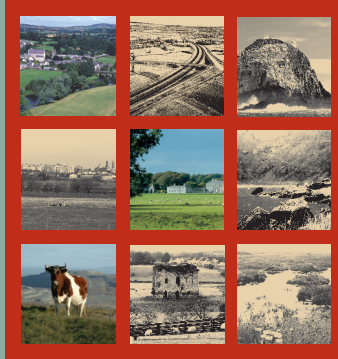


Proposals
for
Ireland's
Landscapes
2010





Proposals for Ireland's Landscapes

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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Irish Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd
The Writers' Centre
19 Parnell Square, Dublin 1

Published by The Heritage Council

Designed and Produced by
B+H Magee Design Ltd

Editorial Consultant: Roberta Reeners

ISBN: 978-1-906304-13-3

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Foreword

The Irish landscape is a living compendium of human and natural history, its character a testament to the lives and aspirations of countless generations. It has been our inspiration and is an essential part of our identity. The landscape sustains us in every way possible — it is both our inheritance and our gift to the future.

The Irish landscape is clothed in a rich heritage of monuments, history, mythology, folklore and placenames. Throughout Ireland, natural places such as mountains, plains, rivers, lakes and the coast have historical, religious, mythological and legendary associations. Our villages, towns and cities have long histories, and our countryside has been shaped by thousands of years of farming and human settlement. These resonances of the past are a central part of our heritage.

Every generation leaves its unique mark on the landscape. This textured patina of history confers pathos and meaning on a place or landscape, providing each generation with the traction it needs to attach itself to the historical continuum and to nurture and enjoy a sense of belonging. We belong to a place as a tree belongs to a forest — our roots reach deeply into ancestral soils. Because the places where we grow up, or where we live, are imprinted on us subconsciously, the values we attach to them are rarely spoken aloud and often only come to the surface if they are threatened with substantial change. Only then do we realise how fragile places really are, how easily the character of a place can be lost, and how closely tied our identities are to places.

The character and composition of a place are what sustain us. When that character is lost, the people who belong to it lose their sense of place, and the glue that holds communities together becomes unstuck. Unfortunately, it is often only in the aftermath of substantial change that we remember what it was about a place that sustained us — a row of shops here, a pleasing view there, a tree, a riverbank, an ornamental railing — often quite simple things to which our memories and identities are tied. It is too easy to dismiss the ties that exist between people and places as mere sentimentality, but this would be to deny the fact that belonging is an essential human need. It would also deny the investment that is place: places are where we invest our identities, our personalities, our hopes and our aspirations. This we all know, instinctively and intuitively.

Things are always in flux, and the accelerated pace of building and development witnessed over the last decade in Ireland has left a mixed legacy of successes and failures that we are going to have to live with for the foreseeable future. Greed masquerading as 'development' visited an enormous amount of unwanted and unnecessary change on the Irish landscape during this period. 'Ghost estates' now hang around the fringes of towns and villages the length and breadth of Ireland as permanent reminders of what happens when profit is put before people.



Though we have not yet reached pre-famine population levels, the demand on resources incurred by the lifestyle of every man, woman and child in the country is considerably greater than it was even 30 years ago. In fact, notwithstanding what we import in the way of fuel and consumer goods, we have reached a point where the Irish landscape can no longer spontaneously sustain our collective lifestyle without our assistance or management. Managing the landscape means managing ourselves, which means balancing our biological and cultural needs — our need for an unpolluted, biologically diverse environment (clean air, clean water, pollinated food crops etc.) and our need for beauty, for historical texture, for sense of community and place, and our need for meaningful, secure work. These are non-negotiable principles of human existence, and they can no longer be sacrificed on the altar of economics without dire consequences for all of us and for future generations.

Even if there were no economic crisis, the utilitarian approach to the landscape witnessed over the last decade would still have been unsustainable because it is one-dimensional and exploitative, both of the finite bank of natural resources and of people. We can no longer be passive about landscape management or the capacity of nature to forgive our excesses. If we have learned anything, it is that nature is ultimately unforgiving. Our lakes, for example, cannot continue to supply us with safe drinking water if we don't stop polluting them now, and our rivers need their floodplains because that's what rivers do. Our depletion of natural habitats ignores the fact that 35% of the food we eat — every third mouthful — is the result of natural pollination. Even if it is only for the sake of our tourist industry, we need to be much more attentive to the aesthetics of the landscape so that it can continue to inspire and romance us and offer us the kind of place in which we want to live and raise our families. In short, we urgently need to moderate our behaviour and to find a new way of managing how we relate to the environment, how we use it and how we support it.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) offers a new and inclusive way of engaging with the landscape. Its starting point is the recognition of the multiplicity of ways in which the landscape supports human life. It acknowledges the complex interdependency of all of these facets and, because of the simple fact that the landscape sustains us all, the ELC mandates all of us to participate in managing this finely balanced resource. It recommends that the principles of shared ownership and shared responsibility for the landscape should be reflected in planning legislation that is both inclusive and participatory.

For its part, the Heritage Council espouses the principle of shared stewardship of our natural and cultural heritage. Our experience has been that, equipped with reliable knowledge and support, local communities are more than capable of critiquing what they have around them and imagining, describing and delivering better futures for themselves and their children. Their efforts and their vision deserve to be enshrined in local and regional planning. The case studies that we have sponsored, facilitated and partnered prove that this approach works and delivers quality communal landscapes that generate sustainable employment, social capital, community identity and functioning ecologies.



However, we cannot manage what we do not understand. The landscape has a lot to teach us and we should be attentive to it. Specialist knowledge and training are axiomatic to good landscape management, and for this we turn to researchers and educators in our schools and colleges. The application of landscape science and humanism requires both specialists and polymaths. And though inter-disciplinarity presents considerable practical and pedagogical challenges, Irish third-level colleges have demonstrated their ability to develop, embrace and impart new paradigms relating to landscape and people. Properly supported, our third-level sector is well situated to deliver the type of specialised knowledge and training that will underpin good landscape management practices.

The multifaceted nature of landscape also presents a real challenge to the public sector. The development of a National Landscape Strategy is a vital and welcome first step, but it will not succeed in delivering on its promise of a better landscape if its management is atomised across multiple government departments and agencies. Much greater integration of monitoring, research, planning and actions is needed if we are to achieve the outcome that we so truly deserve.

Conor Newman
Chairman
The Heritage Council

Summary and Recommendations



Introduction

The Irish landscape is where we all live, work and spend our leisure time. Today, it faces an increasingly complex range of challenges. Whether through the accelerating natural and man-made impacts of climate change, or the demands of an increasingly urbanised society on our natural and cultural resources, there are major issues that need to be resolved and changes made in how we legislate for, plan, manage and conserve our landscapes today and in the future. The evidence supporting the need for these changes is etched in our towns, villages and the countryside throughout Ireland.

This document reflects new ideas regarding how we might manage, plan and conserve Ireland's landscape into the future. It is based on the work of the Heritage Council and many of its Irish and European partners in seeking, over a ten-year period, to promote the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ELC). The Convention offers us a new way of thinking about our landscape — one that places people, and their active participation in shaping their landscape, in a central position. The frameworks within which this is delivered may vary from country to country, depending on their needs.

The proposals made in this paper are not about freezing the development of the Irish landscape. Instead, they seek to manage change in a proactive, informed and inclusive manner.

The National Landscape Strategy

The current *Programme for Government*, in building on the 2007 programme, retains the commitment to develop a National Landscape Strategy (NLS). The Heritage Council is actively involved in the Advisory Group established by the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government to develop this strategy.

The Heritage Council's Approach

The Heritage Council advocates a landscape approach that will benefit the management of our heritage — one that demonstrates that this is important not just for heritage but for our quality of life, our identity, our sense of ourselves and for making a bright future for our society. The Irish landscape is where tangible and intangible aspects of our culture (story, folklore, sense of place) intertwine. Together, these forge identity and belonging and provide inspiration.

Since the Heritage Council was established in 1995, it has consistently stated that, without management of the landscape, the various protections being applied to elements of our national heritage are less effective. In calling for a landscape approach to managing our national heritage, Council is seeking an integrated approach to managing cultural, built and natural heritage, rather than seeing them as discrete entities or stand-alone designations. This can be achieved through partnership with local communities, local government and government agencies, as a means to be proactive in problem-solving and in managing change.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC)

The Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (the Florence Convention) was



published in 2000 and came into force in Ireland on 1 March 2004. The publication of this paper coincides with the tenth anniversary of the publication of the European Landscape Convention. Its aim is to promote landscape protection, management and planning and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues. Signatories to the Convention declare their interest in achieving sustainable development that is based on a harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and environmental conservation.

As a party to the Convention, Ireland has agreed to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to define landscape quality objectives, while fully involving the people concerned in the decisions that affect their area.

The Convention aims to increase awareness of the value of all the landscapes in which we live. It emphasises the right of people to identify with their landscape and to exercise their duty of care for it. Something as fundamental to our well-being as landscape needs to be treated well. If we do so, it will sustain a good quality of life, health and prosperity, helping us to meet our obligation to pass it on to future generations in perhaps even better condition than how we inherited it.

In common with other European countries, Ireland is encouraged through the European Landscape Convention to adopt an integrated approach to the management of the landscape, one that gives equal weighting to its economic, social and natural values, and recognises the interplay and symbiosis of these different agents.

The examination and analysis of measures taken by other countries that have implemented the European Landscape Convention show that the Convention has allowed those States to mould it to their own needs. Catalonia has introduced a new and specific piece of legislation. France has seen modifications to its existing legislation allowing for more integrated sustainable development. The UK has also developed new strategies and policies.

The Dynamic Irish Landscape

Above all, the Irish landscape is a dynamic one. Recent census data (Census 2006) gives Ireland's population as 4.2 million — an 8.2% increase compared to figures from 2002, and a 16.9% increase since 1996. This increase — and indeed population increases projected for the future, and the associated demand for new infrastructure, housing and services — requires a greater consideration of how best to manage the landscape and the basic services that it can provide to us such as water, food, energy and recreational opportunities. Climate change introduces an added imperative, as adaptation and mitigation measures will need to be carefully considered and planned for at landscape level.

Ireland's — and Europe's — agricultural landscapes are hugely significant cultural reference points. Their multifunctional nature means they deliver a range of services to us. Agriculture and its associated policies, both at European and global levels, continue to play a significant role in land management. Over 60% of the land in Ireland (4.3 million hectares) is devoted to agricultural activities, with an additional 10% given to forestry.



Urbanisation is another key driver of change in the landscape. In 2006, 2.57 million people (approximately 60% of the population) resided in 600 urban areas (*i.e.* cities, towns and villages). According to the 2006 census, 56,186 one-off rural houses (*i.e.* 22.5% of total construction) were built. In a similar vein, the Irish worker is increasingly reliant on the car for transport needs, and the spread of settlements around our major cities has resulted in increased traffic flows.

The link between economic success and environmental quality is reflected in the Irish government's 2008 *Framework for Economic Recovery*, with the recognition that a high-quality environment is a key contributor to 'quality of life' and a key requirement for economic performance in a 'Smart Economy'. While there is a clear need to manage the legacy of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' phase of the Irish economy, we must now prepare ourselves to deal with the various projections outlined above, creating frameworks and structures that are capable of managing future stress-points in the Irish landscape in a sustainable way.

Six Key Messages

- 1 Effective and meaningful public participation is at the very core of the European Landscape Convention. Community involvement, increased public participation, accessibility and the use of local knowledge in landscape planning and management are highly beneficial and could transform the way we manage all our designated landscapes and other special places.
- 2 The European Landscape Convention brings a clear requirement for an integrated approach to landscape planning and management across all areas of government policy formulation and implementation. In Ireland today, a plethora of State bodies operates at various levels to influence and impact upon landscape. This leads to a fragmented style of governance in relation to landscape management, planning and conservation in Ireland.
- 3 The landscape is multifunctional and constantly evolving. We use the landscape to produce food and other economic resources, as well as to support settlements and transport, yet it also supports a variety of environmental public goods, including the maintenance of valuable cultural landscapes and the ecosystems and historic features they support.
- 4 Tools such as Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) can inform planning for sustainable development. The consistent use of this technique would facilitate greater consideration of historic landscapes, habitats and ecosystem functions and services and would lead in turn to better management and quality of life.
- 5 One of the most critical aspects for increasing our consideration of landscape, and its constituent parts in decision-making, is the availability and accessibility of high-quality information. This includes characterisation studies, and evidence for landscape change, becoming available in an accessible digital format for decision-makers and the general public.
- 6 While a variety of initiatives targeted at different ages and sectors ought to take place in terms of landscape education and awareness, the ultimate goal must be to increase overall understanding of the significant contribution a quality landscape can make to our daily lives and to our health.



The Way Forward

The following proposals will allow us to consider many of the issues that surround the future management, planning and conservation of the Irish landscape in a themed manner. They are cogently presented and have been derived from ongoing discussion with key partners, the findings of the Heritage Council's October 2009 Tullamore conference, and numerous years of Heritage Council involvement and that of others on local, regional, national and international levels. What is needed now is a series of actions to make a real contribution to improvements in the future.

The Heritage Council proposes the following actions:

- Establishing a Landscape Observatory of Ireland (LOI).
- Introducing a Landscape Ireland Act.
- Landscape-proofing existing primary legislation, government programmes and policies.
- Promoting a vibrant research and learning culture on landscape.
- Increasing public participation, accessibility and the use of local knowledge in landscape management.

Establishing a Landscape Observatory of Ireland (LOI)

The Heritage Council proposes the establishment of a Landscape Observatory of Ireland to provide landscape with recognition at a national level. The Observatory would: champion the landscape approach, with a key objective being the promotion of a 'whole landscape approach' in all sectoral land-use policies within a specified time frame; propose policy; assist the implementation of a National Landscape Strategy; and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation.

To facilitate it in its work, the Observatory would be provided with the capacity to tackle the technical aspects of landscape. It would also be equipped to articulate and accommodate the spiritual and aesthetic values of landscape that are so enshrined in both our natural and cultural heritage. In line with earlier policy proposals from the Heritage Council in 2002 and 2006, it would be tasked with the production of the National Landscape Character Map. This would, uniquely on a European level, fully integrate the associated layers of historic landscape and habitat mapping to produce a series of Regional Landscape Catalogues.

Should Council be asked to assume this function on behalf of the Minister, the Observatory would be located within the existing Heritage Council headquarters in Kilkenny.



Introducing a Landscape Ireland Act

The Heritage Council has demonstrated just how effective community involvement can be in a range of landscape management projects. Communities from Julianstown, Co. Meath, to Bere Island in Cork, from the Wicklow Uplands to the Burren, and in the historic walled towns of Youghal to Fethard, have all been empowered to identify and implement the works and tasks that they wish to see in their landscape.

A new legislative framework could lay out a range of options available to projects that encourage and enable collaboration between national and local government, State agencies and local communities on an agreed range of landscape management and conservation measures. Such collaboration would promote actions that bring social, environmental and economic benefits within the Irish landscape. This could provide for the agreement of practical management and conservation frameworks in places such as Natural Heritage Areas, Landscape Conservation Areas and National Nature Reserves, within the context of emerging provisions for Historic Landscapes or indeed resourcing measures within Architectural Conservation Areas or actions agreed in Village Design Statements. It would also, most significantly, provide for structures to assist communities in managing their everyday landscapes.

Landscape-proofing existing primary legislation, government programmes and policies

The European Landscape Convention requires that signatories 'recognise landscapes in law'. While the proposal to introduce a Landscape Ireland Act is intended to introduce new participative approaches for communities in determining agreed actions for the management of their own landscapes, there is also a need to recognise landscapes in existing primary legislation as a matter of some urgency. The Heritage Council welcomes the recent changes to the Planning Acts which include the definition of landscape as per the European Landscape Convention and the placing of landscape requirements in regional planning policies and County Development Plans. These are clearly positive developments, yet the implementation of these new provisions will require training, guidance and monitoring in the years ahead to ensure that the potential of these measures is met and that real change is affected at regional and local levels.

There is also a need to review and landscape-proof all existing legislation and policies, including NAMA. Government policies too — such as the National Development Plan or National Spatial Strategy; fiscal policies such as area-specific tax incentives; and climate change, renewable energy and agri-environment policies, including the Rural Development Plan — must take account of the emerging National Landscape Strategy.

Promoting a vibrant research and learning culture on landscape

While there are challenges in multidisciplinary training and research, a research programme on landscape offers exciting prospects and ought to be a strategic target for the Irish university sector. Should this new programme become available, the range of courses



currently offered in individual institutes indicates that a high level of expertise is available to deliver quality training and research.

There is a need to consolidate existing research on landscape matters at the third level and to encourage collaboration on research along the same lines as achieved with the Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research (INSTAR) Grants Programme as operated by the Heritage Council. A similar programme should now be initiated for landscape as a research topic to transform the very nature of Irish landscape studies. This should require collaboration not only within the island of Ireland but, encouraged by the measures contained in the European Landscape Convention, should also seek to heighten and develop international collaboration on landscape matters.

With regard to professional training, the Heritage Council has ably demonstrated — through the conception, development and delivery of its award-winning, multidisciplinary Landscape Character Assessment/Continuing Professional Development (LCA/CPD) Training Course Programme — that the appetite exists for ongoing multidisciplinary professional development in landscape management theory and practice.

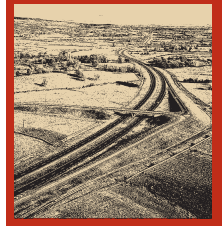
A greater landscape input to farmer training and agri-environmental schemes would be highly beneficial. Dialogue to commence this is a key priority. A major contribution to successful landscape management involves working in partnership with the farming community and relevant State agencies.

However, the successful realisation of such measures does require resources. A landscape training fund is essential to enable these aims to be accomplished. International and all-island exchange and collaboration should be seen as key elements of such a funding mechanism.

Increasing public participation, accessibility and the use of local knowledge in landscape management

As an integral part of the ELC, each party commits to introduce procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the landscape. Mechanisms to promote such involvement have been tried and tested for a number of years by the Heritage Council and its partners through the use of Village Design Statements and Waterway Corridor Studies, through the Field Monument Advisor Scheme, and by Conservation Plans. These measures have had a significant degree of success. However, in keeping with the spirit of this document, and the need to continue the promotion of a landscape approach to managing our heritage, measures with a greater impact are required.

The development of High Nature Value Farming and its adoption to help manage cultural heritage, as well as Green Infrastructure practices, offer a means to promote landscape-scale benefits while forging strong local partnerships. Measures such as these do, however, require public policy support, not just through the work of the Heritage Council but within government departments, agencies and local government. Measures to mainstream initiatives like these, such as through the Rural Development Plan or future agri-environment schemes, would be advantageous.



Conclusion

This paper is presented with a view to ensuring that we have the best possible structures and frameworks to plan, manage and conserve all our landscapes, now and for future generations.

In conclusion, the Heritage Council wishes to thank everyone who has guided them along this path. From the Landscape Conference in 1999 and the publication of the 2002 *Policy Paper on the Irish Landscape* to the second Landscape Conference in 2009, many individuals, communities, agencies, government departments and international bodies have helped to shape the thinking that has gone into the formulation of this paper.



INTRODUCTION: The Future of the Irish Landscape

The Irish landscape is a dynamic one, continually evolving in response to natural processes and human influences. High-quality landscapes, based upon local distinctiveness and a strong cultural identity, can deliver cultural, economic, social and environmental benefits — employment, health, education and ecosystem services — and can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

This paper reflects new ideas regarding the future management, planning and conservation of Ireland's landscape. It is based on the work of the Heritage Council and many of its Irish and European partners in seeking, over a ten-year period, to promote the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ELC). The Convention offers us a new way of thinking about our landscape, one that *places people and their active participation* in shaping their landscape in a central position. The frameworks within which this is delivered may vary from country to country, depending on their needs.

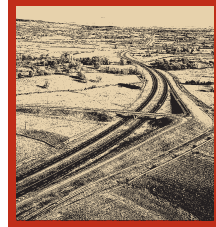
In building on the 2007 programme, the current *Programme for Government* retains the commitment to develop a National Landscape Strategy (NLS).¹ In addressing the Heritage Council's Landscape Conference in October 2009, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD, indicated that his department would deliver a draft strategy for public consultation by the middle of 2010. The Heritage Council is actively involved in the Advisory Group established by the Minister to develop the National Landscape Strategy.

As set out in an issues paper, the objectives of the NLS are to prepare a framework to:

- Implement the ELC in Ireland.
- Recognise the importance of all landscapes in Ireland.
- Promote sustainable development.
- Protect and enhance the environment.

In this paper, Council advocates a landscape approach that will benefit the management of our heritage and goes further to argue that this is important not just for heritage but for our quality of life, our identity, our sense of ourselves, and for making a bright future for our society. The Irish landscape is where tangible and intangible aspects of our culture (story, folklore, sense of place) intertwine and these together forge identity and belonging and provide inspiration.

Since the Heritage Council was established in 1995, we have consistently stated that, without management of the landscape, the various protections being applied to elements of our national heritage are less effective. In calling for a landscape approach to managing our national heritage, Council is seeking an integrated approach to managing cultural, built and natural heritage, rather than as discrete entities or stand-alone designations, through partnership with local communities, local government and government agencies, as a means to be proactive in problem-solving and to manage change. A range of initiatives to further this landscape approach are contained in this paper.



1.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC)

As a party to the European Landscape Convention (ELC) since March 2002, Ireland has agreed to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to define landscape quality objectives while fully involving the people concerned in the decisions that affect their area.

With landscapes (and not only in Ireland), we have tended to adopt rules and regulations that metaphorically fence off areas that are seen to have special value, e.g. national parks or monuments, architectural conservation areas, heritage towns and villages. As a result, we often neglect the inter-connected nature of landscape and undervalue many parts of it.

The Convention aims to increase the awareness of the value of *all* the landscapes in which we live. It emphasises the right of people to identify with their landscape and exercise their duty of care for it. Importantly, the ELC acknowledges the changing character of the landscape, and its dynamism both physically and in terms of perceptions and value systems. Greater detail on the ELC is provided in Section 2.

What is landscape?

'Landscape means an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and /or human factors.'

(The European Landscape Convention)

'The landscape is the entirety of our surroundings, where everything happens. It is the foundation of a good living space for man and of biodiversity, and it constitutes capital in business sector development and in local and regional development. The landscape is society's own shared resource and living archive. It is invaluable in helping us understand and explain our history.'

(Swedish National Heritage Board)

1.2 Landscape as Inspiration

The landscape has had a profound role in guiding the evolution of settlement and society on this island. Historically, the quality and resources offered by different types of landscape have influenced the life-style and the character of the people who lived there. In some cases, at special places such as Tara and Brú na Bóinne, the spiritual aspect came to predominate and endured over many centuries. Thus the landscape sustained early Irish society both physically and spiritually. It is useful to remind ourselves that this is still the case and that our ability to draw inspiration from the landscape around us continues to be a key factor in the international success of Irish storytellers, musicians and artists.

Intimacy with the landscape is epitomised by the unique matrix of townlands into which the



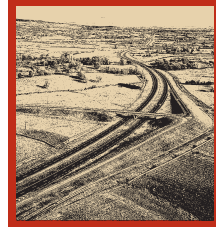
country is divided. The complex placenames associated with the townlands, many of them in Irish, contain a wealth of cultural, topographical and botanical information, and constitute a unique record of past peoples and landscapes. In his play *Translations*, Brian Friel, for example, uses the alteration of Irish townland names by the 1830s Ordnance Survey as an analogy for the complex interaction between colonial and native culture.

An intimate relationship with the surrounding landscape and its occupants, as a source of support and sustenance, inevitably led to a strong feeling of identity. This sense of place, perhaps experienced at an almost subconscious level, conferred a personality on the landscape, and was manifested in local customs, traditions, music and folklore. In exceptional cases, it provided the aesthetic impulse for the creative artist, not necessarily a native of the locality. For example, the 18th-century poem *Cill Cais* which starts with the line ‘*Cad a dhéanfaimid feasta gan adhmaid?*’ (‘What will we do without timber?’) laments the destruction of the Irish oak forests. The early 20th-century dramatist, J.M. Synge, following a prolonged stay on the Aran Islands, immortalised the culture and landscape of the west of Ireland in his classic *Riders to the Sea* and *Playboy of the Western World*. Modern poets continue to find inspiration in their surroundings, sometimes from different perspectives, with Yeats’ nostalgic *Lake Isle of Inisfree* contrasting with Kavanagh’s ‘*stony grey soil of Monaghan*’. In her poem *Warhorse*, Evan Boland writes of the tension that exists between the cosseted sedateness of suburban living and the anarchic wildness of the countryside and its inhabitants. Contemporary novelists also find inspiration in their native places. Colm Toibín and John Banville have both recalled the Wexford of their youth, and Leitrim resonates throughout John McGahern’s work. Visual artists such as Paul Henry, Frank McKelvey, Maurice MacGonigal, Jack B. Yeats and Sean Scully have also responded creatively to the landscapes of Ireland, particularly since the late 19th century. Like Synge, Henry found inspiration in the light and colours of the west — his evocative paintings of bog, mountain and water are among the most identifiable of Irish artworks.

Despite the fact that our personal horizons can be potentially expanded through education, travel, communications and the media, the unique imprinting of one’s locality remains an endlessly intriguing motif. Only the not-so-imaginary Barrytown could yield up the characters of a Roddy Doyle novel, or Offaly the characters in Eugene O’Brien’s hugely popular ‘Pure Mule’. These differences, which can sometimes be extremely nuanced and personal, confer variety and texture on the Irish landscape and contribute to its character. Throughout Ireland, sport provides an occasion to celebrate community as epitomised by the parish-based support for the GAA. Likewise, the many heritage-related projects funded by the Heritage Council’s community-orientated grants schemes reflect the ties that link people and place and help capture different perceptions of the landscape.

1.3 The Irish Landscape Today — Drivers of Change

The most recent census data (Census 2006) gives Ireland’s population as 4.2 million — an 8.2% increase since 2002 and a 16.9% increase since 1996.² This increase, as well as projected population increases for the future and the associated demand for new infrastructure, housing and services, requires a greater consideration of how best to manage the landscape and the basic services that it can provide, such as water, food, energy and recreational opportunities.



Climate change introduces an added imperative, as adaptation and mitigation measures will need to be carefully considered and planned for at the landscape level.

Ireland’s — and Europe’s — agricultural landscapes are hugely significant cultural reference points, and their multifunctional nature means they deliver a range of services. Agriculture, and its associated policies, both at European and global levels, continues to play a significant role in land management. Over 60% of the land in Ireland (4.3 million hectares) is devoted to agricultural activities, with an additional 10% given to forestry. Agriculture in Ireland is predominantly grass-based. Tillage occupies approximately 10% of utilisable agriculture area, with the remainder devoted to cattle and sheep farming. Since the 1990s, through the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) and now the Agri-environment Options Scheme, efforts have been made to encourage farmers to adopt more environmentally friendly farming practices, following the intensification of practices in many parts of the country. Farmers play a critical role as landscape managers, a role that should be recognised and supported more effectively for the contribution it makes to Europe’s cultural values and diversity.³

Urbanisation is another key driver of change in the landscape. In 2006, 2.57 million people (approximately 60% of the population) resided in 600 urban areas (*i.e.* cities, towns and villages). During the period 2002 to 2006, while the population of the State increased significantly, this rate of increase was not evenly spread across the landscape. During this period, for example, the population of Co. Meath increased by 21.5%; Co. Kildare by 13.7%; and Co. Wicklow by 10%. Not all of these increases refer to urban dwellers. According to the 2006 census, 56,186 one-off rural houses were built. The speed of this growth has placed real stress on our social, economic and environmental infrastructure. Moreover, this growth has taken place despite very little landscape management awareness or assessment of its ability to absorb such development.

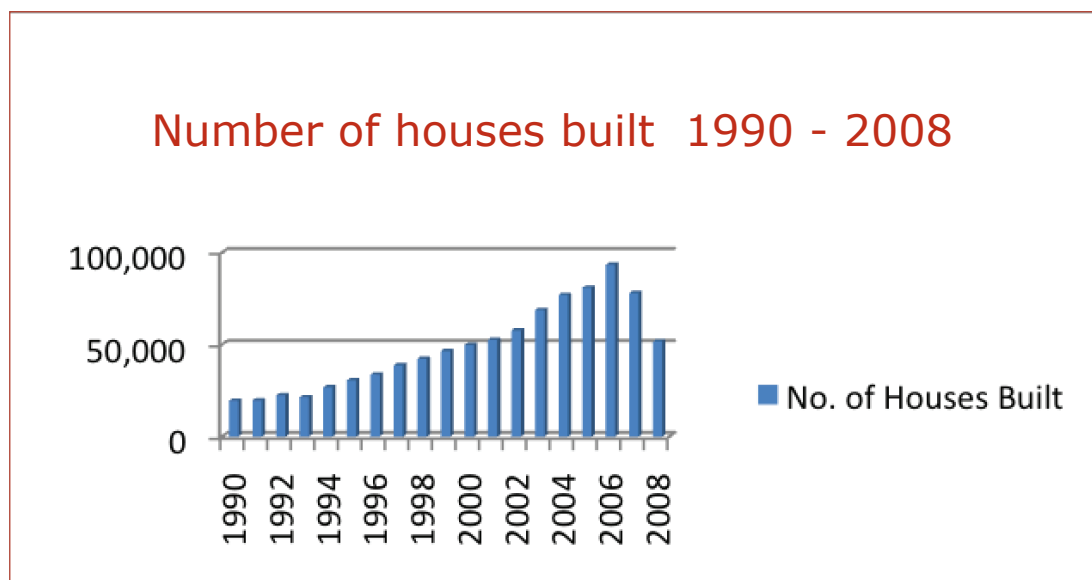


Table 1: Number of houses built in the Irish landscape, 1990-2008⁴



In a similar vein, the Irish worker is increasingly reliant on the car for transport needs, and the spread of settlements around our major cities has resulted in increased traffic flows and congestion. Central Statistics Office (CSO) data shows that 57% of all workers regularly drove to work by car in 2006, up 2% since 2002, and just 9% used public transport.⁵ In 2006, the European Environment Agency (EEA) announced that Dublin, a low-rise city, was one of the worst examples of urban sprawl in Europe.⁶ While such transport dependency exerts pressure for new road developments, it also suggests that many Irish people regularly experience and interact with the Irish landscape from the view point of motorways and roads, or along narrow corridors with occasional and perhaps fleeting vistas of wider countryside or urban views.

In the midst of all these statistics, we should not lose sight of Ireland’s island status. In 2006, approximately 60% of the population were living less than 10km from the coast. Accordingly, the need to consider coastal issues, foreshore management, our seascape and the potential impact of climate change in this area is important.

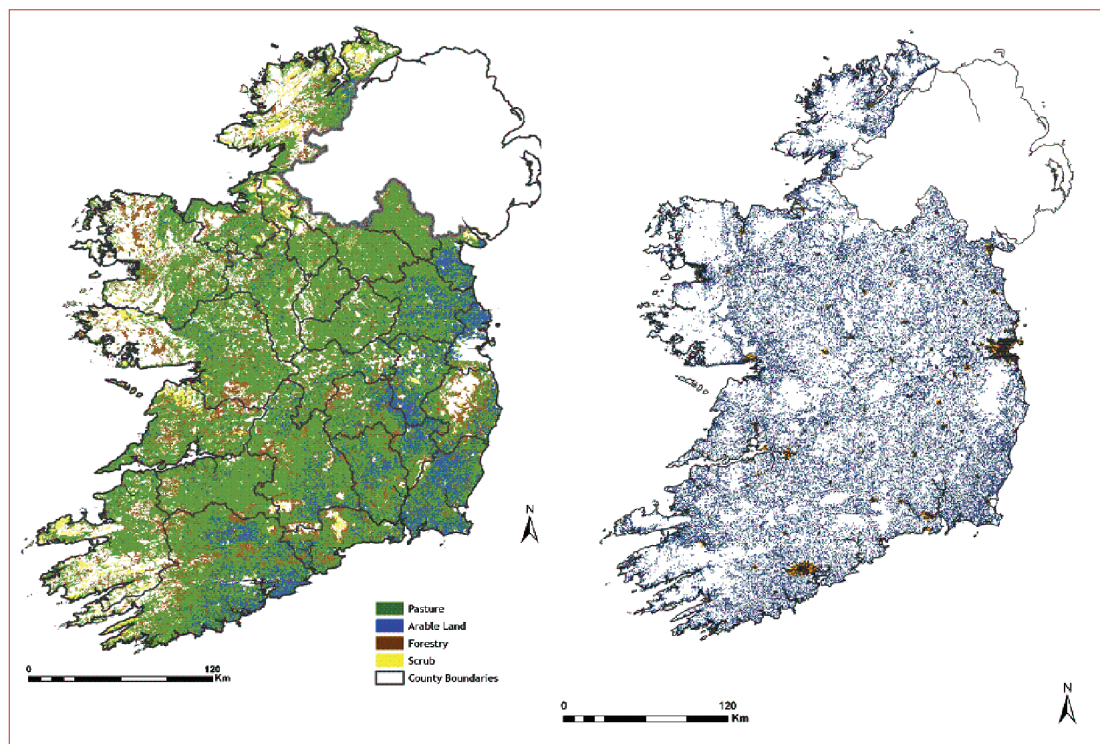
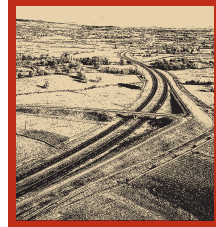


Figure 1: Distribution of arable land and pasture, Corine Land Cover 2000 (left); (Source: EEA/EPA); New residential addresses recorded by An Post 2005–2007 (right): Each dot represents at least one new address (Source: An Post GeoDirectory and EPA)

The character of the Irish landscape is one of the most important factors cited by visitors to Ireland as the reason for their visit. In 2007, 80% of international visitors rated it as such, coming second only to the Irish people themselves. In terms of placing an economic value on this, in 2008, overseas visitors who went hiking and/or hill-walking spent an estimated €364.1 million (three times more than that generated from overseas’ golfers). Overseas’



visitors who cycled spent an estimated €102.8 million in 2008 (only €3 million less than generated through overseas' golfers).⁷

1.4 The Continuation (or Acceleration) of Current Trends?

By using various projections⁸ for social and economic development in the years to 2025, it is possible to suggest that, should current trends continue, the Irish landscape will see:

- A regional imbalance in Ireland's economy: population, commercial agriculture and modern enterprises will be even more concentrated in the east and south than at present.
- Rural areas, especially in the north-west and north midlands, will continue to lag behind in communications and other infrastructure, particularly as EU funds diminish. Notwithstanding this, western rural areas will be seen as key 'receiving environments' for renewable energy installations. The provision of associated pylon corridor networks, and their potential impact on the landscape, is of serious concern.
- Due to Common Agricultural Policy reforms and increased commercial pressures from the World Trade Organisation, there will be dramatic reductions in farmer numbers,⁹ lower agricultural prices, and widespread decline in commercial farming. Furthermore, increased farm and upland abandonment will occur as a direct consequence of shrinking EU farm payments, resulting in dramatic increases in forested land area as well as impacts on the natural and cultural heritage of these areas.
- The failure to adhere to EU Directives and sustainable planning policies will erode the prospects of an attractive environment, thereby eroding the basis of the traditional tourist model.
- Population growth — potentially up to 8 million by 2030 — and the need to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness at minimum cost, with resultant demand for grey infrastructure (e.g. transport and communications, among others).¹⁰ This, combined with the needs of a growing population for increased ecosystem services (e.g. clean drinking water, food etc.) will increase pressure on our natural environment and landscape in some areas, and the way in which it functions and delivers these services and others.
- While climate change is unlikely to eliminate the dominance of grass in the Irish landscape during this century, it will begin to threaten productivity, especially during the summer months. The iconic greenness and lushness of Ireland's landscape is therefore likely to diminish due to rising temperatures and increased emphasis on biofuel production.
- Sea level rise and accelerating coastal erosion will mean that historic harbours and jetties may become unviable to maintain. Settlements, as well as monuments, will also be eroded, resulting in increased calls for costly coastal defence works.
- Precipitation is likely to become more intense, resulting in increased surface run-off, with associated implications for both summer and winter flooding risks.¹¹

While there is no certainty in these projections, they are based on current thinking and offer a range of perspectives on the likely degree of social, economic and climate change which will impact upon the Irish landscape and accordingly upon the services that it provides. The proposals contained in this document are in part designed to equip us and help us manage changes should the projections become reality.



1.5 Sustainable Development in the Irish Context

The link between economic success and environmental quality is reflected in the Irish government's *Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (2008). This is seen in the recognition that a high-quality environment is a key contributor to 'quality of life' and a key requirement for economic performance in a 'Smart Economy'. In some instances, a growing awareness of the results of the Celtic Tiger period shows that while there was increased investment in infrastructure and public buildings, there was also environmental degradation as we manifestly failed to decouple economic growth from negative environmental consequences. In addition to dealing with the legacy of this phase of the Irish economy, we must now prepare ourselves to deal with the various projections outlined above, creating frameworks and structures that are capable of managing future stress-points in the Irish landscape in a sustainable and pre-emptive way.¹²

The Irish government adopted its first National Sustainable Development Strategy in 1997. This was revised in 2002 and again in 2006/2007. (The new strategy, due to be published in 2008, has not yet appeared.) Despite this, it is clear that Ireland has not yet achieved a model of sustainable development. Environmental considerations alone, such as water quality issues and the state of protected habitats and species, clearly demonstrate the scale of challenges the country is facing.¹³

In its 2002 policy document, the Heritage Council articulated the following vision for the Irish landscape:

*'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.'*¹⁴

This incorporates and reflects the spirit of the original explanation of the term *sustainable development*: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹⁵

The traditional model of sustainable development is usually depicted as a three-legged stool, the legs representing Economy, Society and Environment. This model, however, fails to reflect current thinking which emphasises the hierarchy of interdependency between these three elements. This is captured better diagrammatically by a nest of concentric circles that demonstrates the ultimate dependence of social and economic sustainability on the environmental bedrock.

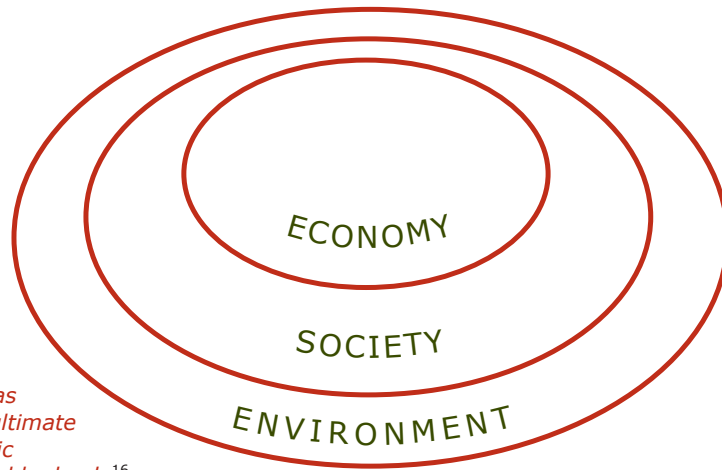
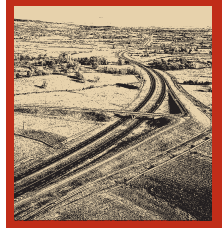


Figure 2: Recent thinking on sustainability shows this concept as concentric circles illustrating the ultimate dependence of social and economic sustainability on the environmental bedrock ¹⁶

1.6 Frameworks and Tools for Landscape Management

A number of frameworks, tools, approaches and methodologies are at our disposal to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development through landscape management. The National Landscape Strategy will use the European Landscape Convention as its starting point. This section outlines several tools and ideas that have evolved through parallel or complementary processes since the Convention was drafted that can assist in realising its potential. These are:

- Ecosystem Approach and Ecosystems Services
- Landscape Multifunctionality
- Green Infrastructure
- Characterisation Studies

1.6.1 Ecosystem Approach and Ecosystems Services

In 2000, Ireland and other members of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted a framework for action to achieve sustainable development. This is known as the Ecosystem Approach¹⁷ — a way in which to manage entire ecosystems in a holistic manner. This approach recognises that ‘*humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of many ecosystems*’. Twelve principles, as well as operational guidance, were articulated and supported by the member parties in 2000. The Ecosystem Approach’s principles state, *inter alia*, that:

- Management of land, water and living resources are matters of societal choice.
- Ecosystems must be managed within the limits of their functioning — the conservation of ecosystem structure and functioning should be a priority target of the Ecosystem Approach.
- The Ecosystem Approach should involve all relevant sectors of society and scientific disciplines.



‘THE ULTIMATE GOAL MUST BE TO INCREASE OVERALL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION A QUALITY LANDSCAPE CAN MAKE TO OUR DAILY LIVES AND TO OUR HEALTH’

By adopting the Ecosystem Approach, parties to the CBD (including Ireland) are committed to considering these principles and to implementing them, as appropriate, in local or national conditions through case studies or pilot projects. Such an approach does not preclude other management and conservation approaches (such as action plans for single species or taxonomic groups, or protected areas) but could integrate all these approaches to deal with complex situations. In 2004, the parties agreed that priority should be placed on facilitating the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach. Subsequent to the adoption of this approach in 2000, Ireland developed its first National Biodiversity Plan (2002-2006). Although this plan sets out the general framework for implementation of the CBD by Ireland,¹⁸ it does not consider how to develop or implement Ecosystem Approach case studies, focusing instead on thematic issues. As the second National Biodiversity Plan is still under development, it remains to be seen if the implementation of such an approach will be supported here.

In recent years, as efforts to explain the interactions and linkages between the natural environment and human well-being increase, the concept of *ecosystem services* became prominent. Ecosystem services can be divided into four general categories (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, [MEA] 2005¹⁹):

1. **Provisioning services: the supply of goods of direct benefit to people (e.g. food, timber, medicines).**
2. **Regulating services: regulation of climate, water and air filtration, flood management.**
3. **Cultural services: including spiritual value and aesthetic beauty.**
4. **Supporting services: essential for the functioning of ecosystems, on which other services are dependent, such as soil formation and photosynthesis.**

MEA highlighted the importance of ecosystem services to human well-being, and that, at global scales, many of these key services are being degraded and lost, including pollination, water quality and soil fertility. In several countries, and indeed at the European level, national ecosystem assessments are being considered, in development or in progress (e.g. France, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom). In order to ensure landscapes continue to deliver the services required by society (and at an even greater level than is currently the case), a national ecosystem assessment could enable us to identify and develop effective policy responses to the degradation of ecosystem services which has already occurred. This could also enhance our capacity to respond to the changes that will be wrought by climate change and to ensure that our adaptation strategies are appropriately and effectively designed.

1.6.2 Landscape Multifunctionality

The term *multifunctionality* is now widely used in landscape studies. It speaks to how the landscape serves more than one function in responding to population growth and social demands. According to this perspective, land is capable of sustaining or fulfilling several needs at the same time — economic, ecological, socio-cultural and aesthetic. Recent studies suggest that interactivity is at the heart of multifunctionality and entails:

- The pursuit of different goals on the same parcel of land, either simultaneously or successively in time.

- The integration of different land-use goals at the beginning of a project.
- Spatial combination of separate land units with different functions.²⁰

Ensuring delivery of such goals can be challenging. It requires partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as individuals and communities, in a multidisciplinary approach that embraces professional and civic stakeholders and identifies a committed lead organisation to motivate other partners.

This concept of landscape multifunctionality complements ideas of agricultural multifunctionality. This latter term, promoted as an element of EU policy, seeks to emphasise that, in addition to food production, agriculture can contribute to the maintenance of rural landscapes, the protection of natural and cultural heritage, and the provision of recreational access to the countryside.²¹



Figure 3: Multifunctionality of our landscapes ²²

1.6.3 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a relatively new concept in Ireland. It refers to parks, nature conservation areas, river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, farmland and coastal areas which together form a network of green space providing clean air, water and natural resources that enrich our quality of life.²³

Since the 1990s, Green Infrastructure approaches to planning and managing green space have been developing in the USA and, more recently, in Europe, as a means of delivering landscape benefits to people and the environment. For instance, the UK Landscape Institute has written that:



*'Functions are multiplied and enhanced significantly when the natural environment is planned and managed as an integrated whole; a managed network of green spaces, habitats and places providing benefits which exceed the sum of the individual parts. It is this concept of connectivity and multifunctionality which makes the GI approach such an important part of landscape planning and management.'*²⁴

Green Infrastructure planning involves mapping existing Green Infrastructure resources, assessing future needs, and charting where improvements or enhancements can be made, and where new Green Infrastructure can be provided in the future. Strategies are evidence-based and generally use Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to collate, map and analyse information. This map-based approach can be readily understood and is easily communicated to a wide audience. This, in turn, provides a good basis for communication with the public and for engaging key partners in the planning process and also focuses on maximising benefits in the creation of a connected and multifunctional green space network. Both connectivity and multifunctionality are key concepts in Green Infrastructure planning. Generally, connected green space provides greater benefits to both people and wildlife than isolated patches, and multifunctionality recognises that multiple benefits can often be provided on the same site. For example, a floodplain unsuitable for (built) development could provide for some form of low-intensity recreational use — as long as it does not affect its function as a floodplain — while also intercepting surface water run-off from adjacent housing developments.

1.6.4 Characterisation Studies

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is generally seen as a way of documenting the characteristics and processes that contribute to the distinct character of the landscape. As well as providing a baseline against which change can be measured, LCA could be key in influencing the direction of landscape change. In keeping with the philosophy of the ELC, this technique concerns itself with the character of the *whole* landscape, not just special or protected areas. At a basic level, LCA is designed to:

- Identify what environmental (geology, soils, relief etc.) and cultural features (enclosure patterns, land use etc.) are present in an area.
- Provide a baseline for measuring change in the environment.
- Analyse/understand a location's sensitivity to development and change.
- Inform the conditions for any development and change.

Crucially, this should be a two-stage process, with a clear separation between characterisation itself and the making of judgements based on this characterisation to inform a range of different decisions. Assessment exercises such as this are generally carried out using Geographic Information Systems which allow for the use of layers and overlays of spatial data such as maps and aerial photographs. Notwithstanding this, field survey and local participation and input are vital elements of any LCA exercise. A consultation draft of *Guidelines on Landscape and Landscape Character* was published by the then Department of the Environment and Local Government in 2000, but the guidelines have never been finalised.



Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is concerned with identifying and detailing the historical processes that explain the complex character of the current landscape, specifically within the definition of the European Landscape Convention.²⁵ HLC is an important contribution to landscape management because it considers the historical development of the landscape and the relationship of buildings and monuments to landscape patterns. HLC is a critical component of an overall LCA approach. It complements other historic environment records such as the Record of Monuments and Places and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage which focus mainly on individual heritage assets and areas rather than general landscape.

Habitat survey and mapping are also significant in understanding landscape character.²⁶ A habitat survey is a method of gathering information about the ecology of a site, where the fundamental piece of information collected is the habitat type to which a particular area can be assigned. Habitat types are determined by reference to a system of habitat classification. In Ireland, the two systems used most frequently are the Heritage Council’s classification and the EU’s Habitats Directives habitat types.²⁷ The location and extent of different habitat types present in a site are mapped to provide a clear spatial record. Depending on the objective of the specific habitat survey, additional information on the habitats may also be collected, such as dominant species or conservation status. Accompanying information on faunal species may also be collected as required. The results of a habitat survey provide basic ecological information that can be used for biodiversity conservation, planning (e.g. forward planning, spatial planning — such as Green Infrastructure strategies — or development control) and land management. This can also be used to identify any further supporting survey needs that may be required to best inform land or landscape management.²⁸ As fundamental building blocks of our landscape, and our understanding of how they function, habitats are major components of how we characterise and understand our landscapes. While no national habitat survey has been conducted to date, survey and mapping exercises are often undertaken by local authorities at the county, sub-county or local level to inform forward planning, local area plans etc. In order to standardise the methodologies being used, and to ensure comparability between surveys, the Heritage Council is in the process of publishing *Best Practice Guidance on Habitat Survey and Mapping in Ireland*.

As explained above, in order to produce a comprehensive character assessment, a suite of other studies can be carried out to provide a rounded and holistic view of landscape development and usage. In terms of characterisation, the challenge is one of capturing the complexity of the landscape at a variety of scales and ensuring that Landscape Characterisation Assessments evolve so that they can effectively inform decision-making. This will be particularly important as new concepts and strategies (such as Green Infrastructure) and pressures (such as climate change) evolve that influence our rationale, our priorities and our need for landscape management. This remains a key challenge for characterisation practice in Ireland to date, as well as the need for consistency and local involvement.

These approaches can be compatible and complementary. The use of such proactive, integrated, participatory and pre-emptive approaches in managing our landscapes should deliver real and lasting benefits to society. They should also reduce the level of conflict often associated with decisions regarding development that impact upon our landscapes.

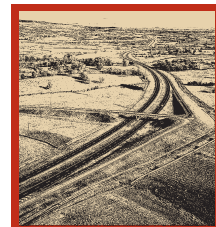


1.7 Summary

Our landscape is living, dynamic and ever-changing. However, it is also a finite resource used for our economic, social and environmental benefit. Landscape is also central to the achievement of sustainable development. The last 10-15 years have witnessed dramatic changes in the manner in which the Irish landscape is perceived and used. These changes are evident throughout our rural, urban and peri-urban environments. The speed and scale of the changes have stretched our legislative frameworks and structures to the limit. They have also heralded a new orthodoxy that championed an almost exclusively utilitarian perception of the landscape as a blank, a-historical canvas whose value could only be realised through 'development' (*i.e.* building). This approach has proven to be unsustainable.

Through the European Landscape Convention and in common with other European countries, Ireland is encouraged to adopt a more holistic and integrated approach to the management of the landscape, one that gives equal weighting to its economic, social and natural values and recognises the interplay and symbiosis of these agents.

Section 2 looks in more detail at the general and specific measures contained in the Convention and the steps taken in a number of countries to effect its implementation.



Section 1 Footnotes

- ¹ *Renewed Programme for Government*, 10th October 2009 available at http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2009/Renewed_Programme_for_Government_October_2009.pdf
- ² EPA 2008 *State of the Environment Report*, 14,
- ³ Lyon, G. 2010. *Working Document on the Future of CAP after 2013*. Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.
- ⁴ www.environ.ie
- ⁵ EPA 2008 *State of the Environment Report*, 16.
- ⁶ EEA Report, No. 10/2006, *Urban Sprawl in Europe – The Ignored Challenge*.
- ⁷ Fáilte Ireland Tourism Facts 2008
<http://www.failteireland.ie/Research---Statistics/Tourism-Facts/Tourism-Activities>
- ⁸ *Rural Ireland 2025: Foresight Perspectives*, NUI Maynooth, Teagasc and UCD, 2005; Engineers Ireland and the Irish Academy of Engineering, 2010. *Infrastructure for an island population of 8 million*. InterTrade Ireland, Newry, Northern Ireland; Fáilte Ireland and the Heritage Council, 2009. *Climate Change, Heritage and Tourism: Implications for Ireland's coast and Inland Waterways*, Kilkenny.
- ⁹ But see also Haase, T. 'Demography of rural decline and expansion' in McDonagh, J., Varley, T. and Shorthall, S. *A living countryside? The politics of sustainable development in rural Ireland* (2009 Ashgate), 237-254; 246-51.
- ¹⁰ *Infrastructure for an island population of 8 million*. InterTrade Ireland, Newry, Northern Ireland.
- ¹¹ Heritage Council and Fáilte Ireland, 2009. *Climate Change, Heritage and Tourism: Implications for Ireland's Coast and Inland Waterways*. Heritage Council, Kilkenny.
- ¹² See for instance Mullally, G. and Motherway, B. 'Governance for regional sustainable development: building capacity in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland' in McDonagh, J., Varley, T. and Shorthall, S. *A living countryside? The politics of sustainable development in rural Ireland* (2009 Ashgate), 69-84.
- ¹³ *The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland*. National Parks and Wildlife Service 2008.
- ¹⁴ *Policy Paper on Ireland's Landscape and the National Heritage*, The Heritage Council of Ireland Series (2002)
- ¹⁵ Bruntland Commission Report, 1987. *Our Common Future*. The World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford University Press.
- ¹⁶ Ott, K. (2003). "The Case for Strong Sustainability." In: Ott, K. & P. Thapa (eds.) (2003). *Greifswald's Environmental Ethics*. Greifswald: Steinbecker Verlag Ulrich Rose.
- ¹⁷ The full text of COP 5 Decision V/6 on the ecosystem approach can be found at <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=7148> (as of April 2010). Defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (2000), 'a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. It recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems'
- ¹⁸ Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 2002. *National Biodiversity Plan*. Government of Ireland.
- ¹⁹ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2003. Available at <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/> (as of April 2010).
- ²⁰ Selman, P. 2009. Planning for landscape multi-functionality. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, & Policy* 5(2):45-52. <http://ejournal.nbii.org/archives/vol5iss2/communityessay.pselman.html>.
- ²¹ L. Downey and G. Purvis 2005 Building a knowledge based multi-functional agriculture and rural environment, in R.C. Mollan (ed.) *Science in Ireland: Value for Society*, Royal Dublin Society, 121-139; C. Crowley, J. Walsh and D. Meredith 2008 *Irish Farming at the Millenium – A Census Atlas*, NIRSA Maynooth, 157-8; Feehan, J. and O'Connor, D. 'Agriculture and multi-functionality in Ireland' in McDonagh, J., Varley, T. and Shorthall, S. *A living countryside? The politics of sustainable development in rural Ireland* (2009 Ashgate), 123-138.
- ²² L. Guinan, pers. comm.
- ²³ G. Clabby *Green Infrastructure: Critical Infrastructure for a Smart Economy*, www.comharsdc.ie/_files/Commentary%2040%20Green%20infrastructure.pdf
- ²⁴ Landscape Institute. 2009. *Green Infrastructure: Connected and Multi-functional Landscapes*. Position Statement. London: Landscape Institute.
- ²⁵ Oxford Archaeology and G. Lambrick 2010 *Historic Landscape Characterisation: Policy and Best Practice Guidance*, report commissioned by the Heritage Council
www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Archaeology/Irish_HLC_Guidelines.pdf
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- ²⁸ L. Downey and G. Purvis 2005 Building a knowledge based multifunctional agriculture and rural environment, in R.C. Mollan (ed.) *Science in Ireland: Value for Society*, Royal Dublin Society, 121-139; C. Crowley, J. Walsh and D. Meredith 2008 *Irish Farming at the Millenium – A Census Atlas*, NIRSA Maynooth, 157-8; Feehan, J. and O'Connor, D. 'Agriculture and multifunctionality in Ireland' in McDonagh, J., Varley, T. and Shorthall, S.(eds) *A living countryside? The politics of sustainable development in rural Ireland* (2009 Ashgate), 123-138.



Background to the ELC and Examples of 'Good Practice' Case Studies

This section presents an overview of the provisions of the European Landscape Convention (ELC), and assesses its current status. It also examines eight cases studies of 'Good Practice' in landscape management by Member States at a Pan-European, and national/regional level, and assesses common principles, approaches and themes for the successful implementation of the ELC.

(Irish Case Studies are dealt with separately. See page 48.)

2.1 Overview of the European Landscape Convention (ELC)

The Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (the Florence Convention) was published in 2000 and came into force in Ireland on 1 March 2004).²⁹ The Convention's aim is to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues. Signatories to the Convention declare their interest in achieving sustainable development based on a harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and environmental conservation.³⁰

The ELC, while having regard for other international agreements and legal texts concerning, *inter alia*, the protection and management of natural and cultural heritage and regional and spatial planning, is the first international instrument to deal with the 'whole landscape' in an integrated manner.³¹ According to the Council of Europe Explanatory Report for the ELC:

'Landscape must become a mainstream political concern, since it plays an important role in the well-being of Europeans who are no longer prepared to tolerate the alteration of their surroundings by technical and economic developments in which they have had no say.'

As Ireland is a signatory to the ELC, it applies to Ireland's entire territory, including: *natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas, encompassing land, inland water and marine areas*. The Convention's purpose is to encourage the formulation and adoption of policies and measures at local, regional, national and international levels for protecting, managing and planning landscapes. This is intended to help maintain and improve landscape quality and to raise awareness about the value and importance of landscape among the public, professional institutions and local, regional and national authorities.

Critically, the ELC emphasises that landscape cannot be protected merely by drawing boundaries around what are considered 'outstanding' areas to the detriment of others. As such, the ELC recognises the importance of *all* landscapes, not just protected areas such as national parks or UNESCO World Heritage Sites. A central tenet of the Convention is the key role it assigns to how the public perceives and evaluates landscape. Awareness-raising is therefore critical in order to involve the public from the outset in decisions affecting the landscape and the environment in which they live. According to the Council of Europe:

'If people are given an active role in decision-making on landscape, they are more likely to identify with the areas and towns where they spend their working and leisure time. If they have more influence on their surroundings, they will be able to reinforce local and regional identity and distinctiveness and this will bring rewards in terms of individual, social and cultural fulfilment.'



Significantly, the ELC acknowledges the evolving character of the landscape, its dynamism both physically and in terms of perceptions, and value systems.

2.1.1 European Landscape Convention's Definitions

The ELC's definition of landscape stresses the role of personal and collective perceptions in seeing and defining landscape. Article 1A of the ELC provides this broad definition of 'landscape':

'Landscape' means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

The ELC defines the following terms:

- **Landscape policy** — *an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes.*
- **Landscape quality objective** — *for a specific landscape, the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings.*
- **Landscape protection** — *action to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by the landscape's heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or human activity.*
- **Landscape management** — *action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes, which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.*
- **Landscape planning** — *strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.*

2.1.2 The European Landscape Convention — The 'Nuts and Bolts'

The 'nuts and bolts' of the ELC are set out below.

Article 4 deals with the division of responsibilities, and states that:

'Each Party shall implement this Convention, in particular Articles 5 and 6, according to its own division of powers, in conformity with its constitutional principles and administrative arrangements, and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, taking into account the European Charter of Local Self-government. Without derogating from the provisions of this Convention, each Party shall harmonise the implementation of this Convention with its own policies.'

Articles 5 and 6 provide general and specific measures for signatories relating to legislation, policy development (including but not limited to planning), establishment of procedures for enhanced public participation, awareness raising, training and education, identification and assessment of landscapes, formulation of landscape objectives, and implementation of landscape policies and management instruments.



Articles 7-9 deal with European co-operation in terms of: international landscape policy and programme development; promotion of mutual assistance and exchange of information and experiences, skills and landscape specialists; and trans-frontier co-operation on landscape management matters.

Article 10 provides for the establishment of a *Committee of Experts* to be set up under Article 17 of the *Statute of the Council of Europe*, with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the ELC.

Article 11 establishes the *Landscape Award of the Council of Europe* — a distinction, which may be conferred on local and regional authorities, and their groupings that have instituted a policy or measure(s) to protect, manage and/or plan their landscape, and can serve as an example to other territorial authorities in Europe.³²

2.1.3 Implementation of the European Landscape Convention — 12 Requirements

According to a study undertaken in 2007 on behalf of the Scottish Executive by the International Centre for Protected Landscapes (ICPL), the European Landscape Convention is now in its '*implementation phase*':

'The implementation process begins with the Government providing the strong lead (through Articles 5A and 5D) and goes on to challenge local and regional authorities to confirm the quality standard or landscape vision to which they will aspire, after having first consulted with the public about this and having regard to the landscape features in the locality. The Convention also expects local authorities to have developed competencies in determining its landscape "quality objectives" and formulating a landscape vision. Competencies include identifying landscape types, analysing their characteristics, understanding the forces and pressures transforming them and assessing how the public and other interested parties "value" their landscapes.'

Figure 4 shows the sequence and relationship of the 12 requirements for implementing the ELC. These are also listed in Box 1



Figure 4: 12 requirements for implementing the ELC (After Michael Dower).

Box 1: Implementing the ELC – 12 Requirements (ICPL, 2007, 25)

1. *Recognise* landscapes in law (Article 5A).
2. *Integrate* landscape into all relevant policies (Article 5D).
3. *Identify landscapes* — describe their character and the key elements in that character (Article 6C).
4. *Assess landscapes* — analyse what contributes to and what detracts from their quality and distinctiveness (Article 6C).
5. *Define objectives* for landscape quality, after public consultation, thus providing the framework for the physical action that follows (Article 6D).
6. *Protect* what should be protected (Article 6E).
7. *Manage* what needs management in order to be sustained (Article 6E).
8. *Plan*, as stated in the Convention, to take strong, forward-looking action to enhance, restore and create landscapes (Article 6E).
9. *Monitor* what is happening to landscapes (Article 6C).
10. *Promote* education and training (Article 6B).
11. *Raise* public awareness and participation (Articles 5C and 6A).
12. *Co-operate* at a European level through exchange of experience, information and specialists (Articles 7 & 8).



2.2 Pan-European and National/Regional Case Studies

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) allows each signatory State to consider how best to respond to the range of general and specific measures recommended in the Convention. The following examples of 'good practice' case studies have taken place at European, national or regional levels. The case studies are listed in Table 2. A case study from one Member State (Sweden), which has not yet ratified the ELC but is currently in the process of designing a national landscape strategy to deliver the implementation of the ELC, is also discussed. Examining and analysing measures taken by other signatories — their successes and otherwise — can be greatly beneficial as we in Ireland determine our own way forward through the National Landscape Strategy and the implementation of the ELC.

<i>Pan-European</i>	<i>Date of Signing ELC</i>	<i>Date of Ratifying ELC</i>	<i>Date of Entry into Force</i>
1. European Landscape Character Assessment Initiative (ELCAI) (includes Ireland)	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. CivilScape	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Member State/ Country/Region</i>	<i>Date of Signing ELC</i>	<i>Date of Ratifying ELC</i>	
3. France	20/10.2000	17/3/2006	1/7/2006
4. Slovenia	7/3/2001	25/9/2003	1/3/2004
5. Spain – Catalonia Region	20/10/2000	26/11/2007	1/3/2008
6. UK – England and Scotland	21/2/2006	21/11/2006	1/3/2007
7. UK – Wales	21/2/2006	21/11/2006	1/3/2007
(Ireland)	(22/3/2002)	(22/3/2002)	(1/3/2004)
<i>Member State/Region</i>			
8. Sweden	22/2/2001	November 2010	Pending

Table 2: Pan-European and National/Regional Good Practice Case Studies and Dates of Signing/Ratifying the ELC



In considering these case studies, it is noteworthy that all of the EU Member States cited have already put relatively strong legislative frameworks and structures in place within which to situate the implementation of the ELC. Landscape planning, management and conservation, for example, have been undertaken within the framework of national and regional parks in Sweden for over 100 years.³³ The UK has had such legislation since 1949, and the French Regional Parks have been developing their role as models of sustainable development for over 40 years.³⁴

Each case study demonstrates that the relevant Member States have responded to the 'whole landscape approach' required by the ELC by introducing a mix of new legislation and structures, policy measures and new management programmes. They have also recognised the inherent weaknesses in their existing systems and have taken integrated steps, backed with new and/or realigned resources, to ensure that the ELC can be effectively implemented and monitored.

For its part, Ireland is starting with what is effectively a 'clean sheet' in relation to a 'whole landscape approach'. For example, national planning legislation is only now about to formally recognise 'landscapes' into law,³⁵ as required by the ELC (Article 5). Similarly, it is envisaged that proposed National Monuments legislation will make adequate provision for the management of historic landscapes throughout the State. Ireland is one of the few European countries with no specific legislation for its national parks, or enabling legislation for the active management and conservation of other protected landscapes.

To address some of these weaknesses, the following case studies illustrate a number of ways in which Ireland's government — at national, regional and local levels — might act to improve its existing legislative provisions and structural frameworks to implement and monitor the ELC effectively.

2.2.1 Pan-European Case Study — European Landscape Character Assessment Initiative (ELCAI)³⁶

Along with active participation (Article 5C), the importance of identifying landscapes, their characteristics, and the forces and pressures transforming them, as well as monitoring changes, is recognised as a fundamental part of the implementation of the ELC (Article 6C). To date, Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), which gathered momentum in Europe in the mid-1980s, is a key tool that assists in the implementation of this specific measure. The following European Landscape Character Assessment (ELCAI) case study is sourced from the *ICPL Report 2007*.

J.H.A. Meeus first developed a map of 30 landscapes on a European scale in the early 1990s. The purpose of that work was 'an attempt to generalise the characteristics of landscapes and to formulate a basic framework for assessing how natural and anthropogenic factors affect the development of the environment'.³⁷ In the last two decades, increasing demands for monitoring the efficacy of EU policy have spawned a plethora of methodologies to monitor and manage landscapes — landscape character maps have been important in that process.



The focus has been on two aspects of mapping. The first of these is the characterisation of landscapes to show how they differ across the wider European territory. This has involved the identification of key features and structures of different landscapes that contribute to their character. The second aspect involves the measurement and monitoring of landscape change over time. The ELCAI project looked at the approach of 17 countries and produced a cross-analysis of 55 maps comparing their typologies, indicators and policy roles, making it probably the most comprehensive review of LCA in Europe in recent years. The countries studied are listed in Table 3.

Country	Country
Austria	United Kingdom
Belgium	Hungary
Switzerland	Ireland
Czech Republic	Italy
Germany	The Netherlands
Denmark	Norway
Estonia	Portugal
Spain	Slovak Republic
France	

Table 3: ELCAI Countries Studied

The purpose of the ELCAI study was to try and provide a '*practical and agreed upon tool for the implementation of landscape related policies*'. Important future applications were seen to include environmental impact assessments, sustainability impact assessment, indicator-based monitoring, and reporting on landscape and agri-environmental assessments. The project involved:

- identifying existing data sets and methodologies
- establishing a typology of European landscapes
- developing a flexible methodology to help identify major landscape types
- creating a European landscape map on a scale of between 1:1 million to 1:5 million

Although Landscape Character Assessments had been developed since the 1930s, there was an explosion of interest in this work in the 1990s. The recent rebirth in interest reflects both an increasing need and opportunity to map changes in land cover and land use. Technological developments — especially Geographical Information Systems (GIS) — have helped in this. There has also been a growth in the range of character maps produced. Early maps are typically narrowly focused on mainly biological factors, whereas later ones also include cultural and aesthetic aspects. Latterly, several European countries (*e.g.* Czech Republic, England, Scotland and Wales) have promoted the opportunity to map and monitor landscapes with their regional and local authorities, offering them guidelines and support to engage in this work.

When it comes to choosing exemplar approaches to LCA mapping, the following points should be noted:



- Natural science, human use and human experience of the landscape are essential factors in the definition and mapping of Landscape Character Areas.
- When mapping both Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas, automated GIS-based techniques can provide vital assistance but should always be followed up by interactive, field-based, ground truth research.
- Landscape Character Areas cannot be identified through traditional natural science methodologies alone but must also draw on robust public participation from the outset.
- LCA now plays an important part in planning and land-use policy work — this is one of the sharpest differences between recent and earlier LCA work.

It should also be noted that some of the central tenets of LCA have been challenged recently by the Welsh LANDMAP national information system. The Welsh system describes different qualities or ‘aspects’ of landscape. LANDMAP is examined as a case study in Section 2.2.7.

2.2.2 CivilScape — Involving Civil Society in Landscapes³⁸

This case study has been sourced from the ICPL Report 2007. Article 5C of the European Landscape Convention requires each party *‘to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties’* in the establishment and implementation of landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning of their territories. The ELC has been described as *‘a people’s convention, a call to all citizens of Europe to co-own the landscape in which they live’*.³⁹

For this to happen, citizens will need to be supported and encouraged in this regard. Non-government organisations (NGOs) can help in this. CivilScape, launched on 23 February 2008 in Florence, is a network of NGOs committed to facilitating knowledge exchange within the framework of the ELC.

CivilScape seeks to enlist NGOs from across Europe willing to invest time and effort towards these ends. Actions undertaken during its critical infancy stage include:

- Develop a CivilScape website to identify with ease all the European NGOs active in the sphere of landscape, their activities and newsletters.
- Organise excursions to study examples of good landscape management practice.
- Exchange experience with public-private landscape initiatives.
- Issue regular CivilScape newsletters.
- Maintain contact with the European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention (RECEP ENELC⁴⁰) and UniScape (European Network of Universities for the implementation of the ELC⁴¹).
- Develop a handbook on landscape management.
- Organise a ‘Day of the Landscape’.
- Develop and define the scope for closer working relationships between urban and rural landscapes.



According to the *ICPL Report*, CivilScope offers great opportunities to support the ELC implementation process because it is recognised as an official network affiliated to the Council of Europe (CoE). It is an interesting case study as it seeks to facilitate the exchange of information and experience about good practice and while raising awareness of landscape issues at a pan-European level. Although this is in keeping with the key principles of the ELC, in reality it is both important and difficult to achieve.

2.2.3 France — French Regional Parks: Models of Sustainable Development⁴²

The legislative framework allowing the establishment of Regional Parks in France has been in existence since 1967. The first Regional Park was established in 1969, with the 46th being established in 2009. The French Regional Parks aim to reconcile development and protection, making their territories dynamic living areas that are forward looking, and above all, focusing on the part they can play in delivering on large world issues including, but not limited to, climate change. The approach therefore is '*Think global — Act local*'.

The unique aspect of the French approach is that, while the legislative framework is provided by the national government, the actual process requires full participation, consultation and initiation at regional and local levels. This is achieved by clear articulation of a three step process involving:

1. The Territory
2. The Project
3. The Contract/Charter

1. **The Territory** — Not all territories are eligible for consideration as Regional Parks. A feasibility study must first be undertaken to determine the justification for the park's establishment.
2. **The Project** — If the territory passes this first phase, all local partners prepare a project based on sustainable development, *i.e.* one that delivers economic, social and environmental benefits. This step requires extensive consultation and the meaningful participation of all elected members, NGOs, the services of the State, local businesses, landowners and residents. This project proposal is then validated by both national and regional governments.
3. **The Contract** — The contract between all partners is confirmed in *The Charter*. This is a significant document because it requires the co-ordination of all the policies of each signatory towards agreed objectives outlined in *The Charter*, including:
 - Being centres of innovation, integration and research
 - Placing the decision-making at local level within a system of governance adapted to local needs
 - Being time-limited — currently 12 years
 - Being renewed only if targets are met within the 12-year period



- Placing a focus on results

The success of the French experience can be measured by the fact that within the last three years, *i.e.* since 2007, the French government has realigned the legislation governing its national parks to reflect more closely the new paradigm applied to protected areas.⁴³ The parks are now viewed as being managed with and for people, as opposed to purely for nature conservation purposes. This reflects much more closely the objectives and philosophy underpinning the European Landscape Convention.

2.2.4 Slovenia — National Spatial Planning System⁴⁴

This case study is sourced from the *ICPL Report 2007*. Slovenia introduced landscape planning into legislation in 1984. After gaining independence in 1991, Slovenia redesigned its entire spatial planning system to provide a legal framework for balanced sustainable development of the whole of its territory. The process was influenced by many factors, notably a high degree of societal development and the associated system of values (possibly unique in Europe) developed by Slovenians. The new planning system has had to adapt to sharp cultural change resulting from the collapse of the former socialist regime, a new parliamentary democracy, market economy, establishment of local government, and recent membership of the EU.

The Slovenian approach has been informed by the *Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning* (CEMAT) guiding principles for sustainable development and the *EU Spatial Development Perspective*. The outcome of this process has been the passing of new *Spatial Planning Acts (2002 and 2007)*, which have seen the replacement of plans at national and local levels by spatial strategies and development concepts. The big difference is that the new approach is more strategic at the national level, dealing with planning as a 'process' and a 'flexible framework' for the formulation of development decisions. The new arrangements also incorporate a comprehensive system of measures seen to be crucial for the successful implementation of the spatial development strategies.

In 2006, the new arrangements had begun to reveal the urgent need for better integrated treatment of settlement, infrastructures and landscape, and emphasis has since been placed on the polycentric developments of cities and other settlements. It is worth noting how strongly 'landscape' considerations feature in the main objectives of the Slovenian Spatial Planning Policy.

- Enforce comparative advantage in the European integration process and protect national identity.
- Promote balanced development of all the regions (*i.e.* the whole territory).
- Define polycentric urban network development, enabling good transport links and access to information.
- Promote the modernisation of agriculture and the preservation of cultural landscape when restructuring rural areas.



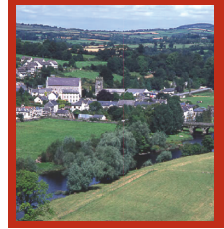
- Promote the economically viable use of space.
- Ensure the active conservation and management of the environment as well as natural and cultural values.
- Improve the institutional system of spatial management. This system is underpinned by:
 - Regulatory assessments of funding and other resource needs akin to procedures in the UK.
 - Development of professional skills and comprehensive information systems.
 - Public involvement throughout the planning process.
 - High-quality legislation and consistent enforcement.

Spatial planning is seen as a continuous process in Slovenia where there is a strong commitment to gathering comprehensive and contemporary information to guide spatial development. This is in sharp contrast to planning methods found elsewhere in Europe that are orientated towards pre-set solutions that prove themselves unable to manage the continually changing needs of society. The Slovenian emphasis is on flexibility of planning, with the principle that problems should be tackled where they exist, and as they arise, while still in pursuit of a long-term and shared vision, which provides a strategic framework for spatial development.

Slovenia's approach to implementing the ELC focuses on the following:

- Incorporation of the legislative bases for the implementation of landscape development and protection objectives into the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia.
- A comprehensive series of laws (Spatial Management Policy of Slovenia, Spatial Planning Act, Construction Act, Spatial Development Strategy and Spatial Order, Environment Protections Act, Nature Conservation Act, Cultural Heritage Protection Act) that cover different aspects of landscape (planning, biological and landscape diversity, and cultural heritage protection) in an integrated way.

Slovenia's new strategic spatial planning framework (introduced in 2007) provides a '*flexible framework*' more receptive to public needs and can be prepared for a single municipality or for several. Landscape development is specifically referenced in the Spatial Planning Strategy, and landscape protection is addressed in two different yet complementary ways – direct protection through designating reserves; and through Environmental Impact Assessments and spatial vulnerability analyses. Landscape management is underpinned by a comprehensive inventory and evaluation of '*visible morphological and symbolic qualities*'. Public awareness and engagement in landscapes are supported through education and training (public and professional). Financial support is available to help deliver landscape aspirations, especially the maintenance of cultural landscapes through agricultural activities, so that '*Slovenian landscapes become an important contributor to national and European identity*'.⁴⁵



2.2.5 Spain — Catalonia Region⁴⁶

On 8 June 2005, the Catalan parliament passed the *Landscape Act 8/2005*. This Act embodies in its entirety the philosophy contained in the ELC, as it applies to the protection, management and planning of all Catalonian landscapes, urban, peri-urban and rural. Its purpose is the recognition, management and planning of the landscape to preserve its heritage, social and economic values in a framework of sustainable development. It is now the primary legislation and reference upon which the landscape policies of the government of Catalonia are founded. The Act establishes that its provisions apply to all the territory of Catalonia: to the natural, rural, forest, urban, peri-urban and to singular landscapes such as everyday and degraded landscapes, whether inland or coastal.⁴⁷ The Act gives the government the means for legal recognition of the values of landscape and a mandate to promote actions for its conservation and improvement. These means are by way of *instruments* (which are descriptive in nature) and *directives* (which are regulatory in nature).

The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

The most imaginative aspect of the *Landscape Act 8/2005* is the provision to establish the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia (Observatori del Paisatge de Catalunya).⁴⁸ This is described by its director, Joan Nogué, as '*a sort of great umbrella under which anyone interested in landscape can take shelter*'.

The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia is an advisory body of the government of Catalonia, and Catalan society in general, in matters of landscape management. Its creation responds to the need to study the landscape, prepare proposals and sensitise Catalan society to the need for better protection, management and planning of the Catalan landscape within an overall framework of sustainable development.

The main purposes of the Landscape Observatory are to increase knowledge of Catalan landscapes among Catalan society and to support the application in Catalonia of the European Landscape Convention. In this regard, the Landscape Observatory is the meeting point for the government of Catalonia, local authorities, the universities, professional groups and Catalan society in general, in everything referring to the management and preservation of the landscape.

The Landscape Observatory, therefore, seeks to become a centre of excellence for the study and monitoring of the evolution of landscape in Catalonia and the factors conditioning change. It also aspires to become a point of reference for scientific and technical research in matters of landscape. The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, in short, is conceived as a think tank and centre for action in relation to landscape management.

The Landscape Observatory is organised as a consortium and is included in the Act for the protection, management and planning of the landscape in Catalonia.

The Observatory's main benefit is that it has particular responsibility for giving effect to the 2005 Act. Dedicated solely to undertaking this task, landscape management is no longer seen as a 'bolt on' extra to the role of individual departments or individual officials. The Observatory's key objectives are these:



- Increase the knowledge that society has of its landscapes.
- Collaborate with government in implementing landscape policies.
- Support application of the European Landscape Convention.

Since its establishment, the Landscape Observatory's achievements have been substantial. It completed a cataloguing programme in 2009 and has also engaged in the following activities:

- Designing landscape indicators
- Promoting and carrying out professional training and public awareness campaigns
- Creating a Landscape Observatory website available in four languages — www.catpaisatge.net
- Publishing a series of articles, books and documents on its activities and services
- Initiating a Catalonian historical landscape project to complement the new catalogues
- Establishing a documentation centre
- Collaborating on the Catalonian Landscape Museum

The Instruments

The production of landscape catalogues is a new instrument for the introduction of landscape targets and measures into town and country planning, as well as other sectoral policies such as agriculture and forestry. The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia produces landscape catalogues that:

- Describe and define the various types of landscape in Catalonia.
- Identify their values and current state.
- Propose the quality objectives which need to be met.

The *Landscape Act 8/2005* prescribes the minimum content for each of the catalogues. It took just under four years (2005-2009) for this cataloguing process to be formulated, agreed and published.

Landscape Directives

The Catalan Landscape Directives are based on the landscape catalogues. These set out precisely — and incorporate into regulations — the quality objectives to be incorporated into national and regional plans (the Irish equivalent of the County Development Plan) or other sectoral/strategic plans. Through articles in the 2005 Act, the Directives provide for the following measures:

- Harmonise strategies of authorities and agents by means of landscape strategies.
- Develop research, education and public awareness.
- Create a fund for the protection, management and planning of the landscape in accordance with the criteria established by the Act and implementation of its regulations.

2.2.6 UK — Developments in ELC implementation in England and Scotland⁴⁹

The need for national landscape strategies to be explored and developed has been identified and acted upon in England and Scotland. The case studies provided below have been prepared by the Heritage Council.

England

Natural England (NE) is the public body charged with protecting the natural heritage in England. As part of this role, it has been given responsibility by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to lead ELC implementation in England. The approach, undertaken in partnership with English Heritage, is to ensure that organisations involved with landscape embrace the language and intent of the ELC and that these elements are incorporated into their various strategies and policies.

In 2008, Natural England commissioned research on the implementation of the ELC in England. The report — entitled *Research to Support the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention in England, A study for Natural England* — concluded that specific guidelines are needed to help government departments, regional cross-sectoral organisations and sectors to identify how they can incorporate the content of the ELC measures and express the intent of the Convention clearly.⁵⁰ Natural England has taken up this challenge by developing National Guidance on the Implementation of the ELC in England. Its aim is to enable organisations to create ELC Action Plans in order to integrate landscape into their strategic policies and plans. The National Guidance is produced in three parts (see Table 4).

<i>ELC Guidance</i>	<i>Purpose of Guidance</i>
<i>ELC Guidance Part 1: ELC — What does it mean for your organisation?</i>	Part 1 focuses on what the ELC might mean for organisations spanning the social, economic and environmental sectors.
<i>ELC Guidance Part 2: Integrating the intent of the ELC into plans, policies and strategies</i>	Part 2 highlights the checklist and how the ELC can be integrated into policies, strategies, plans and programmes.
<i>ELC Guidance Part 3: Preparing an ELC Action Plan</i>	Part 3 presents guidance on how a specific ELC Action Plan might be developed.

(Source: Natural England, 2009)

Table 4: Natural England ELC Guidance

Natural England, English Heritage and the National Forest Company have all drafted *ELC Action Plans* in recent months. *Natural England's ELC Action Plan* charts progress to date and also sets targets. English Heritage has prepared a high-level Action Plan for 2008-2013 which will assist the implementation of the Convention. It seeks to co-ordinate their existing landscape work, plan for areas where more work is needed, and raise awareness of the ELC and its aims within English Heritage and the historic environment sector.



Scotland

In 2009, the Scottish Executive published research undertaken by the ICPL to identify 'good practice' from countries implementing the ELC. The overarching recommendation from the research was that the European Landscape Convention provides an unparalleled opportunity for planning, managing and protecting Scottish landscapes and for mainstreaming landscape considerations into public policy.⁵¹ The ICPL recommended that the Scottish government develop:

1. A national strategic framework for its landscape work (a landscape strategy)
2. A spatial vision for its landscapes
- 3 A strong landscape focus in public policies
4. Comprehensive programmes for landscape training and education⁵²

The ICPL report also recommended that the Scottish government prepare a Landscape Strategy to implement the ELC in Scotland, setting out the work to be done and confirming the contributions expected of others to plan, manage and protect landscapes in a way that is sustainable. In order to progress the findings of the report, the Scottish Executive established an *ELC Coordination Group* in early 2010. This is composed of representatives from various public sector interests and chaired by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Scottish public body charged with protection of the natural heritage including landscape.

In 2010, SNH plans to launch *Scotland's Landscape Charter*. Based on work undertaken by the Scottish Landscape Forum (set up in 2006 for 18 months), the Charter calls for determined action from all sectors of society to fulfil its vision and so ensure all landscapes are places they would be proud to pass on to future generations. All organisations and individuals with an interest in Scotland's landscapes are encouraged to sign up to this charter, thereby committing themselves to fulfilling the vision and undertaking the action relevant to themselves.⁵³

SNH is currently producing a national map of Scotland's landscapes that will identify the 70-80 landscape regions of Scotland. It is also developing a programme of awareness-raising events for the public called *Sharing Good Practice*. Expert practitioners will give presentations around the country on a wide variety of subjects, including landscape, with a forthcoming event called *Envisaging Places*, which seeks to explore the links between landscape and culture.

In relation to cultural landscapes, Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) collaborate in delivering Historic Land use Assessment (HLA). This is intended to enhance understanding of the historic dimension of landscape. HLA is a GIS-based mapping project that shows the historic origin of land-use patterns, describing them by period, form and function. It is compiled at a scale of 1:25000, and is based on the analysis of key data sources, such as early maps, aerial photography and survey results. HLA has been completed for around 65% of Scotland at present, and it is expected that full national coverage will be achieved by 2011-12.



2.2.7 UK — Wales⁵⁴

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is a body sponsored by the Welsh Assembly which champions the environment, landscapes and coastal waters of Wales as sources of natural and cultural riches, a foundation for economic and social activity, and as places for leisure and learning opportunities. It is estimated that direct and indirect engagement with the environment contributes £9 billion per annum to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Wales.⁵⁵

In 2009, the CCW commissioned research into the types and scale of future changes on Welsh landscapes. Previously, the main work of CCW was focused on developing its evidence base, resulting in the development of resources such as LANDMAP, National Landscape Character Map, and seascape assessment mapping. These landscape assessment tools are intended for integration into the public policy and planning process. LANDMAP consists of a series of five assessments:

1. *Geological Landscape*: the study of the geology, geomorphology and hydrology of the area.
2. *Landscape Habitats*: looks at the distribution of vegetation and habitats and the basis for landscape ecology.
3. *Visual & Sensory*: identifies those landscape qualities that are perceived through the senses. It deals with the individual physical attributes of landform and land cover, as well as their visual patterns of distribution and sensory characteristics, and the relationships between them in a particular area.
4. *Historic Landscape*: identifies those classes of historic land uses, patterns and features (e.g. field systems) that are structurally prominent and that contribute to the overall historic character of the present landscape.
5. *Cultural Landscape*: considers the relationship that exists between people and places; how people have given meaning to places; how the landscape has shaped their actions; and how their actions have shaped the landscape.

The resulting study, entitled *Forces for Change*,⁵⁶ is intended to establish a framework that will help identify those natural heritage elements important in providing valued ecosystem services, objectives that set out how landscapes should develop in the future in a way which benefits society, and indicators to monitor progress towards these objectives. Forces identified as key drivers for change include the development of a low carbon economy, energy security and supply, food security, globalisation, demographic change, climate change, and multi-tiered governance. These complex drivers indicate a need to consider a new approach to the planning and management of change — integrating environmental, economic and social well-being.



Multifunctional Landscapes

In its *Forces for Change* report, CCW states that:

'we need to recognise the multifunctional nature of our environment and the competing demands that are placed upon it. This requires an integrated approach to the management of environmental resources and integration with social and economic processes. This reflects the "ecosystem approach" recognising the range of ecosystem services underpinning human well-being and that any particular place undertakes a range of functions beneficial to well-being simultaneously. This requires the strategic planning and management of our "Green Infrastructure" alongside built or grey infrastructure, recognising that the management of our natural or Green Infrastructure is as important as developing our economic and social infrastructure'.⁵⁷

Finally, CCW is developing a *Green Infrastructure Plan*, which will be an agreed public vision of the landscapes of Wales.

Cadw (the Welsh Assembly government division charged with protecting built heritage), the CCW and its partners have for some time been working on several projects which are aimed at improving the understanding of the historic landscape of Wales, at both the national and local levels. In 1998 and 2001, as a first step towards raising the profile of historic landscapes in Wales, Cadw, CCW and ICOMOS (UK) (International Council on Monuments and Sites) published the two-volume *Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales*. This advisory, non-statutory document highlights what are considered to be the best examples of different types of historic landscape in Wales. However, the selection of areas for this Register does not reduce the importance of the rest of Wales' rich historic landscape.

Following on from this, the *Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales* has been broadened into another initiative, involving Cadw, CCW and the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts. The initiative has started by looking in more detail at the character of each of the 58 landscapes on the register. These detailed historic landscape characterisation studies are being undertaken by specialist staff in each of the four trusts. The results have greatly enhanced previous understanding of the historical development of these areas.⁵⁸

2.2.9 Sweden — Swedish National Heritage Board (2008): Proposals on implementation of ELC ⁵⁹

In 2006, the Swedish government commissioned the Swedish National Heritage Board to develop a proposal for the national implementation of the European Landscape Convention. In terms of landscape issues, the project brief included an overview of the division of responsibility between government agencies, as it was felt that the issue of division of responsibility was the key to overall implementation of the ELC. The opening paragraph sets out to explain succinctly that landscape is

'the entirety of our surroundings, where everything happens. It is the foundation of a good living space for man and of biodiversity, and it constitutes capital in business sector development and in local and regional development. The landscape is society's own shared resource and living archive. It is invaluable in helping us understand and explain our history'.



The report put forward three options:

1. Maintain the *status quo* by not ratifying the ELC.
2. A *de minimis* approach, whereby there would be 'little or no changes in legislation of praxis'.
3. Consistent implementation of the ELC, whereby the ELC is ratified and would become an issue of concern for several policy areas.

The Swedish National Heritage Board recommended the third option for the consistent implementation of the ELC. Moreover, it made further recommendations:

- Create a commission charged with formulating a national landscape policy. Its task should include developing a national landscape strategy with proposed measures to facilitate co-ordination of landscape-related work carried out by different government agencies and to monitor and evaluate landscape policy.
- Create an *Interdepartmental Working Group* to review how the intentions of the European Landscape Convention could be introduced and clarified in relevant legislation.
- Propose that all counties/regions develop, implement and monitor regional landscape strategies.
- Strengthen requirements for participation and use of local knowledge as part of the work to protect, manage and develop the landscape.
- Co-ordinate existing monitoring systems to ensure more comprehensive and appropriate monitoring, based on the need for a holistic perspective on landscape.
- More investment in applied research and education relating to landscape. The 'landscape perspective' should be integrated into all planning and environmental courses, both at upper secondary school level and at university level.

In November 2010, Sweden ratified the ELC. Accordingly, the Swedish National Heritage Board has been tasked with initiating the implementation of the ELC, in co-operation with other parties, focusing in particular on two key tasks: identifying crucial processes in the Swedish planning system where landscape should be applied according to the aspirations of the ELC; and suggesting a model for shared responsibility for the national implementation and monitoring of the European Landscape Convention.

2.2.10 Case Studies — Assessment of Common Principles, Approaches and Themes

The case studies discussed above indicate the wide-ranging efforts currently under way across Europe to meet the potential of the ELC. A number of common principles, approaches and themes emerge at both macro and micro levels.

Macro

- Efforts to implement the ELC are guided by the principles of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental (and more recently, aesthetic and cultural).



- The development of a collaborative and co-ordinated Strategic Vision or National Charter is the first step undertaken by several EU Member States to provide a foundation for the formulation and delivery of cross-sectoral *strategies* at national, regional and local levels.
- EU Member States also recognise that effective public participation and use of local knowledge must be designed/built in from the start of the visioning process, not merely as add-ons.
- Numerous EU Member States have focused on the need for the design and delivery of public awareness, research, and training and education programmes (at all levels) in relation to landscape management.
- A number of EU Member States have been proactive in integrating the strategic management of settlements, infrastructure and landscapes, and introducing new legislation where required.
- Member States recognise the need to establish innovative structures (including IT) for monitoring, documenting and accessing information on landscape change.

A shortcoming in the parameters of these case studies concerns the relevance of ELC to the strategic management of coastal zone areas and seascapes, although it must be recognised that the overall principles proposed are equally applicable for these areas. In addition, the Heritage Council's work on Climate Change Coasts and Inland Waterways has immediate application in these areas.

2.3 Summary

In looking at the specific and general measures contained in the European Landscape Convention, it is clear that, true to its non-prescriptive participative approach, the Convention has allowed those that have ratified it to mould it to their own needs. As an autonomous region of Spain, Catalonia has introduced a new and specific piece of legislation. France has seen modifications to its existing legislation allowing for more integrated sustainable development. The UK has also developed new strategies and policies. As such, it is apparent that the preparation of a national strategy is the key first step as a means to address the European Landscape Strategy.

Ireland, too, is in a position to develop its own unique approach. The commitment in the Programme for Government to develop the National Landscape Strategy is a major step in the right direction in terms of implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

Following the *Featured Irish Case Studies*, Section 3 looks at the specific areas in which Ireland might take action and make progress in terms of the European Landscape Convention.



Section 2 Footnotes

- ²⁹ Council of Europe Conventions operate through voluntary compliance and respect for the 'spirit' of the agreement.
- ³⁰ International Centre for Protected Landscapes, *Identifying Good Practice from Countries implementing the ELC, 2007, page 17*
- ³¹ Preamble, European Landscape Convention, Florence, 2000.
- ³² The *Landscape Award of the Council of Europe* can also be conferred on non-governmental organisations. The programmes and projects must be operating for at least three years to be eligible for the Award.
- ³³ Sweden has the oldest legislative framework for protected landscapes in Europe and celebrated 100 years of national parks in association with the EUROPARC Federation in 2009.
- ³⁴ Bernard Guiheneuf's Paper at the Heritage Council's Tullamore Conference, October 2009.
- ³⁵ See UK's *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*.
- ³⁶ Source: ICPL, *Identifying Good Practice from Countries Implementing the European Landscape Convention, 2007, page 78-80*.
- ³⁷ Source: J.H.A. Meeus (1995), *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Vol 31, Issues 1-3, cited in ICPL Report 2007.
- ³⁸ Case Study Source: ICPL, 2007, page 83.
- ³⁹ Michael Dower (2008), 7th Meeting of the Council of Europe Workshops for the Implementation of the ELC, Piestany, Slovakia, 2008 – Opening Keynote Address, cited in ICPL Report.
- ⁴⁰ RECEP_ENELC currently has 36 Members – see <http://www.recep-enelc.net/>.
- ⁴¹ UniScape - see <http://www.uniscape.eu/>
- ⁴² Case Study Source: The Heritage Council, 2010.
- ⁴³ Beresford and Philips, 2000
- ⁴⁴ Case Study Source: ICPL, *Identifying Good Practice from Countries Implementing the European Landscape Convention,, 2007, page 73*.
- ⁴⁵ Source: Bratina Jurkovic, N (2007) *Slovenia Experience on Landscape Issues in Kulturlandschaftserfassung und Landshaftpflege in Mitteleuropa* ed Mayer, Hans- Heinrich, cited in ICPL Report.
- ⁴⁶ Case Study Source: The Heritage Council and the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, 2010.
- ⁴⁷ Joan Nogue, Director. Paper to Landscape Conference Tullmore. The Observatory consists of a Governing Board, an Executive Committee and staff comprising a director, three full-time staff members, a part-time web-master and two administrators.
- ⁴⁸ Source: www.catpaisatge.net
- ⁴⁹ Case Study Source: Heritage Council, 2010.
- ⁵⁰ *Research to Support the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention in England, A study for Natural England, A Study for Natural England* by Maggie Roe, Carys Jones and Ian C. Mell March 2008 www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/elc/research
- ⁵¹ International Centre for Protected Landscapes, 2009. *Identifying Good Practice from Countries Implementing the European Landscape Convention, page 14*.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, Page 14
- ⁵³ The Scottish Landscape Forum was established in 2006 by Scottish Natural Heritage with support from Scottish Ministers. It brought together some of the key stakeholders with an influence upon or a stake in the state of the landscape. Its terms of reference included facilitating discussion, preparing advice and promoting action for the better care of Scotland's landscape. The Forum was specifically tasked to prepare advice and guidance relevant to landscape. Scottish Natural Heritage, 2010. *Scottish Landscape Charter, page 4*.
- ⁵⁴ Case Study Source: Heritage Council, 2010.
- ⁵⁵ <http://landmap.ccw.gov.uk/methodology/>
- ⁵⁶ insert AH
- ⁵⁷ Extracted from *Sustainable Landscapes or Sustainable Places*, by Keith Davies, Head of Environment Policy, CCW, date unknown.
- ⁵⁸ www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?id=108
- ⁵⁹ Source: www.raa.se/cms/en/cultural_heritage_586/landscapes/the_european_landscape_convention.html and Jerker Moström pers comm.

Featured Irish Case Studies

ELC Article 5A — Defining Architectural Setting or Curtilage

This Heritage Council study attempts to provide advice on the interpretation of case law in relation to this sometimes perplexing subject. Its aim is to present various principles that have been established in case law to the owners and occupiers of protected structures in a digestible format, helping to clarify for them the extent of the protection afforded to land and subsidiary structures.

The study highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the 'red line' approach to clarifying a statutory protection mechanism. In this approach, strong control is exerted over the area within the line, whereas none is given to that which lies outside. Similar problems exist with the use of buffer zones around World Heritage Sites and the use of zoning within protected areas. In its legal evolution, curtilage provides protection for the small area of land that is necessary for the functioning of the building, and thus often leads to the unexpected exclusion (and inclusion) of subsidiary structures, and conflict about conservation priorities.

Extensive gardens, parklands or designed landscapes cannot be protected by this mechanism, as it provides only a framework for the protection of living elements such as trees and plants — elements which may represent the principal value of a place. While the term 'attendant grounds' is used in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, to denote a larger sphere of influence around a protected structure, its invocation does not confer protection. *The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, which complement and support the Act, can be read as giving useful advice for the protection of the 'Setting' of protected structures. Nonetheless, the protection of a special place, which has a building as its focus, remains problematic.

In New South Wales, Australia, the legislative code refers to 'Heritage Curtilage', a term with a heritage-based statutory meaning. It may be useful to explore the possibilities whereby such a term could be defined in Irish legislation to serve heritage objectives. In Australian practice, the application of this term is simplified by a typology of four patterns of 'Heritage Curtilage':

- Where the Heritage Curtilage coincides with the legal boundaries of a property (the majority of cases)
- Where it is smaller than the legal parcel of land
- Where it is necessary to include land outside the legal parcel of land because of its contribution to the setting of the structure
- Where the Heritage Curtilage is a whole area (coinciding with a recognition of an area having character worth protecting with the Irish legal mechanism of the Architectural Conservation Area)

This typology, if given a new legal basis, could be most helpful for the heritage management of places in Ireland.

ELC Article 5C — National Village Design Programmes I and II

Small Irish towns and villages are central components of the history of this island. Over many years, they created a sense of regional — and sometimes a very local — character that is based on the natural, built and cultural heritage. Put simply, each Irish village is distinctive in its own way. The sense of place resulting from a village's unique cultural heritage links directly to a community's sense of identity, which can ultimately enhance people's overall sense of being and belonging and quality of life.

Village Design Statements (VDSs) were introduced into Ireland in 2000 by the Heritage Council through the *National Village Design Programme I*, with a particular emphasis placed on 'local heritage'. Over the past 10 years, approximately 40 VDSs have been produced, many as a result of the efforts of local authority Heritage Officers, with most supported by part or full-time funding from the Heritage Council.

A Village Design Statement is a way of enhancing, celebrating and managing the local character and distinctiveness of a village. A VDS is an expression and description of what a local community believes to be the key factors and local features that make their particular village or town unique. VDSs use this cultural base/asset to outline a series of planning and design guidelines, which can be used in early discussions with local authority planners, developers and designers, helping them plan and design in ways that respond to and enhance valued features.

The Heritage Council commissioned an external evaluation of the National Village Design Programme I in 2008. The All-Island Steering Group that guided the national evaluation included representatives from the Heritage Council (staff and Board), DoEHLG (Spatial Planning Unit), Meath County Council, the GAA, and academics with expertise in village planning and design and community development. The post-evaluation programme — entitled *National Village Design Programme II* — has been revised substantially to embrace a 'bottom-up' approach; a 'pilot' VDS is currently being finalised in Julianstown, Co. Meath. The Heritage Council is working on the 'pilot' in partnership with the local community (Julianstown and District Community Association) and Meath County Council to formulate and deliver the 'pilot' VDS. The 'pilot' VDS in Julianstown follows on from the Village Design Statement for Lucan (*Leamhcáin*, 2007), which introduced a more collaborative approach designed by the Heritage Council.⁶⁰ The process adopted for the 'pilot' in Julianstown is being evaluated by Tipperary Institute. In addition, a summative/output evaluation of the 'pilot' project will be under way in 2013.

It is intended that a draft *National Village Design Toolkit* will be prepared by the Heritage Council in late 2010/early 2011. This draft toolkit will be tested in villages/communities in East Cork and the Border Area before being finalised for publication and launch. The publication of the toolkit will be accompanied by multi-sectoral training by the Heritage Council and its partners for community groups, planners, landscape and built architects, and local councillors.

ELC Article 5C — Bere Island Conservation Programme

This project emerged from a Conservation Plan that was initiated by the Bere Island community because of its concern for its long-term survival. By focusing on and gaining a better understanding of their heritage, the community hoped to find ways to maintain its population and livelihoods. As a result, a work programme focused on heritage and related matters, including agriculture, aquaculture, waste management and youth activities. It has been running for eight years. More importantly, an Island Council was set up and has been operating for approximately four years. Cork County Council were the other partner in the Conservation Plan and have integrated all the policies from the plan into the Local Area Plan for Bantry Bay.

The plan has been used as a model for other projects on islands around Ireland and elsewhere in Europe. It has enabled the community to access funding and project support at EU level.

Like the Water Corridor Studies, the Conservation Plan process had its flaws — it was not possible to pull in all the necessary State agencies and departments to take an active role in the island's development. While generally supportive, they see the initiative as being 'the Heritage Council's, Cork County Council's or the islanders'.

However, the Conservation Plan was an attempt to remedy the lack of joined-up thinking that made life hard for the islanders. It is an initiative that could greatly benefit from the ELC landscape approach if sufficient scope were included for similar projects in any emerging National Landscape Strategy.

ELC Article 6A — Heritage in Schools Programme

As the future custodians of our landscape, children depend on a connection to and knowledge of 'place' if they are to become its caretakers. Recent studies in Britain show that 38% of children spend less than one hour a day outdoors and have an alarming lack of even the most basic awareness of nature. There is growing scientific evidence that there are emotional and mental health benefits for children who have greater access to and experience of nature.

The Heritage in Schools Scheme was set up in 1999 with the aim of getting children outdoors to experience their heritage in a hands-on way. It started off with 15 specialists supporting the primary school curriculum in counties Galway, Clare, Dublin and Wicklow.

Today, the scheme is available nationwide and has over 150 specialists with an extraordinary diversity of expertise who are willing to travel and visit primary schools, encouraging and supporting teachers and pupils interested in engaging with their heritage, set as it is within their local landscape.

The immense success of the scheme is largely due to its effectiveness in supporting teachers in the delivery of the curriculum and the active engagement of children. Through promotion in education publications and by word of mouth, the scheme has grown steadily since its inception, with schools in every county now participating in the scheme. The number of visits nationwide has grown from 187 (2000) to over 1,100 (2009), reaching over 100,000 children during its short life.

The value of the Heritage in Schools scheme is in the richness and depth of knowledge it makes available to children. Gabriella Cundari, President of RECP-ENELC, recognises this in her Foreword to the document 'We Are the Landscape'. In this, she states:

'The aware citizen is conscious of forming an integrated part of the landscape and protects the landscape and oneself to provide the best development possible.... This ethic is best achieved from the early age.'

The expansion of the scheme effectively concurred with the phased introduction of the new Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) curriculum. The scheme strongly supports not only the stated aims and objectives of the SESE curriculum but also all curricular areas. The overlap of subject areas and skill sets is especially suited to objectives of the science and geography aspects of the SESE, where questioning, observing, predicting, investigating, measuring, analysing and recording require a 'hands-on' approach to learning that are the key objectives of this education scheme.

Further Information

<http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/education/heritage-council-initiatives/heritage-in-schools-scheme/>

Countryside Recreation Network: Young People and the Outdoors Vol. 17 No. 2

ELC Article 6B — Introduction to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The award-winning *Introduction to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA): All-island, Multidisciplinary Continuous Professional Development Training Programme* was developed and delivered by the Heritage Council in partnership with Clare County Council, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia and nine professional institutes (north and south). These included: Engineers Ireland (EI), Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI), Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM), Irish Institute of Horticulturists, the Irish Landscape Institute (ILI), Irish Planning Institute (IPI), Northern Ireland Landscape Institute (NILI), Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI), Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). The course has been developed in accordance with Article 6B of the European Landscape Convention.

As noted in the main report, the Heritage Council of Ireland identified an overwhelming need for multidisciplinary LCA CPD training, as a result of the findings of its *National Evaluation of Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) in Ireland* (September 2006). For example, the 2006 LCA Evaluation Report found that '68% of Heritage Officers, Planners and Consultants in Ireland had no formal training in Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)'.⁶¹ It should be noted that the Heritage Council estimates that the LCA studies that have been prepared in Ireland (up to 2006) have cost around €1,000,000 in total to produce (implementation costs have not been estimated).

Following the delivery and evaluation of the 'dummy run' LCA CPD course in December 2008 (one day), the multidisciplinary course was revised in line with the recommendations from the external evaluator. A full 'pilot' course (two days) was then delivered in May 2009. The 'pilot' LCA CPD course was evaluated by Professor Carys Swanwick and George Lambrick

from the UK. The recommendations from the evaluation of the 'pilot' were then fed into an approved two-day LCA CPD course (*i.e.* approved by both the external evaluators and all project partners), which was delivered for the first time in Ireland on 15 and 16 September 2009 (30 fee-paying attendees).

The LCA CPD training course programme comprises presentations (by relevant experts in their field), group discussions, two case studies (Spanish Point and Tulla), field visits, group work (indoors and outdoors) and workshops with local community groups. The Multidisciplinary LCA CPD Training Course was conferred with the Irish Landscape Institute's President's Award in November 2009.

Details of the LCA CPD training programme are available to download from the Planning webpage of the Heritage Council's website: <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/events/>.

The training course was delivered for the second time in May 2010 (32 attendees) and focused on the following elements:

- 'Need' for multidisciplinary training course and endorsement of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) approach in Ireland.
- Introduction to the concept of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), underlying principles, uses of LCA.
- Introduction to Irish Habitat Types and Mapping.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) — Introduction to the philosophy and rationale underpinning HLC, how HLC contrasts/complements LCA, evolution of HLC in Ireland.
- Landscape Perception.
- Geology, IT and Landscape — GIS in LCA/HLC/Habitat Mapping.
- The Theory of Public Participation, and Public Participation as part of the LCA process in Ireland and Spain (Catalonia).
- Using LCA in forward planning and development management.
- Townscape Appraisal.

The Heritage Council and its partners will deliver the multidisciplinary LCA CPD training course in September 2010, May 2011 and September 2011.

ELC Measure 6C — Review and Guidance on Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is concerned with identifying the contribution of the past to the landscape as it exists in the present. All areas have some element of historic character, which contributes to their distinctiveness and people's sense of place. HLC is not particularly concerned with sites or monuments, although these can make an important contribution to character, just as their landscape setting is an important aspect of their historic interest. HLC creates a seamless mosaic of historic character of the present-day

landscape. It begins with identification and description of character, followed by assessments of value, sensitivity, significance and pressures. This is now seen as an established practice in England, Wales and Scotland, with HLC recently adopted by the UK Highways Agency as a key element of road planning.

The first stage usually involves identification of generic types of landscape which recur in different areas. These may combine to create character areas that are specific to the study area.

A further stage of characterisation will often involve making recommendations about how respect for the historic character of places can be built into strategies and decisions about future development or land use. The use of Historic Landscape Characterisation in Ireland is very recent and can be seen to have mainly emerged in two contexts: in combination with Landscape Character Assessment; and as a complement to the consideration of defining specific, special historic/archaeological landscapes.

To date, HLC has been undertaken in Ireland on a limited basis in counties Offaly, Westmeath and Laois as part of an EU-funded programme, and more recently in counties Limerick, Donegal, Roscommon, Louth, Kerry and Fingal. It is expected that policy guidance resulting from the Heritage Council review project will inform practice from 2010 onwards and will assist in the following areas:

- Implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local, regional and national levels as a key plank of general Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) at regional, county or local levels.
- HLC can form a robust basis for covering heritage issues in drafting Regional, County and Local Development Plans and guidance and their associated Strategic Environmental Assessments.
- Consideration of suitable locations for large-scale infrastructure projects including roads, bridges and wind farms etc.
- Providing a robust basis for assessing interactions of heritage, wildlife and landscape factors in EIAs of major developments or land-use improvement.
- Targeting landscape management initiatives, REPS agri-environment schemes, rural regeneration, farm diversification and woodland expansion.
- Improving public awareness, appreciation and understanding of historic landscape as a key part of people's sense of place and identity.

ELC Measure 6C — Habitat Mapping

Our natural and semi-natural habitats are critical foundation stones of the landscape around us. It is crucial that they are managed and protected so that they will continue to provide us with clean water, clean air and food. In managing our broader landscape, we need to take particular steps to ensure that the natural landscape continues to perform its vital services for people. The first step in doing this is to identify what habitats surround us — only then can we analyse what services it performs, what we may need to protect, and what we may need to manage.

The Heritage Council's first stage in this work was the publication of the first standard guide to the description of Irish habitats (*A Guide to Habitats*, Fossitt, 2000). This has been followed by the preparation of *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Mapping and Survey* (Smith *et al.*, in press) to improve the quality of habitat survey and mapping exercises. Numerous habitat mapping exercises have been undertaken at the local authority level and are regularly used to inform forward planning, such as County Development Plans. They can provide vital tools in directing where development *should* go, and not just where it *shouldn't*, particularly when used in conjunction with Historic Landscape Characterisation and Landscape Character Assessment.

ELC Measure 6C — Work on Designed Landscapes

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is completing an inventory of 'Designed Landscapes' (demesnes, parks, gardens), which are such a feature of the Irish countryside. The information gathered has been made public through a website (www.buildingsofireland.ie) run by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. For the moment, however, there is no positive State initiative to provide for their management or protection. This aspect of the NIAH's work has attracted much international attention and is becoming a form of archive for recollections and associations of Ireland by many emigrants. As such, it is a testament to the enduring presence of landscapes as cultural reference points.

Demesnes have often been portrayed as landscapes of privilege and exclusion. However, they offer models for a deep and committed inhabitation of the land, resulting in increased productivity, making efforts in the present to enhance the future (as John Ruskin put it: '*...of planting forests that our descendants may live under their shade...*') and aesthetic beauty. The demesne is a largely redundant social construct, as the economy of the 'Big House' has disintegrated. They have been replaced by the golf course, as the large-scale pleasure ground in the modern world. In the first place, it will be necessary to establish an agreed value for this form of heritage asset, as the values associated with their history and ownership are re-negotiated in changing economic circumstances.

The protection of the combined works of man and nature presents special conservation problems in dealing with a form of heritage that is not fixed but is living, grows and dies. Land form does not change effectively in the time frames that heritage management seeks to address.

The Great Gardens of Ireland grant scheme run by Fáilte Ireland set out to provide assistance for this form of heritage and sought to grapple with the issues of a truly living heritage. Clearly there is a growing need for a continuing management policy relating to this important element of our landscape.

ELC Measure 6C — Coastal and River Audits

This year, five local authorities intend carrying out coastal audits of heritage, and two are planning to continue river audits. The motivations vary from area to area — pressures for tourism development, from ill-planned building development, the need for coastal policies, how to deal with projected sea level rise.

However, a co-ordinated approach is being adapted by the Heritage Council this year, with a single central project being developed between the local authority Heritage Officers. The intention is to provide a high-quality, coherent package on heritage in the coastal (land and sea) area of these counties. Some field work is involved but it will build on existing data, including Landscape Character Assessments, Historic Landscape Characterisation studies, the archaeological Record of Monuments and Places, Natura 2000 and other non heritage data. This approach could provide an example of what can be achieved through greater co-ordination.

ELC Measure 6C — High Nature Value Farming: From the Burren to North Connemara, the Aran Islands and Beyond?⁶²

The Burren is one of Ireland's most outstanding landscapes, and its value has been recognised in many ways and in many contexts. For its natural heritage value, much of it is designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. Many of its archaeological sites and monuments are protected under national laws, and it is being considered for GeoPark and World Heritage Site status. Farming has shaped the Burren for almost 6,000 years. Farming traditions, such as low-input grazing, maintain the flower-rich grasslands for which the Burren is revered. Without farming, the character of the Burren will change — and it is this character which is so highly prized by those who live and visit there. This type of farming — one that influences, supports and maintains the nature value of the land — is called High Nature Value Farming.

Changing farming practices, often unanticipated and in response to European and national level policies and socio-economic factors, were facilitating the spread of hazel scrub across the Burren landscape and threatening the features that made it so special. It has become clear in recent years that, in order to manage this landscape and its special values, and to support the role of the farmer and farming in its creation, a blueprint for farming in the Burren needed to be developed.

In order to arrest these changes and to support the continuation of farming in the Burren in a clever and innovative way, the BurrenLIFE programme was established by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc and the Burren IFA, with funding from the European Commission's LIFE funding programme. The BurrenLIFE-Farming for Conservation approach is based on a number of central principles, which could be considered a new approach to managing our countryside:

- Recognise and support the central role of the farmer in planning, delivering, monitoring and promoting farming for conservation.
- Bring together multiple partners, agencies and disciplines to deliver the programme (ecologists, agronomists, economists and farmers).
- Implement effective farm planning that builds on a sound understanding of how the farm works, combining an advisor's expertise with that of the farmer.
- Employ a practical approach that seeks to incorporate and merge sound aspects of existing farming systems with new innovations and technologies, to deliver the programme objectives.

- Engage in flexible management to deal with unforeseen events, and to enable farmers to meet their farming-for-conservation goals.
- Be results-oriented, with an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.
- Create real benefits for the farmers, the broader community, the taxpayer, and society at large.
- Use a monitoring programme to prove that the programme delivers its objectives and provides value for money.

The Heritage Council is also making efforts to drive further initiatives on High Nature Value Farming in the Aran Islands, north Connemara and the Iveragh Peninsula. This builds on the success of the model employed by the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme. This is being undertaken with numerous local partners, academic institutions and, of course, most importantly, the farmers themselves. It is intended to develop a national framework that could be applied on a broader level, and that could deliver objectives of the National Landscape Strategy and contribute to a future Rural Development Programme.

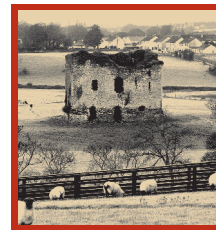
Footnotes

⁶⁰ The Lucan VDS was awarded the Certificate of Merit for Participatory Planning in 2008 from the Irish Planning Institute – see <http://www.sdublincoco.ie/sdcc/departments/planning/publications/pdf/LucanVDS11090711092007.pdf>

⁶¹ *Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) in Ireland: National Baseline Audit and Evaluation*, Heritage Council, September 2006, http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications/LCA_2006/index.html.

⁶² Source: BurrenLIFE, 2009. *A Guide to Farming for Conservation in the Burren. BurrenLIFE Best Practice Guide No. 1*. BurrenLIFE, Carron, Clare.

Reaping the Rewards



3

3.1 Introduction

This section examines six themes through which, it is argued, significant progress and collaborative action needs to be taken if Ireland is to realise the potential for the European Landscape Convention to bring real social, economic and environmental benefits. These themes are:

- Integrated Landscape Policy
- Public Participation
- Landscape Literacy: education, training and awareness
- Planning for Landscape
- Accessibility (Physical and Intellectual)
- Landscape Management and Conservation

Discussion of these themes is intended to add further detail to issues identified earlier in this document and ultimately to frame the proposals outlined in Section 4. The Heritage Council contends that the six themes identified, and the recommendations set out in Section 4, are collectively designed to assist in the achievement of sustainable development.

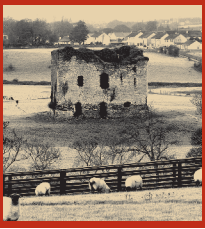
3.2 Integrated Landscape Policy

As is the case with many modern policy issues, landscape policies present a complex series of factors that cannot be adequately addressed unilaterally by any one department or agency. A subject such as landscape extends across traditional individual organisational responsibilities, similar to other key policy areas such as sustainable development, lifelong learning, health and well-being, social inclusion and so on. It requires a multi-agency/multi-departmental approach.

The European Landscape Convention brings a clear requirement for an integrated approach to landscape planning and management across all areas of government policy formulation and implementation, *i.e.* across sectors such as spatial planning, cultural, environmental, agriculture, social and economic policies. A cursory review of the prevailing situation in Ireland suggests that there is a plethora of State bodies operating at various levels, all influencing and impacting upon landscape, and leading to an existing fragmented style of governance in relation to landscape management, planning and conservation.

As demonstrated by issues such as the over-supply of housing, excessive zoning and the state of our environment, the current framework is not effective in managing the increased demands placed upon the Irish landscape. A key need is for arrangements to integrate and better co-ordinate the activities of existing structures in delivering public policy measures. The multifunctional perspective on landscape demonstrates the range of benefits that integrated management can provide, yet it is clear from previous sections that attaining this requires greater multi-agency co-operation.

From examination of a diverse selection of recent government strategy reports and programmes which involve varying degrees of cross-departmental interaction, it can be seen that a number of implementation and monitoring responses are possible. For example,



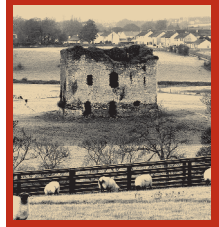
a Cabinet committee was assembled to oversee the National Development Plan 2007-13, the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI), the Social Inclusion Strategy, and the Smart Economy Framework. The more traditional route, however, appears to be the Inter-Departmental Committee, many of which report directly to Cabinet.

Given the complexity of the administrative and operational framework that operates/exists in relation to a proposed National Landscape Strategy, it is argued that a high-level inter-departmental implementation group that reports to the Minister and that oversees the realisation of the agreed NLS is required.



Figure 5: Government departments with a particular role in the Irish landscape, with the agencies/bodies under their aegis shown in brackets

Box 2 highlights the particular values and functions that can be attached to the peri-urban landscape in particular. A glance at these shows that they touch on health, energy, transport, travel, nature, culture and education, giving an indication of the likely competing sectoral demands. An integrated policy approach requiring such interests to focus on the peri-urban landscape would serve both the landscape and its people well and would ultimately benefit from the work of a high-level inter-departmental group.



- A 'bridge to the country': The Green Infrastructure connecting rural to urban areas.
- A 'gateway to the town': Features that make a powerful impression of the region.
- A 'health centre': The health benefits of outdoor recreation.
- A 'classroom': Hands-on learning such as farm-education centres.
- A 'recycling centre': Landscaped quarries and land-fills.
- A 'power plant': To expand, harness and use renewable energies.
- A 'productive landscape': Agriculture and forestry.
- A 'place to live sustainably': Scope for compact, energy-efficient settlements close to work and leisure.
- An 'engine for regeneration': Increasing the value of often run-down landscapes.
- A 'nature reserve': existing ecological assets and scope for creating new ones.
- A 'heritage resource': Hosting rich and diverse archaeological and historical legacies.
- A 'locational function': Occupying a position with potential to reduce travel, reduce food miles, and increase social inclusion.

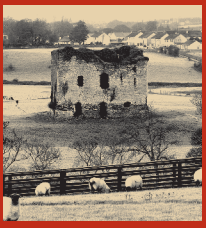
Box 2: The multifunctional perspective on landscape (in this case the peri-urban landscape) demonstrates the range of benefits that integrated management can provide. Yet it is clear that attaining these requires a greater multi-agency approach⁶³

3.3 Public Participation

Effective and meaningful public participation is at the very core of the European Landscape Convention. The Convention aims to involve the public from the outset in landscape policy formulation/definition and implementation for *all* landscapes, including natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas, encompassing land, inland water and marine areas.

Recent archaeological survey work in the Beara Peninsula of Co. Cork has concluded that the uplands in this area constitute a considerable social and economic resource. However, it is one that needs increased local partnership between farming and forestry interests, as well as heritage groups, to ensure the continued preservation of a rich archaeological landscape.⁶⁴ The ongoing involvement of landowners, farmers and residents (of all ages) in a range of initiatives — the Wicklow Uplands Council, the Tara-Skryne Landscape Conservation Area (LCA) Project, several initiatives in the Burren, as well as the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) — highlights the need and indeed the case for increased participative structures and mechanisms in landscape protection, planning and management.

What is equally apparent is the need for a multi-agency approach from the State in assisting such local communities, *i.e.* collaboration between wildlife, archaeological and architectural heritage, the farming community and relevant State bodies. It is noteworthy in this regard that the emerging National Monuments Bill, which will include provisions for the protection of historic landscapes, specifically includes the production of management plans in partnership with the local community. Moreover, the proposed LCA for the Tara-Skryne area of Co. Meath has also been undertaken with substantial local involvement and input from the outset. The collaborative processes emerging provide useful models for other forms of designation, such as the proposed increase of UNESCO World Heritage



Sites in Ireland, as indicated by the publication of a new Tentative List in 2010. Clearly the success of such designations will rest upon the degree of, and capacity for, local buy-in, involvement and the articulation of a benefit for local communities.

In the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, one of the five current Strategic Objectives of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO is cited as the enhancement of *communities* in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (Section 26) and that partners in the protection and conservation of World Heritage especially include *local communities*, governmental, non-governmental and private organisations and owners who have an interest and involvement in the conservation and management of a World Heritage property (Section 40).⁶⁵

Recent work undertaken in north Connemara and the Aran Islands on behalf of the Heritage Council on High Nature Value Farming, as well as the Farming for Conservation Programme in the Burren, has illustrated that the success of nature conservation policies would be greatly improved by greater understanding of these policies by the key implementing stakeholders — the farmers.⁶⁶ The work focused on the challenges faced by farmers in maintaining farming practices that in turn support the very nature value of these areas, and agri-environment and rural development issues. The primary recommendation forthcoming from the report relates to the need to foster better relationships between State bodies and local farmers, with a greater participatory role for farmers in defining policy, management measures and practices.

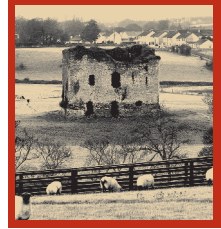
To ensure that landscape-related agri-environment and rural development policies achieve their goals, we need to start approaching them in a different manner, ensuring that stakeholders understand and are committed to the conservation objectives and their management measures, and are committed to working together to achieve their objectives. Most importantly, there is a need to ensure they are adequately supported by the various State agencies.

Data from the Central Statistics Office indicates that, in 2007, the number of farm holdings over one hectare was 128,200. This had dropped from a historic high of 419,500 farms of one acre or more in 1855, which indicates a considerable degree of social and economic change in the Irish landscape.⁶⁷ Equally noteworthy is the fact that of 141,500 farms surveyed in 2000, only 17% were larger than 50 hectares.⁶⁸ This points to the fact that the pattern of landownership in Ireland, even by 2007, is one of small private farms. Given the number of landholders, it highlights that efforts to manage our landscape at a large scale will be resource-intensive, due to the need to build in community participation and consensus building. The value of this approach should not, however, be underestimated.

3.4 Landscape Literacy: education, training and awareness

While a variety of initiatives targeted at different ages and sectors ought to take place in terms of landscape education and awareness, the ultimate goal must be to increase overall understanding of the significant contribution a quality landscape can make to our daily lives and to our health.

Significantly, a recent survey conducted on behalf of the Heritage Council found that awareness levels of biodiversity have not improved since 2007.⁶⁹ However, among those



who were aware of biodiversity loss, there was greater appreciation of the economic value of biodiversity. The importance of maintaining a healthy environment, as well as the rationale, objectives and benefits to be derived for nature conservation or cultural purposes, would not appear to be effectively communicated to, nor understood by, the public at large.

3.4.1 University perspectives

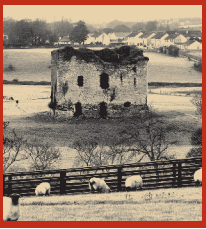
Article 6, sub-Section B of the ELC underlines the requirement for training and education aimed at specialists and decision-makers as well as the general public, through schools, university courses and in-service training. What it envisages is a combination of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), as well as, *ab initio*, general and specialised education in schools and in third-level institutions, respectively. The goal is to achieve increased landscape literacy among the general public and practitioners alike, and to arrive at a situation where accredited specialists, qualified in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, occupy a central position in participative decision-making processes.

The approach to landscape envisaged in the ELC is informed by a humanist philosophy that champions the importance of the connection between people and place, as well as the contribution of the aesthetics of landscape — urban, rural, industrial, recreational and so on — to the quality of life generally. Analysis and exploration of these aspects of landscape have preoccupied generations of scholars, writers and creative artists; this is reflected in teaching and training throughout the third-level sector in Ireland. In recent years, a strongly theoretical dimension has emerged among social sciences researchers across the globe, producing a considerable volume of literature and establishing a key platform for cross- and inter-disciplinarity in the context of research and teaching. Landscape analysis demands synthesis of a broad palette of evidence that is simultaneously diachronic and synchronic, historical and contemporary, empirical and artistic. This degree of multidisciplinary presents a considerable challenge to educators at all levels.

Whereas a host of undergraduate modules and courses pertaining to select aspects of the landscape are offered at Irish third-level institutions, no denominated undergraduate degrees in landscape studies are offered. This situation is largely replicated at postgraduate level, where both discipline-specific and cross-discipline denominated taught Masters programmes are available. The following is a selection of Masters degrees currently on offer: MA in Environment, Society and Development; MA in Landscape Archaeology; MA in Landscape Architecture; MA in Urban Design; MA in Cities: Art, Architecture and Aspiration; MA in Cultural Policy and Arts Management; MA in Regional and Urban Planning, Society and Space; MA in Planning and Sustainable Development.

Programmes such as these pertain to the study of place(s) as a relational nexus of people and nature, and therefore address key aspects of the landscape paradigm. Most of them attempt to combine humanist and scientific perspectives. The majority are located within the social sciences which are, in fact, well placed to mediate between the semiotic and ecological junctures of landscape. The literary arts, on the other hand, underwrite the philosophical principles behind the concept of landscape and place and speak to the cultural nuances surrounding the attachment of identity to place.

It is more difficult to gauge the extent of fully inter-disciplinary landscape research at



PhD level. The structured PhD programmes currently being rolled out in the university sector would appear to offer an exceptional opportunity to develop cross-disciplinarity. The programmes available at present, however, tend to draw their taught modules from within the parameters of faculties or colleges, thus impeding the development of cross-disciplinarity. Notwithstanding the pedagogical challenge of multidisciplinary training, the prospect of its contribution to society is genuinely exciting and ought to be a strategic target for the Irish university sector. The range of courses currently on offer indicates the high level of expertise already available in the sector and its potential to deliver high-quality training and research.

Experience demonstrates that, the earlier they are exposed to the landscape paradigm, the better students are equipped to embrace the multidisciplinary requirements of landscape research and training at fourth level. Therefore, the provision of landscape training at undergraduate level is desirable and achievable, if appropriate resources are made available.

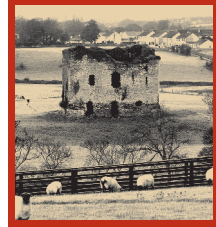
3.4.2 Primary and Second level education perspectives

At present, there is no landscape education per se in Irish primary or secondary schools. Elements of the mosaic that is landscape are introduced through subjects such as geography, history, science and so on. However, appreciation and critical evaluation of how the balance and fusion of the built and natural environment, and social and natural history, give a place and its people their unique character and aesthetic are under-developed.

In short, landscape literacy at primary and secondary levels has the potential to put in place the foundations of an understanding of the ecological character and symbiotic nature of the people-nature nexus and awareness of the impact of the human footprint on human society itself. Significantly, the local environment around our schools, whether it be urban or rural, provides the ultimate learning resource about the landscape without the need for travel. The Heritage in Schools programme pioneered by the Heritage Council provides one vehicle through which this issue could be addressed, as do the recent changes to the Leaving Certificate Geography Syllabus, initiated in association with the National Curriculum Advisory Council.

3.4.3 Continuing Professional Development Perspective

There is a marked need to provide continuous training to professionals working in landscape protection, planning and management. The national evaluation of Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) in Ireland, published by the Heritage Council in 2006, found that 68% of survey respondents, including planners, heritage officers and consultants, had not received any formal training in LCA activity. A greater focus on integrated or multidisciplinary training programmes targeted at planners, agricultural advisors, archaeologists and engineers would assist in building recognition of landscape management issues as they relate to society past, present and in the future.



3.4.4 Farmer training: a landscape approach

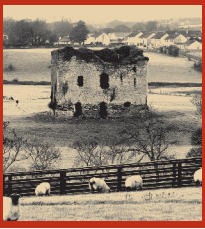
The case for inclusion of the farming community as a key audience for any training or awareness programme is compelling, given their role in management of the Irish landscape. Under the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), participation in training modules for farmers was an obligatory part of the voluntary agreement entered into between the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the participating farmer. Such training schemes were considered by many stakeholders to be vital tools in communicating the scheme's objectives to the participants and helping them to improve their environmentally friendly farming skills. However, REPS is now closed to new participants and has been replaced by a new Agri-Environment Options Scheme. This new scheme does not include any training component and so represents a missed opportunity to engage the farming community in such matters. Recent research has highlighted the importance of a clear understanding and internalisation of a scheme's objectives by participants in order to ensure its effective implementation and that it reaches its objectives.⁷⁰ Effective training programmes can form part of that process. The decision to exclude farmer training programmes from the new agri-environment scheme would indicate that less attention and effort will be devoted to farmer education programmes, rather than more. This should be addressed through the Landscape Strategy and supported by the Rural Development Programme.

3.5 Planning for Landscape

A review of the first ten years of the *Planning and Development Act (2000)*, and the system provided for under the Act, could show that aspects of Ireland's development were demonstrably unsustainable by reference to economic, social or environmental criteria. This is plain to see in some of the landscape legacies of Ireland's Celtic Tiger era.⁷¹ Well-intentioned fiscal policies have the potential for adverse impacts if there is an inadequate strategic environmental assessment of the receiving environment, its capacity to absorb development, and an omission of a robust assessment in a mid-programme evaluation, e.g. various Urban Renewal Schemes, and the '*Pilot Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon Area*'. It is important that any *ex ante* assessment of future tax incentive schemes is developed in accordance with the tenets of the whole landscape and true sustainable development.

One of the key institutional developments arising from the Celtic Tiger era is the formation of the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA), set up in late 2009. NAMA will acquire good and bad loans (over €5m) from participating financial institutions and will manage these assets, with the aim of achieving the best possible financial return over a 7-10 year period. As of March 2010,⁷² the NAMA statistics are as follows:

- The portfolio size (book value of loans) is approximately €80 billion. NAMA will acquire some 14,000-15,000 loans.
- About 67% of NAMA's prospective assets are based in the Republic of Ireland and approximately 6% in Northern Ireland. The rest are overseas, with the bulk of these in the UK (21%).
- About 43% of NAMA's prospective assets are land, about 26% are development, and about 31% are commercial.



Clearly, NAMA operations will potentially have a significant impact on the Irish landscape during the next 7-10 years.⁷³ Therefore, it would be beneficial if any *planning and economic appraisals* undertaken were broadened to include a robust environmental appraisal; these should be undertaken for land assets within the NAMA portfolio and include a review of landscape quality and environmental objectives at national, regional and local levels.

3.5.1 Planning and Development Act 2010

The Planning and Development Amendment Act 2010, includes a definition of landscape, in accordance with the ELC. Broadly speaking, the Act aims to support economic renewal and promote sustainable development by targeting investment on infrastructure and modernising land-use zoning. Importantly, the Act strives to achieve a closer alignment and status between the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), Development Plans and Local Area Plans (LAPs). For example, under the provisions of the Act, Development Plans must provide an evidence-based 'core strategy', and the lifespan of LAPs is increased to 10 years. In support of the broader climate change agenda, development plans must now contain mandatory objectives for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, including appropriate measures to reduce man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

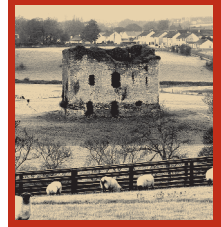
The Act also provides that a Regional Authority has an explicit role in the pre-draft and draft Development Plan process; in addition, a planning authority must demonstrate how it has implemented the policies and objectives of ministerial guidelines. Clearly, the NLS and any resulting National Landscape (including Seascape) management guidelines will complement the key aims of the Act.

New planning tools are slow to roll out. The diversity of policies and methodologies also complicates the achievement of any single objective, not to mention a holistic one as encompassing as 'landscape'. The flaws in the operation of the planning system may even form the case for greater national oversight of planning, and for providing a planning advisory service that would uphold the rights of those affected directly by development, and to ensure that sustainable development is achieved and the interests of the common good are at all times vindicated.

3.5.2 Emerging National Monuments Bill

This bill will include a broad definition of landscape based on the European Landscape Convention. It envisages two levels of protection for historic landscapes. The first level will include a small number of iconic landscapes, to be known as Outstanding Historic Landscapes (OHLs). The second level will comprise Special Historic Landscapes (SHLs); these will be more locally based historic landscapes, mainly complexes of archaeological monuments. A Special Historic Landscape will merit formal recognition in the planning and development process.

In proposing these legislative proposals, it was considered that around 15 historic landscapes in the State would have potential for designation under the proposed new legislative provision. Many of these have core areas already in State care and may be possible candidates for designation as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



3.5.3 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and accompanying layers

To begin to grapple with the large-scale areas which constitute our landscape, the Heritage Council has promoted Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) since 2000 as a useful tool to inform planning for sustainable development. Following on from this, the then Department of the Environment and Local Government published consultation *Draft Guidelines on Landscape and Landscape Assessment (June 2000)* under the provisions of Section 28 of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*. Unfortunately, despite the enactment of the ELC, these guidelines are still in draft format 10 years later. LCA sets out to describe how landscapes differ from each other. It would be advantageous if the results of the LCA process, and the underpinning layers of historic landscape characterisation and habitat mapping, are fully integrated into the process of development plan-making by giving landscape characterisation and the resulting character areas a statutory importance in strategic planning. Adopting this approach is a challenge to the planning system on several levels. Using Landscape Character Assessment and its associated layers (e.g. historic landscapes and habitat mapping) as a bedrock of the development plan requires a change of approach or methodology in the drafting of such plans. It also demands new or further resources in forward planning, which include greater multidisciplinary expertise such as archaeologists, ecologists and landscape architects, *inter alia*. As the LCA methodology evolves, this would facilitate greater consideration of historic landscapes, habitat maps and wildlife surveys, and ecosystem functions and services.

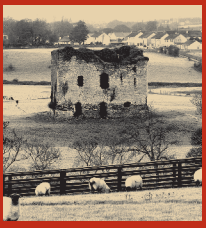
A greater emphasis on multifunctional landscapes, *i.e.* ones supporting multiple functions and providing a greater range of services, would also be advantageous. The application of concepts such as Green Infrastructure, through the development of strategies at the national, regional, county or local levels, offers a mechanism to achieve such aims.

3.6 Accessibility (Physical and Intellectual)

Landscape accessibility can be seen as critical in two respects: physical access to the landscape; and access to information and knowledge relating to it, such as landscape-related datasets, spatial data, history and literature. Effectively, the latter can be referred to as intellectual access.

3.6.1 Physical Access

Ireland's landscape offers a wonderful resource, allowing its population to enjoy participating in a wide range of land- and water-based activities. These opportunities vary from walking in the mountains, surfing at the coast, canoeing on the rivers, mountain biking in forests, cruising on the canal network or simply walking in a park. Participation in these activities not only contributes significantly to the nation's economy, particularly through activity tourism, but also contributes significantly to the nation's health. Recent research undertaken at the University of Essex indicates that exercise and exposure to nature ('green exercise') can improve and protect mental health.⁷⁴ Closer to home, an ESRI Survey suggests that Dublin house prices are influenced by proximity to shared green spaces and open parks. This research found that for every 10% increase in the share of green space and park area near a house, its average price increases by 7% to 9%.⁷⁵ Both of these studies suggest that the landscape is beneficial to our health and well-being.



An additional benefit is the restoration of social interaction, now more commonly referred to as 'social capital'. Healthy communities have higher levels of social capital. Where there is greater interaction between people and community, it equates to a greater sense of community spirit. Participating in recreational activities consequently provides the ideal opportunity for connecting people to each other as well as to their surrounding landscape. We should also not forget the educational and learning resource of the Irish landscape.

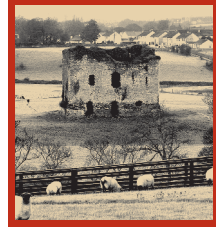
The multifunctional perspective on landscape management, as set out in Section 1, places emphasis on accessibility to landscape as a means of recreation, learning and enjoyment. Work by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, through Comhairle na Tuaithe, has ensured that significant progress concerning agreed access to the rural landscape has been achieved in recent years. Some 1,200 farmers now participate in a walks scheme for which they receive payment to maintain walks, while Fáilte Ireland has now developed 150 looped walks in partnership with the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.⁷⁶ Programmes that increase accessibility to the landscape are to be welcomed, and efforts should be made to ensure they contribute to sustainable landscape management. Similarly, there is great benefit to be derived by effectively implementing the excellent National Trails Strategy, under the aegis of the Sports Council.

3.6.2 Intellectual Access to high-quality information

One of the most critical aspects for increasing consideration of landscape, and its constituent parts in decision-making, is the availability and accessibility of high-quality information. This principle was recognised in Ireland's first *National Biodiversity Plan (2002-2006)* with the inclusion of several actions relating to knowledge, identification, monitoring and research and, most specifically, in its call for the establishment of a national biological data management system to be co-ordinated by a National Biological Recording Centre. In response to this, the National Biodiversity Data Centre was established in 2006 and is now playing an instrumental role in the establishment of standards for data recording, as well as, through its web-based system, placing a major emphasis in ensuring that biological data is made accessible to the general public and decision-makers.⁷⁷

The Heritage Council considers bodies such as the National Biodiversity Data Centre, which generate accessible landscape-relevant data to be critical components in the delivery and achievement of any objectives that are set within a National Landscape Strategy. While the Data Centre is concerned solely with biodiversity data, there is an equally compelling case for the integration of other categories of landscape data including cultural heritage data (Archaeological Survey of Ireland; National Inventory of Architectural Heritage; the hosting of research project generated datasets), as well as characterisation datasets. The focus of landscape data would include the integration of varied datasets from a range of data-collecting bodies, including State agencies and departments, the undertaking of consistent characterisation studies, and ensuring the accessibility of this information to the public and decision-makers.

Potentially, such bodies could also play a critical role in delivering any monitoring and evaluation programme that should be established to monitor change in the landscape. Furthermore, an added benefit would be by fulfilling the requirements of the European



Union's SEA, EIA and INSPIRE Directives, and to assess the impacts of policy change, or the effectiveness of landscape management programmes (including agri-environment schemes), under the auspices of the National Landscape Strategy.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (2001/42/EC), which came into force on 21 July 2004, is the process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes. The objective of the SEA process is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of specified plans and programmes, with a view to promoting sustainable development. Eleven sectors (including planning) are specified in the legislation where competent authorities must subject specific plans and programmes, that are likely to have significant effects on the environment, to an environmental assessment. SEA is designed to complement the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process (1985/337/EEC), which is project based.⁷⁸

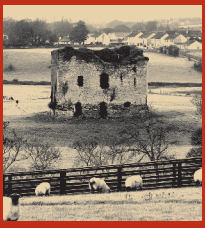
The key to robust SEAs, as well as the robust implementation of other environmental directives, is the availability of relevant and up-to-date environmental data. In this regard, it is interesting to note that a number of local authorities in Ireland have undertaken SEAs in relation to emerging County Development Plans without first preparing a detailed landscape assessment (including a historic landscape assessment) for their area, as required under the provisions of the ELC. As a result, it is likely that policy objectives (e.g. housing, transport etc.) are being formulated in certain development plans without the necessary environmental data or analysis. Clearly, the standard of environmental information is an issue in relation to the current formulation and implementation of SEAs in Ireland. It is envisaged that the delivery of the NLS will improve the quality of SEAs in Ireland, particularly in relation to planning through undertaking a national Landscape Characterisation Assessment, with associated layers of HLC and habitat mapping.

In relation to the availability of online mapping, a significant recent development in the UK has involved the release of a selection of free mapping by the UK Ordnance Survey — on the basis that making such data freely available will bring wider economic benefits and help foster a greater sense of place.⁷⁹ In the Irish context, the availability of such free Ordnance Survey data would be a positive development, in that such mapping acts as a baseline for any landscape study; licensing agreements and purchase costs, however, have been prohibitive in the past. A commitment to providing easier and less costly access to the national mapping resource for community groups should also be provided.

3.7 Landscape Management and Conservation

The European Landscape Convention offers ways to widen the scope of landscape management and to make landscape more broadly democratic. As far back as 1997, Aalen, Stout and Whelan argued that:

'at present, we [Ireland] have a designation policy rather than a landscape policy, a concern with sites rather than landscapes, with elements rather than wholes. The chief strategy has been to establish enclaves encompassing valued resources and to safeguard them by



limiting human use. Landscape is treated as a series of discrete elements to be planned in isolation; the outcome is a fragmented and confused perspective, inimical to the landscape, which is holistic and requires broad strategic approaches. Nowadays, whole landscapes are the issue, not sites'.⁸⁰

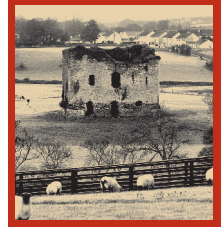
In the period since the publication of the *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* some 13 years ago, there has been a growing awareness in some sectors of the need to move towards a landscape-based approach to management. Yet this same period has heralded an unprecedented level of development. The European Landscape Convention embodies the approach of looking at *all* landscapes, not just unique or special places. It is suggested in this paper that it is now opportune for Ireland to embrace the 'whole landscape' approach in accordance with the ELC. Such a landscape approach to managing our national heritage comprises an integrated approach to managing cultural, built and natural heritage, rather than as discrete entities or stand-alone designations. A key element of this involves partnership with local communities, local government and government agencies as a means of being proactive in problem-solving and in managing change.

In Ireland, major conservation developments since the 1990s have been designation-led, as seen in the creation of:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) when the Habitats and Birds Directive was transposed into Irish law.
- The Record of Monuments and Places under the *1994 National Monuments Act Amendment*.
- Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and Landscape Conservation Areas (Section 204), under the provisions of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*, as well as other zoning and planning designations.
- The designation of two World Heritage Sites in Ireland at Brú na Bóinne and at Skellig Michael (*Sceilig Mhichíl*), as well as the publication in 2010 of a Tentative List from which further WHS designations will be selected.

While there have been issues concerning the way in which some designation processes have been managed, these developments are considered to be highly beneficial. However, in order to ensure the designations achieve their objectives, there are (at least) three critical issues to consider with regard to designations and their role in landscape management:

- Will the designations stimulate or be accompanied by management measures and resources that will achieve its objectives?
- If in private ownership, has the landowner taken ownership of, or internalised, those conservation objectives? What role have they had in determining them, and will they support their achievement?
- Are designations sufficient to protect our landscape and its constituent elements and to sustain and enhance its functions and the services provided to society?



Designations need to be accompanied by concerted actions and resources to manage that asset effectively for the long term. Designation should never be considered an end in itself. This rationale is borne out in places like the Burren, where large parts of the landscape were designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. However, this designation, and the fact that a large proportion of the farmers in the area have entered the Rural Environment Protection Scheme, did not sufficiently ensure the management of the landscape to sustain the orchid-rich grasslands and limestone pavement for which the area was originally designated. Instead, an agri-environment scheme designed specifically for the Burren has been required so as to develop a model of sustainable agriculture to conserve the Burren habitats. This has been done as a partnership with the farmers in the area, ensuring that the objectives of the scheme and its measures are delivered for the farmer as well as for the designated sites. In this case, designation alone has not succeeded in producing the conservation outcome which was originally desired, though it helped to stimulate the development of a more effective landscape management programme. (See the High Nature Value Farming case study.)

It is also important to consider whether designations alone can actually deliver our broader conservation and management commitments for various aspects of heritage, and ensure that the Irish landscape continues to sustain and enhance its functions and the services provided to society. For instance, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) reported in 2008 on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland. This addressed the status of the protected habitats and species both inside and outside designated sites, and painted a stark picture of how much remains to be done to achieve our goal of halting biodiversity loss, which was due to be achieved in 2010.⁸¹ The NPWS report also highlighted that, while most protected habitats received favourable assessment, the prognosis of their structure, function and future prospects was 'Bad' or 'Poor' in almost all cases. Clearly, our landscape, and the services it provides to us, are still not in good shape.

Some of the damage inflicted on these habitats and species would have occurred prior to the actual designations — hence their designation for protection. Management plans are to be developed, or are in development for such designated sites, and are intended to set out appropriate strategies and management actions to deliver the conservation objectives of the sites. These are, for the most part, still in development, but over 40 completed Management Plans for designated sites are now available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

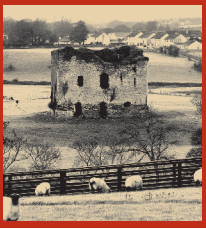
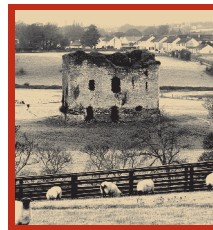


Figure 6: A proposed partnership model for the management of landscapes.

However, it is widely considered that designated areas alone will not be sufficient to allow us to reach a target of halting biodiversity loss — a critical component in ensuring our landscape functions effectively and continues to provide critical services to society. For instance, as early as 2004, the European Environment Agency highlighted that *'at best, one third of high nature value farmland will benefit'* from being located in a designated area, with the remainder being undesignated, and that additional policy efforts will be needed for the conservation of high nature value farmland if we are to halt biodiversity loss.⁸² Thus we can conclude that broader policy measures than designations are needed to manage our wider landscape effectively — policies that will stimulate sustainable landscape management on a much broader scale. One such critical area would be ensuring that our agricultural, rural development and agri-environment policies are designed and delivered so that they maintain farming with a high nature value and the delivery of landscape multifunctionality.

The Irish landscape was created by generations of farmers and foresters, landowners and tenants, all interacting with nature. This cultural legacy permeates the landscape in the form of ancient monuments, evidence for past environments; historic farmsteads and traditional farm buildings; the evidence for past industries; features such as field walls and drainage systems; hedges and woodlands — all of which cumulatively create the overall landscape pattern. These historic features which give our landscape such character are very fragile.



Measures to improve management could include, for example, more targeted agri-environmental schemes that will support High Nature Value Farming and the cultural value of these landscapes. Accompanying measures in the Rural Development Programme would also ensure the economic viability of such farms and farming communities.⁸³ Multi-objective farming schemes, *i.e.* ones which include measures for management of cultural and natural heritage, will provide a better return for public money because their objectives are mutually supportive. They deliver biodiversity, cultural heritage and resource protection measures on the same land.⁸⁴

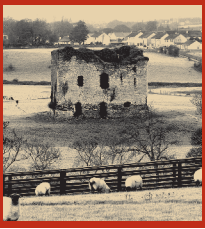
Issues concerning landowners of designated sites are addressed in Section 3.3, Public Participation.

To conclude, designations certainly play a role in contributing to broader landscape management. However, we need to reconsider the ways in which such designations usually come to fruition, then invest greater resources in consensus-building in the relevant communities. Designation must also be considered as just one option in delivering landscape management and sustaining the services that landscape provides to society.

3.8 Summary

This section encourages us to consider, in a themed manner, many of the issues that surround the future management, planning and conservation of the Irish landscape. These issues have been derived from continuing discussions with key partners, the findings of the Tullamore conference, and numerous years of involvement by the Heritage Council and others on local, regional, national and international levels.

What is needed now is a series of actions/proposals that will make real and concrete contributions to improvements in how we manage our landscapes, now and in the future. These proposals are described in Section 4.



Section 3 Footnotes

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- ⁶⁹ Behaviour and Attitudes, 2010. Biodiversity Awareness, Understanding and Impact of its Loss. A report to the Heritage Council, Kilkenny.
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- ⁷³ Section 240, Schedule 3, Part 10 of the *NAMA Act 2009* makes provision for an 80% windfall tax.
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- ⁷⁵ K. Mayor, S. Lyons, D. Duffy, and R. S.J. Tol, A Hedonic Analysis of the Value of Parks and Green Spaces in the Dublin Area, ESRI Working Paper No. 331, November 2009, www.esri.ie/publications/latest_publications/view/index.xml?id=2913
- ⁷⁶ Shaun Quinn, CEO Failte Ireland, Tullamore Conference Proceedings, 134-5.
- ⁷⁷ The Data Centre is an initiative of the Heritage Council and is operated through a Service Level Agreement with Compass Informatics; it is funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. www.biodiversityireland.ie/
- ⁷⁸ The 11 sectors involved in SEA are: agriculture, energy, forestry, fisheries, industry, telecommunications, transport, tourism, town and country planning/landuse, waste management and water management. Three statutory environmental authorities have been designated under the SEA Regulations in Ireland: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG); and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR).
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The Way Forward



4.1 Window of Opportunity

This paper argues that new frameworks and structures are needed for us to develop our landscapes sustainably. There is a new way forward, a new way of working. There is also a real window of opportunity. With so much of value in our landscapes to manage, plan for and conserve, there is a palpable determination among people to resolve the issues outlined earlier. The economic collapse has put a brake on the approach that led us to focus on economic development. The National Landscape Strategy will provide an opportunity to place equal value on the social and environmental aspects of the landscapes in which we live, work and relax. This can all be achieved in a manner that supports economic development, creates employment and allows us to flourish along with our landscapes.

4.1.1 The Framework

The European Landscape Convention provides the framework in which Ireland can respond to the demands placed on a modern landscape. It embraces all landscapes, and provides an opportunity for meeting people's needs and aspirations for the landscapes of today and tomorrow. Most significantly, the ELC provides people and communities with scope for meaningful participation in imagining and planning the futures of their landscapes.

The selection of European case studies presented in Section 2 suggests a growing realisation that if we are to rise to the challenge, our current sectoral approaches to the landscape will not deliver what people need. Notwithstanding the ability of existing structures to adapt to changed circumstances, we should remain open to the need for real change in how those structures plan, manage and conserve our landscapes. Such change will require leadership and guidance to ensure co-operation and integration across sectoral interests.

It is important to recognise and respect the existing legitimate sectoral interests. For the most part, however, such interests view the landscape from their own particular perspective. In dealing with today's complex circumstances, it is important that we encourage all parties to recognise the rainbow of factors that sustain and affect it. Certain steps need to be taken and structures provided to support us in getting to that recognition. As set out in Section 2, it is increasingly accepted across Europe that new frameworks, structures and legislation are needed to meet the demands placed on our landscape, and on the changing demands of nature itself.

If the tendency remains to sectoralise and fragment our landscape management, we face the prospect that existing problems will persist and, in fact, may even be compounded. The Irish case studies, nurtured by the Heritage Council and piloted in a number of locations throughout the island, offer a viable and sustainable alternative.

4.2 The Proposals

In suggesting new structures and delivery mechanisms, the proposals that follow seek to broaden the availability of those benefits to as many people and communities as possible.



The proposals are:

1. Establishing a Landscape Observatory of Ireland (LOI).
2. Introducing a Landscape Ireland Act.
3. Landscape-proofing existing primary legislation, government programmes and policies.
4. Promoting a vibrant research and learning culture on landscape.
5. Increasing public participation, accessibility and the use of local knowledge in landscape management.

Proposal 1 – Establishing a Landscape Observatory of Ireland (LOI)

A fundamental weakness in all the landscape work we do is that everyone (individuals and agencies) has an impact on the landscape — yet there is no over-arching strategy within which to direct, plan for and manage those impacts. Each sector currently views landscape from its own point of view and does not reflect on the impacts of their work from the perspective of landscape as a whole. The emerging National Landscape Strategy in the current Programme for Government should address this fact and bring such differing perspectives together. The Heritage Council acknowledges the government’s commitment to this strategy as it can play a major part in resolving the issues surrounding the new landscape approach advocated in the European Landscape Convention. Council looks forward to developing its own work within the framework provided by such a strategy.

Notwithstanding the emergence of the National Landscape Strategy, the Heritage Council is of the view that a *landscape champion* is essential in advocating and promoting the required change in approach and proposes the establishment of a *Landscape Observatory of Ireland*. An Observatory would provide landscape with recognition at a national level. Its key roll would be to champion the landscape approach, with a key objective being the promotion of a ‘whole landscape approach’ in all sectoral land-use policies within a specified time frame, to propose policy, assist the implementation of a National Landscape Strategy, and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation.

To facilitate it in its work, the Observatory would have the capacity to tackle the technical and data aspects of landscape and, in line with earlier policy proposals from the Heritage Council in 2002 and 2006,⁸⁷ be tasked with the production of the National Landscape Character Map. This would, uniquely on a European level, fully integrate the associated layers of historic landscape and habitat mapping to produce a series of *Regional Landscape Catalogues*. The Observatory would also be equipped to articulate and accommodate the spiritual and aesthetic values of landscape that are so enshrined in both our natural and cultural heritage. The availability of such data would be of critical use in supporting the implementation of, for example, Green Infrastructure strategies, High Nature Value Farming support measures, or the assessment of ecosystem services. The Heritage Council anticipates that these would be supported through the National Landscape Strategy, and associated policies such as the forthcoming second National Biodiversity Plan.

The capacity of the Observatory would be greatly enhanced as a result of work already in development by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) and the Discovery Programme (DP), two existing satellites of the Heritage Council. From a natural and cultural



heritage perspective, and in developing cutting-edge technological applications for their work, both the NBDC and the DP have proven track records in data collection, research and innovation. Similarly, the Observatory would draw on expertise available to it through the Heritage Council's Museum Standards Programme and the Local Authority Heritage Officer Programme, including new work in progress regarding the development of a coastal heritage mapping system.

Over a five-year period from 2012–2017, the Observatory would build on the ongoing work of the National Biodiversity Data Centre and the Discovery Programme by adding to the initiative the cultural heritage data and other relevant information required to effect the necessary standard in landscape cataloguing. Co-operation with other initiatives such as the National Inventory, which deals with both architecture and designed landscapes (NIAH), as well as the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI), would also be essential in allowing the Observatory to realise its potential. A key partnership should be developed with the Ordnance Survey. The integration of this data within the Observatory and its synthesis would allow its application in the monitoring and tracking of change in the landscape and its character.

Establishing the Observatory

It is envisaged that the Landscape Observatory of Ireland would be established under the aegis of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. On behalf of the Irish government, this ministerial portfolio has had initial responsibility to sign and then act upon the specific and general measures contained in the European Landscape Convention. This department is currently leading the development of the National Landscape Strategy.

Pursuant to its responsibilities under the Heritage Act 1995, the Heritage Council proposes that it be invited to establish the Landscape Observatory of Ireland and would welcome such an invitation from the Minister. This approach would avoid any perception in these straitened times that additional agencies were being established. Rather, it would be seen as a development of the Heritage Council's role in line with emerging best practice and European approaches to our landscapes, as well as being of direct and meaningful relevance to the public at large.

Council would also bring to bear the experience it has gained in promoting habitat mapping, Historic Landscape Characterisation, and in reviewing Landscape Character Assessments in establishing such an initiative, as well as in directing cost-effective and efficient operations, such as the National Biodiversity Data Centre and the Discovery Programme.

Should Council be asked to assume this function on behalf of the Minister, the Observatory would be located within the existing Heritage Council headquarters in Kilkenny, thus minimising any additional costs associated with its establishment.

Proposal 2 – Introducing a Landscape Ireland Act

Through the use of case studies — such as those in operation or in development in the Wicklow Uplands, Bere Island and the Burren, and examples of integrated landscape management applied in Village Design Statements or proposed in the Shannon Waterway Corridor Studies — the Heritage Council has shown how local communities and other



stakeholders can be encouraged, empowered and enabled to participate in a *new way of working in the Irish landscape*.

The Heritage Council has demonstrated just how effective community involvement can be in a range of integrated, multifunctional landscape management projects. In addition to the above, and not accounting for the initiatives taken by local authority Heritage Officers, communities from Julianstown to Bere Island, from Wicklow to the Tara-Skryne Valley, and from Youghal to Fethard have all been empowered to identify and implement the works and tasks that they wish to see in their landscape. The support needed to develop and implement such initiatives can, and should, be more widely available than is currently the case.

Papers given at the Heritage Council's Tullamore Landscape Conference by representatives of a number of the above projects highlighted the value that they placed on the framework and support they had been given. Particular value has been attributed to the fact that the Heritage Council has been non-prescriptive in its dealings with these communities, preferring instead to facilitate discussion within a framework that allows them to discover what it is that they themselves value and wish to plan, manage or conserve in their landscapes.

While being positive in this regard, each of these projects has experienced frustrations in trying to secure a medium- to long-term framework in which to operate. Each is concerned by the annual 'scrapping' for funds that takes place, including in some cases an over-reliance on funding from European sources, correctly perceived as likely to be less available in the future.

Gaining the confidence of those with whom we work has required not only a significant investment of time but, more importantly, a conviction and commitment that there is a new, more integrated way of working that can offer huge benefits to the communities and stakeholders involved. Thus, Council is proposing a *Landscape Ireland Act* to facilitate collaborative and integrative approaches to landscape management and conservation.

A new type of legislation

In discussing new legislation, all involved have been encouraged *to imagine a new type of legislation, one that is empowering and enabling* of those with an interest in the management and conservation of their landscapes. Such an approach would lay out a range of options and frameworks available for initiatives that encourage collaboration on, and integration of, actions that bring social, environmental and economic benefits within the Irish landscape. This is what, in partnership with local communities and stakeholders, a Landscape Ireland Act would achieve.

This could be through the development of a statutory Charter such as that employed in the French Regional Parks (Section 2) or other such mechanisms that might be considered appropriate. The end result would be the same — all parties to the Charter would collaborate and agree to a range of activities and actions that they wished to see in their landscape. The 2004 evaluation of the Bantry Bay Charter shows just how a more formal legislative and structural framework such as a Landscape Ireland Act could have saved that innovative initiative.⁸⁸

The direction advocated in this new style of legislation turns our traditional approach of designation from 'on high' on its head, where each and every landscape — through the



people who live there, and work there or indeed just visit — could benefit from a structure dedicated to delivering an agreed range of activities and actions. A Landscape Ireland Act would allow the social, environmental and economic benefits from such an approach to be more evenly and widely distributed and available.

As indicated in Section 2, in comparison to other European signatories to the ELC, Ireland has a particularly clean sheet in terms of recognising landscapes in law. This approach could therefore be used to provide a legislative basis for Ireland's National Parks and other designations, allowing them to sit within the 'whole' landscape rather than viewed as islands in State ownership. It could also provide frameworks for the agreement of practical management and conservation measures in others such as Natural Heritage Areas, Landscape Conservation Areas and National Nature Reserves, emerging provisions for Historic Landscapes, or indeed the resourcing of measures within Architectural Conservation Areas or actions agreed in Village Design Statements.

Proposal 3 — Landscape-proofing existing primary legislation, government programmes and policies

The European Landscape Convention requires that signatories 'recognise landscapes in law'. While the proposal to introduce a Landscape Ireland Act is intended to introduce new participative approaches for communities in determining agreed actions for the management of their own landscapes, there is also a need to recognise landscapes in existing primary legislation as a matter of some urgency. The Heritage Council welcomes the recent changes to the Planning Acts which include the definition of landscape as per the European Landscape Convention and the placing of landscape requirements in regional planning policies and County Development Plans. These are clearly positive developments, yet the implementation of these new provisions will require training, guidance and monitoring in the years ahead to ensure that the potential of these measures is met and that real change is affected at regional and local levels.

In a similar vein, the Heritage Council welcomes the amendments to the Planning Acts that seek to minimise future capacity to allow development on floodplains and the unrestricted zoning of lands adjacent to towns and villages. As a priority, there is a need to ensure that effective guidelines emerge from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the process of landscape characterisation and on the regulations of Section 204 regarding designation of Landscape Conservation Areas.

National Monuments Legislation

The framework of the new National Monuments Bill was approved by the government on 20 April 2010, and has been referred to the Attorney General's office for commencement of detailed drafting.

The Heritage Council welcomes this Bill's provisions to provide for designation and recognition of historic landscapes. Most significant is the provision being made for the Minister to engage in extensive consultation with all concerned interests, both prior to designation and in the subsequent development of conservation and management strategies. It is anticipated that the Bill will be published early in 2011.



Government policies and programmes

Throughout this paper, the current framework for managing, planning and conserving the Irish landscape has been shown to be ineffective in responding to the increased and complex demands placed upon it. The key need is for arrangements to integrate and better co-ordinate the activities of existing structures in delivering public policy measures. Beneficial measures would include:

- Use the data and guidance from the proposed Landscape Observatory and other data providers to produce an annual report to the Minister as to how the National Landscape Strategy is being implemented, and to monitor its effectiveness.
- Have an input in emerging legislation from government departments to ensure incorporation of the ELC, ensuring that the Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) of new pieces of legislation considers landscape impact (this process currently assesses impact on business, impact on national competitiveness, and impacts on the environment).
- Ensure that government policies — such as the National Development Plan or National Spatial Strategy; fiscal policies such as area-specific tax incentives; climate change, renewable energy, rural development and agri-environment policies — take account of and support the implementation of the National Landscape Strategy and its associated objectives. These include maintenance of High Nature Value Farming and associated cultural landscapes, delivery of Green Infrastructure strategies and landscape multifunctionality.

Proposal 4 – Promoting a vibrant research and learning culture on landscape

Notwithstanding the pedagogical challenge of collaboration on multidisciplinary training and research, this programme and the prospects it could offer to society are genuinely exciting and ought to be strategic targets for the Irish university sector. The range of courses currently offered in individual institutes indicates the high level of expertise available in delivering high-quality training and research, should this new programme become available.

Existing research on landscape matters needs to be consolidated at the third level. Collaboration on research along the same lines as achieved with the Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research (INSTAR) Grants Programme, as operated by the Heritage Council, should be furthered and encouraged. A recent external review of INSTAR concluded:

*'The Programme is transforming the very nature of Irish archaeological endeavour by bringing together academic, regulatory and private sectors to address today's most relevant research topics including climate change, landscape and cultural identity.'*⁸⁹

A programme similar to INSTAR should now be initiated for landscape as a research topic to transform the very nature of Irish landscape studies. This should seek collaboration not only within the island of Ireland but, encouraged by the measures contained in the European Landscape Convention, should also seek to heighten and develop international collaboration on landscape matters.

Landscape training at undergraduate level is also desirable and achievable if appropriate resources are made available and if it is truly valued. Whereas a host of undergraduate modules and courses pertaining to select aspects of the landscape are offered at third-level institutes, no denominated degrees in landscape studies are offered. This situation is



largely replicated at postgraduate level where both discipline-specific and cross-discipline denominated Masters programmes are available.

With regard to professional training, the Heritage Council has ably demonstrated through the conception, development and delivery of its award-winning, multidisciplinary Landscape Character Assessment/Continuing Professional Development (LCA/CPD) Training Course Programme, that the appetite exists for ongoing multidisciplinary professional development in landscape management theory and practice.

A greater landscape input to farmer training and agri-environmental schemes would be highly beneficial. Dialogue to commence this is a key priority. Working in partnership with the farming community and relevant State agencies should form a major contribution to successful landscape management.

The successful realisation of such measures does require the appropriate resources. A landscape training fund is essential if these aims are to be accomplished. International and all-island exchange and collaboration should be seen as key elements of such a funding mechanism.

Proposal 5 – Increasing public participation, accessibility and the use of local knowledge in landscape management

As an integral part of the ELC, each signatory commits to introduce procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the landscape. Mechanisms to promote such involvement have been tested by the Heritage Council and its partners for a number of years through the use of Village Design Statements and Waterway Corridor Studies, through the Field Monument Advisor Scheme, and by Conservation Plans. These measures have had a significant degree of success. However, in keeping with the spirit of this document, and the need to continue the promotion of a landscape approach to managing our heritage, measures with a greater impact are required.

The development of High Nature Value Farming with associated policies to support it, as well as adapting it to help manage cultural heritage, offers a means to promote landscape-scale benefits while forging strong local partnerships. The same holds true for the development of Green Infrastructure strategies and increased consideration of the services provided by landscape. Measures such as these, however, require public policy support, not just through the work of the Heritage Council but within government departments, agencies and local government. Measures to mainstream initiatives like these, such as through the Rural Development Plan or future agri-environment schemes, would be advantageous.

Other means to improve public participation include the greater availability of Ordnance Survey data, including historic mapping and aerial imagery. Less restrictive licensing policies and more cost-efficient access to users not engaged in commercial or development activities would be positive, as the national mapping resource forms an essential baseline source for those seeking to understand the landscape.

The Heritage Council has demonstrated, through its range of awareness research (1999-2007) and its 2007 *Valuing Heritage Report*, the increasing levels of public interest in



natural and cultural landscapes, and the level of importance that is attached to rural landscapes, rivers and canals in particular. Fáilte Ireland has also shown how significant the Irish landscape is as a visitor attraction. Yet recent trends have highlighted the fall-off in quality and value as perceived by visitors, particularly in terms of litter and unregulated development in the landscape.

In recent years, there have been a few somewhat successful awareness-raising campaigns dealing with environmental issues such as waste, climate change and biodiversity, all of which have resonance in the landscape. Investment in these has resulted in some significant shifts in public awareness and understanding, but it has to be admitted these shifts were from very low initial levels. In 1999, for example, only 3% of people in Ireland considered wildlife/biodiversity as part of their heritage. Awareness levels in 2010 have risen to circa 18%, but recent survey work shows a real confusion among the public regarding the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss; general awareness levels are still disturbingly low.⁹⁰ It is suggested here that a similar exercise to raise awareness of the value of the Irish landscape, and the services it provides, be initiated.

Section 4 Footnotes

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