

Call for Urgent Introduction of Landscape Management Plan

17/10/2007

Two state agencies, The Heritage Council and Failte Ireland have jointly called for the urgent introduction of a National Framework for Landscape Management in Ireland to safeguard quality of life, tourism, cultural and natural heritage, and to provide more clarity in the planning system.

Welcoming the recent announcement by Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government John Gormley T.D., regarding the first steps in honouring the Government commitment to develop a National Landscape Strategy, Failte Ireland and the Heritage Council hope the results of their collaboration will help inform the process.

Separate studies conclude that responsibility for Ireland's landscapes should clearly lie with one organisation with the ability to advise on and influence the management of our landscapes on a national level and provide clear guidelines on land use for amenity, heritage, tourism, housing and infrastructure development, traditional farming and other uses. Development of a national landscape strategy is a commitment in the new Programme for Government and the two state bodies want to see the strategy completed as quickly as possible.

The studies found that Ireland is now the only country in Western Europe that has not specifically legislated for the planning and management of its landscapes on a consistent national level. This view is supported by recent European Environment Agency digital mapping which shows that Ireland has experienced unprecedented urbanisation and landscape fragmentation over the past number of years due to extensive new housing, major road and other infrastructure projects. This has affected open countryside, villages and towns in all parts of the country and the extent of the impact on the landscape is greater than in other parts of Europe.

The Failte Ireland study found that the 29 County Councils in the country each use different approaches to identify, designate and protect scenic landscapes and this disjointed approach precludes the identification of Ireland's most important scenic landscapes. Our scenery has been a cornerstone of international tourism marketing campaigns for decades and in 2006, 80% of visitors rated Ireland's scenery as an important reason for visiting Ireland. The study also found that 72% of respondents in local authorities would prefer and welcome a national approach to the identification of nationally important scenic landscapes.

Shaun Quinn, Chief Executive of Fáilte Ireland stated “ *There is a real window of opportunity to do something very positive which will contribute to the long term economic and environmental well being of Ireland. Our scenery is one of our most valuable tourism assets and we need a nationally consistent and co-ordinated approach to its identification and conservation. Being able to carefully manage change in our most characteristic and distinctive landscapes, in accordance with national guidelines, is essential if we are to achieve sustainable growth in the tourism sector. We need to test our existing legislation and structures to see if they can be used to take this opportunity*”, he concluded.

The Heritage Council study advises that a National Framework for Landscape Management in Ireland is urgently needed if we are to honour our commitments

under the European Landscape Convention which Ireland signed in 2002 and which came in to force in 2004. The Heritage Council has called for a National Landscape Characterisation map and the clear requirement to have one national body or authority with responsibility for managing our landscapes. It also recommends new guidelines and training on landscape for local authorities that will improve planning decisions and provide more clarity for landowners, farmers, foresters and developers.

“New approaches are needed in Ireland, approaches which don’t just see the conservation of our landscapes as part of the planning process. We have singularly failed to effectively manage our landscape even though it is a practice that is used by almost every other country in Western Europe. We have also failed to even test existing legislative provision for landscape conservation areas. It is time to take stock and put tried and tested systems in place to manage and plan our landscapes and seascapes, one of our most precious environmental, social and economic resources”, said Michael Starrett, Chief Executive of The Heritage Council.

“Landscape management makes sense for our economy, our quality of life, our heritage and our environment. The Heritage Council has been calling for a National Landscape Policy for many years and we are delighted that Failte Ireland has joined us in this call. It’s a win-win situation and everyone will benefit from it. There is also great potential benefit to be derived on a cross border basis. Landscape knows no borders. European experience shows that property values can increase in protected landscapes and planning conflicts are minimised because there is clarity about how an area can be best managed and developed”, he concluded.

In welcoming the Government commitment to begin the process of consultation on the development of the national landscape strategy both agencies consider the new reports will make a major and positive contribution to that process.

The following recommendations need to be put in place urgently:

- **Managing landscapes should be the clear responsibility of one body or Government Department**
- **A National Landscape Characterisation Map developed**
- **A National Landscape Values Map developed**
- **New landscape Guidelines prepared for local authorities, planners, farmers, landowners, foresters and developers**
- **A major national awareness programme launched**
- **Training programmes put place with relevant professional institutes**

<http://www.failteireland.ie/>

<http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/>

EEA unveils first digital map of Europe's changing landscapes

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The first digital map of the multiple changes that have occurred in Europe's landscapes since 1990 was unveiled today, enabling policy-makers to draw lessons from how their decisions in areas such as agriculture and transport are impacting on the region's finite land resources and the wider environment.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) presented the results of its Corine Land Cover (CLC) 2000 project at a high-level event in Brussels for representatives from several European Commission departments - including regional policy, agriculture, research and environment - the European Space Agency and the EEA's current and prospective member countries.

Using a common methodology, CLC2000 provides the first standardised survey of Europe's land cover for the year 2000 and of the changes that happened over the decade since the first CLC was undertaken in the late 1980s. Both products are publicly available at no cost through the EEA's web site.

CLC2000's combination of geographical breadth and local detail is unmatched by any other land cover information programme in the world. The project already covers 30 countries and the number is expected to expand in 2005.

"Corine Land Cover 2000 will help policy-makers make better policies and plan a more viable future for Europe", said Prof. Jacqueline McGlade, EEA Executive Director.

"It is a unique tool that makes it possible to measure the dynamic relationship between the many uses of our landscapes and the impacts - and unfortunately all too often the conflicts - that arise from different policies, such as agriculture, regional policy and transport."

The EEA has produced CLC2000 from IMAGE2000, a satellite imaging programme undertaken together with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Aerial photos and near-ground imaging were also used.

From IMAGE2000, experts from across Europe have produced detailed maps showing 44 different land cover types, such as *'continuous urban fabric,' 'pasture'* and *'non-irrigated arable land.'*

CLC2000 is expected to find a wide range of users. The 1990 CLC survey has been accessed by people working in, for example, research, agriculture, physical planning, forestry, education, transport, demography, tourism, energy and health, besides environment. It has also been employed in some commercial applications, for example atlases and in-vehicle navigation systems.

In the policy domain, CLC2000's uses include providing support for protecting ecosystems, halting the loss of biological diversity, tracking the impacts of climate

change, assessing developments in agriculture and implementing the European Union's Water Framework Directive. It will thus aid implementation of key priority areas of the EU's 6th environmental action programme.

CLC2000 can show, for instance, where fragmentation of the landscape by roads and other infrastructure is worsening and thus increasing the risk that ecosystems can no longer connect with each other, putting the survival of their flora and fauna in danger.

In the agricultural field it can highlight where major structural changes are continuing or intensifying, such as the conversion of pasture to arable land (or the contrary), expansion or reduction in the area of fallow land and land taken out of production ('set aside'), or the abandonment of farming altogether.

The EEA plans to undertake a thorough analysis of the changes revealed by CLC2000 over the next two years. Among initial findings is an expansion of urban sprawl during the 1990s in many areas, including Italy, the Netherlands, eastern Germany and Ireland.

"The huge growth in urban sprawl in eastern Germany is a warning of how neighbouring Poland could develop, now that it qualifies for EU regional development funding, unless action is taken to make such development more benign", said Prof McGlade.

"Meanwhile we can see that in Ireland the urban sprawl is developing not around cities but mainly in remote countryside areas. This socio-economic development may be being encouraged by rural development funding provided under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy", Prof. McGlade added.

European Environment Agency

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/>

Data service

<http://dataservice.eea.europa.eu/dataservice/>

[Image 2000 & Corine Land Cover 2000 Project](#)

MIDA - *The Marine Irish Digital Atlas*

<http://mida.ucc.ie/pages/dataUpdate.htm>