration of structures including:

- A new municipal model
- Introduction of performance and standards in line with OECD members
- Re-structuring of regional arrangements
- Greater clarity in responsibilities across both national and local tiers
- Significant re-orientation of existing services towards a more municipal focused model of governance

There will be no direct elections to assemblies

What this means is that municipal government will see very dramatic change moving from having 80 town and borough councils with widely varying powers and responsibilities towards a municipal district council structure which will once and for all deal with the unevenness of representation alongside a full country coverage of municipal designation. This should allow for more integrated planning at district level alongside a proposal to work in greater local participation on local policy development through community planning initiatives.

Such thinking might finally, if implemented, bring Ireland closer to the Local Agenda 21 models envisaged under the Rio Process, something which, if applied, be welcomed by many seeking sustainable development at local level.

Regional planning will be strengthened

The current Regional Authority/Regional

Assembly structures are to see radical re-orientation within a three (possibly four?) regional assembly framework which will be more substantially empowered to address economic social and cultural development alongside integrated spatial and territorial policy development. This will considerably strengthen regional planning given the commitment that state and national bodies adhere to the policies of the new assemblies. There will be some disappointment however at the decision not to apply some of the Mahon Tribunal recommendations on direct election to the Assemblies while the nomination of two members from each relevant county/city council could have the effect of limiting urban voices at a critical time for Ireland's City-Regions.

Reduced levels of representation could be a problem

Much coverage has been given to the reduction in levels of elected representation from almost 1,650 members to around 950 members but this does need to be treated with caution given experience elsewhere. Will reducing the opportunity for local elected representational government contribute to more sustainable local government? International evidence suggests that this may not be the case. If it is to work there is a critical need to ensure that levels of participation onto local policy development are enhanced and some recognition of this



Killarney Town Hall (© Terry Johnson)

The forthcoming legislation will be a critical indication of the Minister's capacity to advance the many innovative ideas in the statement

is clear with proposals on participation. In addition, creation of a more powerful socio-economic committee, drawing membership from both elected and non-elected representation might address gaps in participation albeit that this may not be sufficient to make up the gap in local participation resulting from the limitation on councillor numbers.

Extensive re-configuration of local, community and rural development and re-focusing of local employment and enterprise functions to underpin local government will be welcomed if it can be done without any disruption to local initiative and the need to have active community engagement in such services. This will hopefully become clearer shortly as an alignment process between local government and local development takes effect.

So what about the environment?

There is much to welcome in the policy statement in regard to the environment, most notably the move towards integrated planning at district and regional level. Furthermore the commitment to an improved performance based system based on clear policy outcomes will be important as an overall aspect of more sustainable models of development. Genuine concerns will be expressed in smaller towns with a local council about the loss of local representation while some will be concerned at the failure to have direct election to the regional assemblies. Nonetheless the policy statement represents a unique opportunity to those concerned about the environment to work within a more transparent and accountable local government system which moves the Irish model closer to what is considered a norm in most other parts of the OECD. The real challenge, of course only now begins with the forthcoming legislation a critical indication of the Minister's capacity to advance the many innovative ideas in the Statement.

The environmental response to reform proposals



A key elements of local government reform is the 'alignment' of local government and the local development sector: so for example the Local Partnership Companies that organize the distribution of European and national funding for rural development will be brought within the local government orbit.

The implementation of this policy is to be overseen by an Alignment Implementation Group and representatives of the Environmental Pillar have written to the Minister proposing that the environment should be represented on this group alongside those from local government and the development sector.

The Environmental Pillar, one of the five national Social Partners, and representing 26 national environmental NGOs has a strong ethos of public participation and public service and welcomes the proposals to maintain citizen engagement in local government and decision-making.

166 well trained environmental representatives, supported by the members are currently representing the environment on committees such as County Development Boards, Local Development Committees, and on many Strategic Policy Committees throughout the country, as well as on a large number of national and regional advisory and consultative bodies.

The primary concern would be to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are properly embedded throughout this reform process In this context IEN can bring a considerable level of knowledge and practical experience across the many facets that this committee will need to work on.

The proposed Social and Economic Committee excludes the Environment in its title

The labelling of these bodies is critical. For example the proposed Social and Economic Committee excludes the Environment in its title and therefore in its remit. This is totally unsatisfactory in the context of Our Sustainable Future. The name that would deliver on this would be the Sustainable Development Committee. History shows us that if a body is labelled wrongly, then it will not deliver the public benefits that are expected of it.

Similarly the Environmental Pillar have proposed that the Strategic Policy Committees would be renamed the Sustainable Policy Committees It is clear then that the Terms of Reference for all of these committees should ensure the three threads of sustainability – Social, Economic and Environmental - are equally represented on the Committee and, as key stakeholders, have the same rights and representation as all other members of the committee. •



Members of the Environmental Pillar at training

Neat streets

Tackling litter in schools and local areas



Eoin Morton

LITTER in Ireland's cities, towns and villages impacts negatively upon the physical appearance of the locality, damaging the quality of our experience of the built heritage. The issues related with litter however go far beyond that of the 'visual' impact on the ground; for example, the cost associated with the nationwide

litter cleanup process is estimated at €100 million annually. It is also widely known that litter affects our natural heritage by polluting our watercourses and harming numerous terrestrial and aquatic species, including numerous Irish Annex II species such as Harbour porpoise, Grey seal and Common seal.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that plastic litter kills 100,000 marine mammals and turtles worldwide annually, including 30,000

seals and up to one million seabirds, through either entanglement or ingestion – the majority of this litter is generated on land. Startling figures such as these highlight the need for effective anti-litter programmes and campaigns to address litter in Ireland and thus protect Ireland's natural and built heritage from further degradation.

Neat Streets is an anti-litter and waste programme operated by An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit. The programme is currently being run in 29 secondary schools nationwide and involves students working with their peers to develop initiatives to tackle litter in their schools and local areas. Through Neat Streets An Taisce supports participating schools by providing school visits, workshops, seminars and grants in order to educate and empower students to effectively and creatively tackle the issues of litter and waste at local level.

The programme is designed to facilitate and develop leadership,

project management, citizenship and communication skills amongst second level students through the design and implementation of an anti-litter and waste programme. The programme encourages students to get involved in awareness raising activities and to formulate a student led litter action plan which strives towards reducing the amount litter produced by teenagers and other stakeholders within the school and the wider community.

The Neat Streets programme encourages students to get involved with local community groups such as Tidy Towns committees and Clean Coasts groups in order to achieve a more collective effort towards tackling the issue of litter in their communities. Several participating schools also take part in the National Spring Clean, Ireland's largest nationwide litter campaign which is held throughout the month of April.

Evidence to date shows that the initial phase of the programme (2011-2012) was hugely successful in changing the behaviour of students in participating schools which has resulted in tangible benefits such as a reduction in littering, increased recycling and more involvement in community events. •

LEFT: Students of Castlecomer CC displaying their anti-litter slogan on litter pick jerseys; **RIGHT:** Students from St. Andrews College, Booterstown taking part in a litter awareness night at the Aviva Stadium

The programme can change the behaviour of students in participating schools

If you wish to find out more about the programme please visit www.neatstreets.org or contact Eoin Morton (emorton@eeu.antaisce.org) or (01) 400 2221

Membership application form

Fill of the form and return it to Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8

Membership No (for renewals only):

Name:

Address:

Mobile phone number:

For monthly newsletter and other updates please provide us with your email address:

(We do not share this information with any other persons or organisations)

How did you first learn about An Taisce?

- Newspaper/media Green Schools/Green Home/etc.
 Friend Facebook Special event www.antaisce.ie

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- Please tick the appropriate category
- Individual €45 Family €55
 Retired/Unwaged €20 Family (Retired) €40
 Group €60 Student €10
 Corporate €250 Benefactor (life) €600
 Additional Donation to An Taisce: €

Payment Method

- Credit Card: Please fill in the form on the right or pay online at: www.antaisce.org/membership
 Direct Debit: This is the preferred and most efficient method for An Taisce. Please complete the mandate on the right.
 Cheque /postal order enclosed for: €

Membership runs from January to December each year. If you join between August and December your membership will run to the end of the following calendar year. An Taisce's membership system is managed by volunteers. We will post out a membership card to you in a few weeks. If you have not received your card within four weeks please contact us at membership@antaisce.org

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CVVC number (last 3 digits on back of card):

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Date

An Taisce does not save your credit card details after processing your card payment.

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An Taisce's Identification Number 301560

Member's reference number
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- Membership Direct debits will run on 28th of February each year.
- If you have an existing standing order and are replacing it with this direct debit, you must write to your bank to cancel the existing Standing Order. An Taisce cannot cancel Standing Orders.
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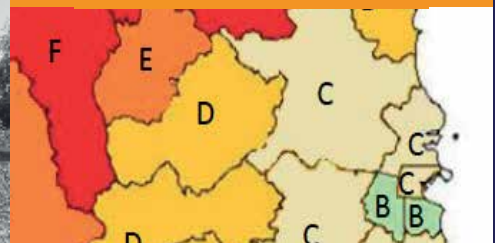
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An Taisce Advocacy makes
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plans, planning applications and
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proposals on the built and natural
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The Environmental Education Unit
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programmes including Blue Flag
Beaches, Green-Schools, National
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