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THE  
HERITAGE  
COUNCIL

## A BRIEF MESSAGE

On behalf of the Heritage Council I am very pleased to support you with today's discussions. It is a discussion which fits very well with the agenda Council recently set for itself in its new strategic plan 2007-2011. That agenda sees Council building on its work in partnership with local communities and prioritising accessibility to and enjoyment of our national heritage including of course our cultural and natural landscapes. Council's work has been very much shaped by the public which it serves. Its new plan was developed following extensive public consultation. In the ten years since its establishment Council has concentrated on working with and supporting local communities whether through its grants programmes or by establishing the Heritage Officer Programme in partnership with local authorities. All of this work seeks to ensure responsibility for our heritage lies close to the people at a local level who know and understand it best and who live amongst that heritage on a daily basis.

Our landscapes are after all so much a part of our daily life. They directly impact on the quality of our lives. We all, live in, work in and play in those landscapes. We also encourage others to visit them. Our landscapes bring not only a physical impact to bear on us, they also touch and effect us spiritually, mentally. They can fill us full of awe, full of fear and be an inspiration. They can also, where we fail to care for them properly, depress us, cause us to regress against change..

Landscapes are dynamic, they do change. Nature itself can of course cause catastrophic changes to our landscapes. More often the changes that nature brings about are slow and imperceptible almost careful and considered. Where change in our landscape is influenced by man, by ourselves, it too should be considered and careful. Change of that nature is more often than not accepted and indeed appreciated. Unfortunately in comparison to the rest of Europe we are lacking the necessary structures, resources and perhaps political will to do our landscapes justice at a time of unprecedented change

Council for its part has been working with all its partners to try to provide new structures and where possible improve those that exist already.

In Ireland we are blessed with unique and inimitable landscapes. People almost subconsciously appreciate their value and significance and discussions such as that taking place today will help us all to make sure that people continue to work together to maintain and even enhance those values. I am just sorry not to be here to learn from and benefit from your views.

I wish you well in your discussions.

Michael Starrett  
Chief Executive  
The Heritage Council