

Policy Paper on Ireland's Landscape and the National Heritage

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Foreword

Ireland's landscape is its people's landscape. At all stages in the development of the contents of this publication that message has been repeated again and again. Such 'ownership' confers both benefits (enjoyment, appreciation and access) and responsibilities (informed decision making and sustainable use). This document recognises that the people of Ireland are responsible for the landscape as it stands today and that they will have responsibility for their landscape in the future.

**“If we lose people and their links with the land
we will be left with just wet hills and lakes.”**

(Conor Skehan Landscape as a Focus of Cultural Identity 1996)

The aspects of our natural and cultural heritage which make up our landscape are so intertwined that any attempt to maintain an approach to the future use of our landscape which supports a sectoralised approach is to do that landscape a real disservice. Landscape must not be considered in neat compartments with, as in the recent past, each compartment (or use) working for its own interest and not seeking links which bring benefits to all. Real benefits are to be derived from co-operation, partnership, and co-ordination between all who impact on our landscape.

The Irish landscape is a living landscape in every sense of the word. It has and will continue to be used in an ever-changing variety of ways. We must be prepared to put in place systems and structures that will serve our landscape well, allowing its continued use and safeguard its value in a positive way for our children. We can use this approach to deliver a better kind of progress and achieve truly sustainable development.

The evidence of how sensitive our landscape really is and the lack of sustainability of some uses to which it is put have been well documented elsewhere. It has been suggested that this document should highlight these inappropriate uses, showing what we want to avoid. Such an approach has been resisted. The Council has chosen to focus on what, together, we can achieve. It is not therefore our purpose in this publication to reiterate the evidence of the past. Rather it is our intent to set out a vision for the Irish landscape in the future.

That vision is to ensure that:

The Irish landscape will be a dynamic, living landscape, one which accommodates the physical and spiritual needs of people with the needs of nature in a harmonious manner, and as a result brings long term benefits to both.

This vision seeks to stress the interdependence of people and their landscape. It seeks to allow people to harness the landscape for economic benefit whilst acknowledging that in the long run such benefits can only be sustained through an appreciation and awareness of the contribution of that landscape to our quality of life. Decisions that affect that landscape must be taken from a very informed base. The recommendations

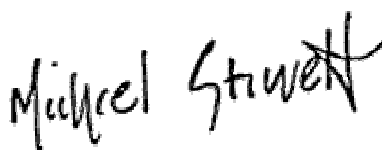
in this document serve to improve access to, and the improvement of, all information on which decisions are based.

The rural landscape provides us with the air that we breathe and the water we drink. Environment, landscape and heritage are inextricably linked. Our heritage rests within our landscape and our landscape rests within our environment. Increasingly, in an Irish context, the urban landscape is influencing the quality of life of Irish people. There is an onus on us all to ensure the policies that influence our landscapes are united in their endeavours to improve that quality. Our considerations must seek to secure the holistic and integrated approach that is required.



Dr. Tom O'Dwyer

Chairperson



Mr. Michael Starrett

Chairperson Chief Executive

May 2002

In July 2001 Council published its Plan 2001-2005 in which it emphasizes its commitment to this overall landscape approach.

Acknowledgements

The development of this document has brought together a wide range of individuals and agencies, many of them working together towards a common goal for the first time. They all share a common belief in the importance of our landscape to the quality of life on this island. Acknowledgement is particularly due to the members of the working group that has guided the Heritage Council through this very complex process and to those representatives of local communities who gave so much of their time to the pilot project in County Clare. The assistance of elected members of Clare County Council and their officials is fully recognised. Their work and the recommendations contained in this document, when fully implemented will, secure major benefits for future generations.



Introduction

Since its establishment in 1995, and the publication of its first strategic plan in 1997, the Heritage Council has exercised its functions under the Heritage Act, 1995, in a manner which aims to raise understanding and appreciation of the value of heritage to all aspects of everyday life. In proposing policies and priorities for the national heritage as defined in the Act (including landscape) the Council has recognised that the availability and quality of information on the national heritage does not always allow informed decision making. It is for this reason that in its strategic Plan 1997-2000 the Council set a specific objective

“ To provide information which will improve the quality and effectiveness of heritage input into Government policy at a national level.”

A number of substantive research documents have been published¹. These have led to policy formulation in a number of areas, policy which has been proposed under the relevant section of the Heritage Act, 1995². In addition priorities have been identified for particular areas and specific partnerships have been entered into which can facilitate effective implementation of that policy. A number of specific areas are of particular importance to the integrated policy approach purported here.

Those of particular significance at this point in time include -

- Submission on the National Development Plan, 2000-2006
- A Heritage Appraisal Methodology for County Development Plans
- Submission on the Planning & Development Bill, 1999
- Submission on the National Heritage Plan
- Policy papers on Agriculture, Forestry, Archaeology, Inland Waterways,
- State Sector Spend on Heritage and Heritage Awareness in Ireland
- Report on Archaeological Features at Risk
- Consideration of Archaeological Landscapes
- Policies and Priorities for Ireland's Landscape (conference papers & proposal)
- Report on the Evaluation of Environmental Designations in Ireland

Required changes in legislation (including amendments to the new planning act and the strengthening of protection for our architectural heritage) have also been informed by this process.

Work towards the achievement of the Council's objective has been undertaken in a constructive manner. For example the Council has sought to indicate how it feels achievement of the objectives contained in the National Development Plan could benefit from the earliest possible consideration of heritage issues and indeed the application of an integrated landscape policy approach to major infrastructural proposals.

In addition to drawing on its own background of work in the formulation of this policy, the Council has drawn widely on the expertise and reports available from a number of agencies of national and international significance³.

All of the above information can be of assistance in the formulation of landscape policy and can contribute fundamentally to the implementation of the National Development Plan. The commitment of the Irish government to production of a National Spatial Strategy within a two-year time frame is to be welcomed. Its development can benefit from consideration of the issues raised in this document and in particular the links which need to be strengthened between our urban and rural landscapes.

The landscape approach proposed here (and the recommendations which flow from it) are designed to allow those with responsibility for the management and development of landscape (and whose use of land impacts on that landscape) to assess the policies they are implementing against specific indicators. The indicators can relate not only to specific indicators for heritage value/quality such as those contained in the Council's advisory document, "Heritage Appraisal of Development Plans A Methodology for Planning Authorities", but also indicators which relate to aspects such as economic development, social aspects and potential for land use change. What is important is that they also allow a fully integrated approach to be adopted. They will ensure that quality of life, a major objective of the National Development Plan, (and of which heritage value is a significant part) is given greater emphasis and allows the Plan to proceed positively to achieve its objectives.

The Council has, in a constructive manner, suggested a need to review existing structures and their effectiveness in carrying out heritage responsibilities. In our changing economic and social climate we must all be open to review and, (where appropriate) alteration of such structures. This can often not simply require additional resources but a complete overhaul of such structures to make them effective in achieving clear policy aims and objectives.

The National Heritage Plan will, it is hoped, grasp this opportunity.

Used effectively, the Council is of the opinion that the policy and recommendations in this paper, together with earlier advice provided to government, will facilitate and inform the adoption of a proactive, sensitive and creative landscape led approach by government and its partners in the implementation of the National Development Plan.



1 The following research documents have been published by the Heritage Council:
Archaeology and Forestry in Ireland; Evaluation of Environmental Designations in Ireland; Impact of Agriculture Schemes and Payments on Aspects of Ireland's Heritage

2 The following policies have been proposed under section 6 of the Heritage Act (1995): Policy Paper on: *The Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways; Agriculture and the National Heritage; State Sector Expenditure on Heritage; The Role of the Heritage Council in the Planning Process; Forestry and the National Heritage; Urban Archaeology and the National Heritage; Heritage Awareness in Ireland*

3 Parks for Life; IUCN : EUROPARC *Loving Them to Death*; Council of Europe European Landscape Convention 2000

The Vision

“I wonder is it possible to write a simple short statement, a vision of what we want for the Irish landscape? If we can write that and accommodate within it all the social, economic, developmental, protective and other needs everything else will flow from that vision.”

(Prof. Michael Ryan - Landscape Conference, Tullamore, April 1999)⁴

There is much resonance in the above statement and its frankness served to galvanise the efforts to agree a vision beyond the Tullamore conference.

A vision can only be arrived at through ‘open eyes’, through a willingness to see all the obstacles that might prevent us getting where we want to go. If we don’t agree where we want to go in the first place (our vision) there is little if any hope of arriving. With an agreed vision you will start thinking of the strategic framework that will get you there. This will include the work that needs to be done to negotiate with different constituencies. Following from the vision everything else becomes commentary. All the comparison with best practice from abroad, all the planning of individual actions, all the existing practical work in a variety of sectors will have application in the achievement of the vision.

In seeking views from the members of the working group⁵ guiding the Council on its policy formulation on the ‘vision’ for the Irish landscape a number of themes appeared again and again. Chief amongst these was the interrelationship between society and environment. In short the link between cultural and natural elements of our heritage was plain for all to see. This can be paraphrased as the “people factor”. People and their sense of place takes pride of place in these deliberations. Landscape whilst tangible and touchable can in addition be attributed to what people carry in their heads, their view of the world.

This document seeks to develop recommendations which link cultural and natural landscapes in a unique manner, combining emotional/spiritual and technical elements in a manner which addresses the whole of the Irish landscape. The underlying implication is that people recognise their influence over the ‘shape’ of that landscape and that they wish to maintain that influence. Landscape is viewed as dynamic and can change with time. People wish to see that dynamism retained, not fossilised.

Validation of the Vision

Bearing in mind the fact that the Heritage Council survey on heritage awareness⁶ showed that less than 3% of the population considered landscape as part of their national heritage it was felt appropriate to validate the issue of a vision for the Irish landscape through market research⁷. Analysis of this research supports the overall vision proposed at the outset of this document, i.e. that :

The Irish landscape will be a dynamic landscape, one that accommodates the physical and spiritual needs of society with the needs of nature in a harmonious manner, and as a result brings benefits to both.

The research clearly shows that people accept a dynamic landscape, one that is changing and developing. There is also broad agreement amongst respondents on what changes are viewed as beneficial and those changes which are not beneficial. The results highlight the need for us to secure an integrated approach for rural and urban landscapes. They show that perceptions of landscape in rural areas focus on mountains and rivers as the terms best describing landscapes whilst urban dwellers focus on parks and green space. We need to address the aspirations of both these constituencies. We also need to address and inform the quality of those changes that make our landscape dynamic. Design, location and species composition control qualitatively the impact of new woodland in the Irish landscape. Design, location and materials control qualitatively the impact of new housing.

It is important at this point to stress that, in considering landscape, the Council is considering the whole landscape. As a society we have tended to treat landscape (as we have our heritage) in a compartmentalised manner.

- The environmental agencies have considered nature conservation as paramount through protected landscapes and designations.
- The archaeological interests have considered aspects of cultural heritage through records of sites and monuments.
- The agricultural sector has packaged landscape primarily within the agri-environment programme.
- The forestry industry has considered the Irish landscape as one which would benefit from additional planting.
- Tourism has marketed our landscape as wild, invigorating and attractive (to date concentrating primarily on an image for foreign markets).
- The Irish people regard it as where they live, and as a nation, Council's heritage awareness policy shows us to be taking it all for granted, or else regarding it as someone else's responsibility to look after it.

In a truly integrated approach to our landscape each of these elements would continue to have their input but in a manner which fully recognises the significance of all the elements. The sectoral approach is undoubtedly changing because of the recognition that a multidisciplinary approach to the way in which we manage and develop our landscape is the only sustainable way in which to use it and enjoy it in the long term. Recent work in the forestry sector through the Forestry Inventory Planning System (FIPS), initiated by the Forest Service of the Department of the Marine & Natural Resources, and the publication by that Department of Forestry and the Landscape Guidelines serves as one very positive illustration of such change. In addition the recent consultative draft guidelines on landscape characterisation, published by the Department of the Environment & Local Government further emphasises government commitment to landscape. Such initiatives have the potential to further an ecological and organic approach which stress the importance of interdependence and interrelationships between agencies.



4 *Policies and Priorities for Ireland's Landscape* - Conference Proceedings, Tullamore April, 1999

5 Members of the Working Group: Freda Rountree, former Chairperson The Heritage Council; Niall Sweeney, Offaly County Council; Vincent Hussey, Offaly County Council; Terry O'Regan, Landscape Alliance Ireland; Fred Aalen, Trinity College; Ross Millar, DOE NI; Gabriel Cooney, University College Dublin; Alan Craig, National Parks & Wildlife Service; Diarmuid McAree, Forest Service; Finnain MacNaeidhe, Teagasc; Joe Hamill, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands; Brendan McGrath, Clare County Council; Representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Food & Rural Development

6 Heritage Council *Policy Paper on Heritage Awareness in Ireland* (2000)

7 Landsdowne Market Research Ltd. (February 2000) *Report on the Future of the Irish Landscape*

The Process

Listed in the Heritage Act, 1995, are the elements which make up the national heritage. This list includes landscape and seascape⁸.

The Council, in exercising its functions under the Act to propose policies and priorities for the national heritage first considered a paper on the subject of landscape in 1997. This paper sought to draw together aspects of the Council's earlier data collection and evaluation work, and in particular its policy advice to government on aspects of land-use such as agriculture, forestry and the land-use planning system itself.

In its publication "Evaluation of Environmental Designations in Ireland"⁹ the Heritage Council pointed out that the Irish State has tended to rely on legislation to protect nature and amenities. There has been recent criticism arising from research¹⁰, of the effectiveness of heritage legislation where it is not backed up with sufficient resources and efficient structures to allow its implementation. Financial incentives and educational and advisory schemes are becoming more acceptable as long term solutions to loss of heritage and landscape features. Council has also¹¹ identified the need for policy harmonisation across sectoral interests. Lack of harmonisation has been viewed as a major source of concern not only in Ireland but on a pan European scale, an issue currently being addressed following the signing of the European Landscape Convention in October 2000. Council in its first consideration of a landscape policy saw such a policy as allowing it effectively to exercise its functions under the Heritage Act (1995) and in particular

- to co-operate with public authorities in the exercise of its functions and to promote co-ordination of all activities which impact on those functions.

The working group that has guided Council reflects the desire to involve as wide a constituency in the process as possible.

A major step in the formulation of Council policy on the matter of landscape centred on an international conference held in Tullamore, Co Offaly in April 1999¹².

The papers for this conference were pre-published and the conference proceedings, including discussions, are also available.

The conference drew on international and Irish experience, raised a large number of issues and pointed a way forward through a series of recommendations.

These recommendations emphasised:

- the particularity of the character, history and dynamic nature of the Irish landscape
- the need to develop policies and priorities which took full account of this special character
- the need to avoid an over-reliance on designations

- the need to consider cultural and natural aspects of landscapes in harmony - the whole landscape
- the need to take account of emerging European initiatives
- the need to place greater emphasis on landscape within the context of the emerging National Heritage Plan
- the need to build on the apparent willingness for a cross sectoral approach
- the need to test the use of landscape characterisation as a tool in a pilot scheme to inform policy formulation
- the need to change/influence public and official perception of landscape
- the need to ensure awareness of the implications of changes in approach to landscape in the EU and in particular the development of the European Landscape Convention through the Council of Europe.

Key points were made by all speakers. These focused discussion on the whole environment and not only what are euphemistically referred to as protected landscapes. Adrian Phillips (IUCN)¹³ in his key note address drew attention to the fact that whilst the 20th Century saw a focus on the development of systems for protected areas the 21st Century would most likely focus on the whole landscape, the whole environment. Phillips fully recognised that protected areas had been a success and sought to build on that success in his holistic approach. As with Matthijs Schouten,¹⁴ Phillips talked of the structural changes in civil society, the flow of responsibility being much less dependent on top down imposition and the links between culture and nature. Marija Zupancic Vicar¹⁵ further recognised the contribution of protected areas to quality of life and sustainable development and Roger Crofts¹⁶ pointed out the folly of looking after only “so-called special places”. Richard Wakeford¹⁷ talked of the need to take stock before we can have a vision, stressed the need for an integrated approach and the importance of such an approach for the people and communities that live in our landscapes. John Faulkner¹⁸ also emphasised these points and stressed the need for society to grow beyond the anachronistic debate about landscape versus development and to resolve the tensions that exist over planning.

Many of the speakers focused on the importance of community involvement in the process. Liz Hughes¹⁹ in particular highlighted this aspect as did the four speakers involved in local initiatives i.e. Arthur Mitchell,²⁰ Tom Egan,²¹ Diarmuid McAree²² and Adrian Phillips (TCD).²³ The necessity for all of us to link our cultural and archaeological landscapes with the more traditional natural landscape approach received timely emphasis from Gabriel Cooney.²⁴

Discussion at the workshops sharpened focus and each of the speakers on the final day provided a series of actions and recommendations which pointed a way forward. Terry O’Regan²⁵ urged us not to wait for great visions but to progress incrementally, building on what we already had. Liam Lysaght²⁶ emphasised the importance of both

urban and rural landscape and Ross Millar²⁷ emphasised the need to have an agency with responsibility to drive this initiative forward. This point was further reiterated by Fred Aalen.²⁸ Aalen also stressed the need to harmonise policy initiatives across the spectrum begging the question as to how we can possibly succeed otherwise.

“ Assuming that desirable strategic objectives can be agreed, how can the development of the total landscape be guided while it is exposed to a range of uncoordinated public policies? ” (Aalen F., Tullamore 1999)

8 Heritage Act (1995) 6(1) *The functions of the Council shall be to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage, including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways*

9 Hickie, David, (1996), *Evaluation of Environmental Designations in Ireland*

10 O’Sullivan, Muiris & O’Connor, David, & Kennedy, Laurence (May 1999), *Archaeological Features at Risk - A Survey Measuring the Recent Destruction of Ireland’s Archaeological Heritage*

11 Submission on the National Heritage Plan - The Heritage Council 1999

12 *Policies and Priorities for Ireland’s Landscape* - Conference Papers - Tullamore, April 1999

13-28 *Policies and Priorities for Ireland’s Landscape* - Conference Papers, Tullamore, April 1999

The Issues

The development of an integrated approach to landscape policy must address a number of fundamental issues. Indeed it must be considered as contributing to the resolution of these issues. The process in which the Heritage Council has been involved to date has suggested that the following are the main issues that need to be resolved. The recommendations at the end of this document aim to resolve them.

The main issues are:

A Should we consider the whole landscape?

B Should we consider complementary measures to the concept of using designations as a means of promoting protection and development of the landscape?

C Should the central role of local authorities in landscape enhancement and management receive greater emphasis through the Development Plan process?

D Should we involve the communities who live and use the landscape in a meaningful way in policy development and implementation?

E Should we develop a landscape approach to take account of the aspirations of both rural and urban sections of society?

F Should the existing data on the national heritage (qualitatively and quantitatively) contribute to the development and implementation of an effective landscape policy?

G Should we encourage all agencies to operate in the context/framework of an integrated landscape policy i.e. achieve harmonisation of policy objectives?

H Should agencies with an interest in landscape endorse an integrated strategic approach
i.e. move away from a compartmentalised approach?

I Should we develop the concept of 'landscape proofing' as part of heritage quality appraisal?

J Should we develop with partners a structured and co-ordinated approach to achieve the implementation of policy?

K Should the role and positive contribution to be made by NGOs be fully and effectively recognised?

L Should the development of a landscape policy as proposed by the Heritage Council be seen by other agencies as complementary to their own area of activity?

The Pilot Landscape Characterisation - County Clare

This pilot project, as initially proposed at the Tullamore conference, was designed to test/resolve a number of the issues listed above. The final report²⁹ shows how we might resolve a number of the above issues. It has also pointed the way in which others can be resolved and in addition afforded Ireland the opportunity to develop the landscape characterisation process beyond what has been achieved elsewhere. The report itself is available in full and contains a number of recommendations and conclusions, all of which are worthy of consideration. The report which was initially viewed as merely informing Council in the formulation of its own wider landscape policy, may now form the cornerstone of that policy. The possibility of this change in approach arises from

- the development of the application of Geographical Information Systems and its potential to achieve initial landscape characterisation profiles
- the links being forged between the evaluation and understanding of cultural and natural landscape.

In both these areas Ireland has a major opportunity to develop international thinking on landscape policy development. The pilot study has demonstrated the efficacy of available data, although much work has to be done in coordinating its computerised format.

Landscape Characterisation - the process

The process of landscape characterisation focuses on what makes one area different from the next, what makes a unique sense of place, something which in the Irish context is of fundamental importance. This is done by analysing combinations of landscape elements and features to define the distinctive characteristic of a landscape. The landscapes of an area can then be classified into units of common character, described and mapped. The elements and features analysed can include, topography, surface geology and soils, land cover, habitat types, historic landscape types, townlands, settlement communication and field patterns. The quality of output of course depends on quality of data input, decisions on what layers of spatial information are included and the methodology adopted. The process was invaluable in attempting to resolve the efficacy of existing data.

The approach can be used to agree a common base, a common character, from which policy led change of the landscape can be put in place. Having such an approach on a national, regional and local basis can only be of benefit in informing, guiding and influencing landscape change, indeed managing character change. Without such a baseline of information we are unable to measure change, unable to establish indicators for change and cannot fully justify the effectiveness (from an environmental point of view) of other policies which impact on the landscape. These policies can range from tax incentives such as the rural tax renewal schemes to those in the Common Agricultural Policy and the National Development Plan. Putting in place such monitors and meeting such demands is becoming increasingly important in

the European context in which Ireland now operates. They are also a fundamental requirement of our commitment to sustainable development.

A major benefit of landscape characterisation is that it covers the whole countryside, and not just special areas. The special areas benefit from being placed in this wider context, their role being seen as part and parcel of everyday life rather than isolated from it. They are part of the landscape character and the special landscapes will always hold a particular place in our minds eye and our imaginations. The characterisation process allows us to link back to and further appreciate the significance and value of all landscapes. This places significance and value on our whole landscape, the countryside in which people live. The process can be used therefore to focus attention away from a preoccupation with designation and designated areas whilst of course fully recognising the value and contribution of such mechanisms to achieve particular objectives. Such an approach encourages the focus to be placed on policy development and policy issues, in relation to all landscapes, including those which may be relatively degraded.

By attributing that landscape a character, the use to which it is put and what makes it dynamic, can be much more effectively managed; decisions can be taken from a much more informed base. Landscape characterisation can be used to highlight opportunities and is in no way anti-development.

The Pilot Project - Findings methodology and next steps

In essence the pilot study supports the establishment of a basic, consistent, agreed landscape characterisation for Ireland as a whole. This National Landscape Characterisation (NLC) would assemble the same data sources and GIS layers as for County Clare. To take full account of particular aspects of our Cultural Heritage the NLC would also require additional information to be included drawn from a number of sources including the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) and established methods such as that pioneered in Cornwall³⁰ and the more recent work by Cooney et al.³¹

The pilot study has clearly shown that a methodology to replicate (using GIS) the initial landscape characterisation can be developed. This could be of major benefit to planning authorities, providing access to the information required, and making it freely available to all those who can derive benefit from it. However it is not the intent to use characterization purely as a planning tool.

In whatever guise, the characterisation process applied on a national scale will make a major contribution towards the achievement of the Heritage Council objective³² to provide the framework for a definitive data base to bring benefit to the national heritage.

The NLC would have a major role in the development of County Landscape Character Assessments (CLCA), likely to be required following publication of National Landscape Guidelines by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. These are currently undergoing a period of public consultation.³³ Further emphasis of the future significance of this approach stems from the specific reference to landscape character in the Planning and Development Act, 2000.³⁴ This requires that landscape character be included in the objectives of county development plans.

Of paramount importance is consistency in the methodology by which such landscape characterisation is carried out. This is why the national, regional and local aspects require co-ordination and integration. This will best be achieved by identifying one particular agency to develop, co-ordinate and continuously update the data.

Major difficulties in consistency could arise where the agreed methodology to be carried out by individual authorities is done purely on the basis of guidelines which may not stress sufficiently the overall national context within which they were derived.

The characterisation should also be carried out through a broadly based partnership of similar make up to that involved in the local stakeholder meeting in the County Clare Pilot Project.³⁵

Building on the existing commitment and enthusiasm it is proposed that the current pilot project in County Clare be extended to produce a full CLCA in association with partner agencies. These would include the County Council, Shannon Development, Teagasc, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands, the Forest Service, the Department of Environment and Local Government, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and local community groups.

The NLC and the CLCA would have application in the development of local strategy initiatives. There is a huge list of such initiatives which would benefit from the landscape character approach. The Heritage Council has made some progress in this area through the promotion of village design statements and the development of heritage quality appraisal for county development plans. What is key to this proposal is that the process involves a marriage of both bottom up and top down input to the process.



29 *Landscape Characterisation in Co Clare: A report by ERM for the Heritage Council (2000)*

30 *Historic Landscape Characterisation, English Heritage 1999*

31 *Archaeological Landscapes*, Heritage Council 2000 (unpublished)

32 *The Plan 1997-2000* Heritage Council strategic document

33 *Landscape and Landscape Assessment* - Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities

34 Planning and Development Act (2000) section 10(2)(d)

35 Stakeholders meeting, Co. Clare February 2000

Recommendations - Priorities for Ireland's Landscape

“ Landscape could be a key means of ensuring that heritage values are properly reflected in public policy in the years to come - and provide a framework for the interaction of civil society as a whole with its heritage. ”

These words of Adrian Phillips (IUCN) (1999), introduced at the very outset of this document now have a sense of realism. The pilot project initially called for at the Tullamore conference has directed us as to how those aspects of our cultural and natural identity which make up our landscape can be properly reflected in public policy in years to come.

The project results should of course not be considered in isolation nor targeted solely at government agencies. Any recommendations must also take account of the extensive volume of related work already instigated by many agencies. These recommendations must also take account of and be complementary to the emerging work of other agencies and bodies. Included in this is the work of bodies such as Landscape Alliance Ireland (LAI) that has earlier highlighted³⁶ the weaknesses in existing legislative framework and has through its Landscape Forum sought to raise the importance and significance of landscape at a national level. There is growing recognition on the need for an overall integrated landscape policy within local authorities and the requirement for this approach to landscape policy at a European level.

There is also a very pressing need to recognise the contribution to this process of bodies such as Bord Fáilte and non-governmental organisations such as An Taisce which have a major interest in the future of the Irish landscape.

The main Government agencies directly involved in the management and development of our landscapes include:

- the Department of Environment and Local Government which is currently preparing national landscape guidelines in exercise of its responsibilities arising from the new planning act.
- the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, which in its preparation of the National Heritage Plan has specifically called for submissions relating to natural and cultural landscapes.
- those other government departments with responsibility for land uses e.g. the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the Department of the Marine & Natural Resources which influence major change in our landscape.
- Those government departments and agencies with responsibility for implementation of the major infrastructure proposals contained in the National Development Plan, e.g. the National Roads Authority.

- Local authorities through their responsibilities under the Planning and Development Acts.
- Other agencies with direct influence including Bord Fáilte, development agencies and the regional authorities.

The recommendations must also take account of and emphasise related aspects of work which for a variety of reasons have not been covered in detail at this point in time. This would include work on seascapes as an integral part of our national heritage and also the need to ensure the importance of our urban landscape in today's society.

There is also a need to take account of systems for the protection of our natural heritage such as the current National Park system, and expand on the success of the current approach in bringing benefits to aspects of our national heritage.

Pursuant to its responsibilities under the Heritage Act, 1995, and in the light of the process outlined in this publication, the Heritage Council proposes the following priorities for Ireland's landscape.

1. That Government recognises the central and positive role integrated landscape policies can play in achieving national and international objectives by:

- acknowledging the value of having a consistent and agreed methodology for landscape characterisation to allow effective monitoring of all policies which impact on our landscape (including seascapes).
- identifying a central agency which will be adequately resourced to complete and maintain a programme of national landscape characterisation in an 18-month period. This will in particular complement the work of local authorities in the exercise of their functions under the Planning and Development Acts.
- providing funding for this work through the National Heritage Plan.

2. That the potential benefits of sharing and making accessible information are realised through the further development of the computerised system applied in the Clare pilot project.

3. That Government recognises the importance of linking the cultural and natural aspects of our landscape by:

- the application on a national scale of the lessons from the Clare Pilot Project as they relate to integration of information on our cultural and natural landscape.
- seeking to further develop the accessibility to information held by government departments which will assist in the process of landscape characterisation.

4. That all key partners co-operate in the completion of the Clare Pilot Project through implementation of a complete county landscape characterisation and the identification of a number of selected local initiatives.

That emphasis is placed on the significance of our landscape at all levels of the decision making process by ensuring:

- effective implementation of the new planning act.
- endorsement of the concept of heritage appraisal (including landscape proofing) as part of the development plan process.
- publication of national landscape guidelines.

5. That a review of legislation as it relates to the designation of national parks and other protected landscapes is completed as a matter of urgency.

6. That the significance of Heritage Council policy papers on landuses such as agriculture and forestry are fully recognised through:

- their application in gaining support from the EU for packages such as the rural development programme.
- the application of the broad principles they contain at a national scale.

7. That Government uses the recommendations in this report to assist in the achievement of the objectives contained in the national development plan and uses the recommendations to strengthen links between urban and rural landscapes in the National Spatial Strategy.

8. That the potential to complement the work of landscape characterisation in the North of Ireland by action as proposed in this publication is realised.

9. That the Irish government having ratified the European Landscape Convention, acts on the above priorities to assist in achieving its objectives.

36 Landscape Alliance Ireland (1998), Survey on Legislative Framework for Landscape Policy (1999)

Conclusion

"The debate makes clear a deep concern that the quality and regional variety of Ireland's landscapes are being diminished by many forces. Because of the outstanding quality of our landscapes and their immense cultural and economic significance to the nation, Ireland must take determined action to reverse the ravages of recent decades and set a course for the long-term management of change. The landscape must be given prominence in any future policies formulated for our national heritage and for rural development generally. There is real urgency here: serious damage to our landscape and the environment must be anticipated when dynamic economic growth occurs."
(After Aalen F 1999)³⁷

The European Landscape Convention acknowledges that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas. The convention notes that developments in agriculture, forestry, industrial and mineral production techniques and in regional planning, town planning, transport, infrastructure, tourism and recreation and, at a more general level, changes in the world economy are in many cases accelerating the transformation of landscapes. The anticipation of this transformation can only be achieved through a policy led approach.

The preceding paragraphs have identified how the long-term management for change can be addressed in the context of integrating policies which have an impact on our landscape and which ultimately determine the long term quality of life. The priorities proposed, which are both passive (in terms of gaining acceptance of their broad principles) and dynamic (in terms of the actions required) now need to be acted upon. Government must take the lead on directing this action to deliver a better kind of progress, one in which all the people of Ireland can justifiably feel proud. The Heritage Council for its part will continue to exercise its statutory responsibilities for landscape under the Heritage Act, 1995, and is committed to seeing the pilot project in Clare through to its conclusion.

This publication reinforces the importance of the opening for signature by the member states of the European Landscape Convention in October 2000. Action on the priorities identified in this report will complement the very significant step taken by the Irish Government in ratifying the European Landscape convention in March 2002.

37 Policies and Priorities for Ireland's Landscape - Conference Proceedings, Tullamore, April, 1999