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## General Election Campaign 2007

# A MANIFESTO FOR IRISH LANDSCAPES

*Because of the outstanding quality of our landscapes and their immense cultural and economic significance to the nation, Ireland must take determined action to reverse the ravages of recent decades and set a course for the long-term management of change. The landscape must be given prominence in any future policies formulated for our national heritage and for rural development generally. There is real urgency here: serious damage to our landscape and the environment must be anticipated when dynamic economic growth occurs." (After F.H Aalen. 1999)*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The ILI represents a fast-growing and vibrant profession that is beginning to make a significant contribution to Irish society. The profession's varied work in landscape planning, landscape design and landscape management, involves a commitment to the establishment of sustainable communities in beautiful, living, working and recreational places. There is now an experienced body of Landscape Architects and Landscape Managers who are ready to tackle the challenges in the recently published NDP 2007-2013.

The NDP presents an ambitious programme for the socio-economic development of Ireland. However, **the NDP fails to provide the policy, legislative framework and resources that are necessary to protect and conserve Ireland's urban and rural landscapes.** These failures are critical because they undermine the NDP stated aim of achieving a sustainable economy, environment and society.

Conscious of the European context of its work, through its membership of EFLA, the ILI sees **the European Landscape Convention** as the launch pad for all national policies on Irish landscapes, both rural and urban. Ireland has ratified the convention, but has so far failed to honour its obligations. To rectify the aforementioned NDP failures, the ILI is calling on the next government to include the following in its programme for action:-

1. A **National Landscape Policy** on and a Landscape Ireland Act as recommended by the Heritage Council since 1997; implement the ELC
2. A **National Policy and Act on Urban Parks and Greenspaces**, placing an obligation on local government to provide and manage greenspace; this is currently a discretionary service
3. Appoint a **State Landscape Architect to lead a dedicated landscape unit** in the Department of Environment
4. **Employ landscape architects** and landscape managers in central and local government
5. **Create parks and landscape services** in all local authorities
6. **Integrate landscape management into the NDP 2007-2013** and a revised Spatial Strategy

These five actions, if implemented, would bring the Republic of Ireland up to the standards of its most environmentally advanced European neighbours. Moreover, these actions would enhance the country's international reputation, thereby attracting inwards investment and highly-skilled immigrants, as well as increasing tourism revenues.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ireland.Feb.2007. Tourism Product Development Strategy 2007-2013

## 1. PURPOSE

This document represents the considered views of the Irish Landscape Institute on how the next programme for government should address issues effecting Irish landscapes. It compliments 'A Better Quality of Life for All', the recently published manifesto of the Urban Forum, of which the ILI is an active member.

This manifesto is the result of widespread consultation by the ILI Council with the Institute's members. **It represents the concerns of members which are reflected among large sections of the electorate, regarding the protection and provision of parks and greenspaces in urban areas and poor management of change in our natural landscapes. Increasingly, these concerns revolve around the need for a higher quality of life in the landscapes where people live, move and recreate.**

The manifesto is a call for action from all candidates in the forthcoming General Election, and is especially directed at party political spokespersons on the environment.

## 2. THE LANDSCAPE PROFESSION IN IRELAND

Landscape Architecture is an established profession in Ireland. April 2007 marked the inaugural International Landscape Architecture Month, designated by IFLA (International Federation of Landscape Architects) and supported by the ILI (Irish Landscape Institute). The ILI established in 1992, is full member of EFLA, the European Foundation for Landscape Architecture.

Working in close collaboration with professionals such as architects, planners and civil engineers, landscape architects have emerged from relative obscurity to play a significant role in Irish society. **There's a new confidence in the profession, bolstered by an increasing workload brought about by the boom and by growing concerns for the environment. While this new-found confidence goes some way to removing a superficial understanding of the profession, there's much to be done in educating the public and politicians about its work.**

In Ireland, most landscape architectural work is related to the design, construction and management of public and private external space. Many landscape architects also carry out large-scale landscape planning, including landscape character assessment, visual assessment for Environmental Impact Statements. The profession manages construction contracts, often acting as project supervisor, as defined under Health and Safety legislation. Projects undertaken in the last ten years include Ardgillan Regional Park (Co.Dublin), Cliffs of Moher Interpretative Centre, Dún Laoghaire Ferry Terminal, Dundrum Town Centre, Marlay Park Walled Garden (Dublin 16) Skerries Windmill (Co.Dublin), O'Connell Street Renewal, Eyre Square and Iveagh Gardens Restoration, Dublin.

In the public sector, landscape professionals - mainly in local government and the OPW - working under the anachronistic job title, 'Parks Superintendent', engage in an ever-widening range of functions. These include landscape design, spatial planning, local area plans, nature conservation, parks strategies, amenity horticulture, play and sports facilities, project management and public consultation. Much of this work is strongly related to serving community needs. **Sadly, given this unique role in providing essential public services, there is a dearth of landscape architects in the sector. Of the 34 local authorities in the State, only the four Dublin councils have fully developed parks and landscape services. In Wicklow - the Garden County of Ireland - there is not one single landscape professional employed. Clearly, there is a need for change.**

### 3. THE ISSUES

#### 3.1 Policy and Strategy

There is a clear lack of national policy and strategy for the protection, provision and management of landscapes, parks and greenspaces. The Heritage Council has been calling for a National Landscape Policy since it published its '*Policy Paper on Landscape and the National Heritage*' in 2002. That same year, the government ratified the **European Landscape Convention**, but has yet to implement its provisions. Because of continuing and predicted increases in urbanisation and population, the implementation of the Convention is vital to the protection of Irish landscapes. The Convention acknowledges that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas. The Convention notes that developments in agriculture, forestry, industry, transport, infrastructure, tourism and recreation and in spatial planning are in many cases accelerating the transformation of landscapes. The anticipation of this transformation can only be achieved through a policy led approach.

A policy will require a strategy for implementation and central to this must be the provision of sufficient human and other resources.

Parks and green spaces are increasingly recognised by sociologists, economists, planners and policy makers as one of the most socially significant urban landscapes<sup>2</sup>. They offer proved health, leisure, social, ecological and environmental benefits in an increasing urbanised society. The latter half of 2006 was marked by several controversies which highlighted serious deficiencies in the protection of urban parks and greenspaces<sup>3</sup>. These deficiencies are the lack of legislative basis to parks provision and the chronic lack of professional expertise at local government level.

Funding for play provision needs to be substantially increased. The Department of Environment's 2006 allocation of €120K per county is insufficient, as it this figure only is typically equal to the budget for a single playground.

#### 3.2 Legislation

Apart from the planning code there is no specific legislation for the planning, protection, design and management of landscapes, parks and greenspaces. Despite some useful tools within the planning code, these are either poorly implemented or not used at all. This is due to lack of resources and training for both planners and landscape professionals, where they exist in the system.

Legislation is urgently required to implement the provisions of the European Landscape Convention and to consolidate existing legislative measures in a single, co-ordinated law. Such legislation would provide statutory basis for our National Parks, protected landscapes, urban parks and greenspaces. It would provide for financial and human resources at national and local levels.

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<sup>2</sup> Research refs.: CABE, PPS, ESRI, LI, UK Commons Committee. report

<sup>3</sup> Examples: Dartmouth Square, Ranelagh and St.Raphaela's, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin

### 3.3 Resources

There is a clear need for capacity building in human resources to plan and manage Irish landscapes. The most urgent need is in the public sector, at both central government and local government. Many local authorities have no staff in place to undertake landscape design, landscape management, landscape planning. Even in the better resourced authorities, there are gaps for example in the management of urban trees and woodlands. There is a need to appoint specialists in arboriculture to manage these resources.

Change and improvement in landscape management and landscape planning could also be achieved through representation in Government bodies and agencies. Landscape specialists should be employed and / or represented, on such bodies An Bord Pleanála, COMHAR, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and the National Roads Authority (NRA). An Bord Pleanála and NRA, in particular would benefit from in-house expertise, as their work has important and significant implications for landscape change.

### 3.4 Research

As population continues to expand, urbanisation increases with consequent changes in rural landscapes, there is a need to support the research efforts at third level and in Government agencies. The mounting energy crisis, global warming and need for sustainable solutions to development of residential communities, transport, recreation demands present challenges for landscape architects.

## **4. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

Government should prepare the following policy documents in consultation with key stakeholders including the ILI, The Heritage Council, Landscape Alliance Ireland, The Urban Forum State bodies, geographers, agricultural representatives and the public.

### 4.1 National Landscape Policy

This policy should express a holistic approach to landscape protection, landscape planning and landscape management. The State should make a whole-hearted commitment to a systematic strategy of implementing a national policy that is clearly related to a revised National Spatial Strategy, as recommended by the Urban Forum. The European Landscape Convention provides the basis for such a strategy. The ILI calls on the incoming government to implement the Convention's provisions. The Irish Landscape Institute endorses the long-standing recommendations of the Heritage Council to government for a Landscape Ireland Act.<sup>4</sup> The policy should build on the work done to date on Landscape Character Assessment by linking landscape policy to urban and regional planning.

### 4.2 A National Policy on Urban Parks and Greenspaces

The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government should update and expand its document '*A Parks Policy for Local Authorities*' (1987) to take account of the latest census information, spatial planning guidelines and research findings. The policy should develop a systematic approach to the development of parks and landscape services in local

<sup>4</sup> See Oireachtas Joint C'ttee. on Environment & Local Government. 13 Sept. '06. Presentation by Mr. Michael Starret, CEO, The Heritage Council. Also: Heritage Council's policy document, 'Policy on the Irish Landscape'.

government throughout the State. The implementation of such a policy should include a Ministerial Directive, directing County Managers to establish parks and landscape services in their respective local authorities. County Managers should be informed of the benefits of employing landscape architects and landscape managers<sup>5</sup>, in particular the added values they bring to the delivery of a wide range of internal (in-house consultancy to planning, roads, housing depts.) and external services (e.g community projects, partnerships with n.g.o's). The recruitment of these professionals might best be based on a formula, based on the ratio of professionals to population, similar to the per capita system used for teachers.

#### 4.3 A National Policy on Urban Trees

The State has no explicit, co-ordinated policy on urban trees, despite their significant contributions to carbon sequestration, climate moderation, bio-diversity, aesthetics and amenity. Government should establish a comprehensive policy on the urban forest, addressing the planning, design and management of each of its component parts – street trees, woodlands, parkland trees – including the respective rights and responsibilities of private and public owners.

The policy should clearly state how and who is to manage this important natural resource. It should identify and provide for whatever resources are necessary to give effect to policy objectives. Policy objectives should include:-

- GIS systems in the larger urban centres (Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick) to act as management tools
- Preparation of urban forestry plans, co-ordinated with Urban Greenspace Plans

### **4. LEGISLATION**

The ILI believes the following legislation should be formulated to address the aforementioned legislative deficiencies. Such legislation should be prioritised under the next programme government. The suggested legislation will require further research on similar legislation in other jurisdiction. The ILI, in collaboration with like-minded organisations, would be pleased to advise government on how such legislation might be framed.

#### 4.1 Landscape Ireland Act

- Give effect to the objectives contained in a National Landscape Policy (4.1 above) and the European Landscape Convention
- Define and provide statutory protection to the National Parks and establish new national parks
- Prescribe a national system of landscape character assessment as basis for landscape planning at local, regional and national levels
- Amend the 2000 Planning & Development Act and 2001 Regulations as necessary

#### 4.2 Urban Parks and Greenspaces Act

- Define and place a duty on local government to provide, plan, design and manage existing and new parks and greenspaces in urban areas
- Require all local authorities to prepare Urban Greenspace Strategies and an 5-year Greenspace Plan, in tandem with the Development Plan strategy

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<sup>5</sup> The current job title is Parks Superintendent, a cognate grade: subject to current debate within the PPN (Parks Professional Network) as there's an agreed need to change and modernise the title.

- Define and provide for necessary minimum levels of professional and other staff on a per capita basis, relative to local population census
- Define and provide local government with powers to acquire land for parks and green spaces – by compulsion and agreement
- Provide tax breaks for individuals and organisations who may contribute funds and other resources to local authorities to assist them in fulfilling duties and exercising powers under this Act
- Define and provide for other funding mechanisms
- Define Ministerial powers to regulate, publish directives, policies, strategies, guidelines and such other means as may be considered appropriate

#### 4.3 Registration of Landscape Architects Act

- Provide for an registration system, independent of the ILI, that would certify qualified landscape architects to practice in the State
- ILI would be represented, but not the actual regulatory body, in the a State –run registration system; except insofar at the ILI would discipline its members for non-compliance with its Code of Professional Conduct
- The Act should deal with educational requirements, disciplinary matters, appeals and registration board

### **5. RESOURCES**

The main aim here is to adopt a systematic approach to a substantial expansion of the professional presence in the public sector. In tandem with such an expansion, the Government should assist the profession in the development of skills and expertise at professional practice level. Such skills development will ensure that landscape architects become more central to spatial planning, urban design and landscape planning (e.g landscape character analysis), especially within the public realm. The following actions are critical to achieving a systematic approach:-

4.1 Develop a **strategic plan for the expansion of park services & landscape services departments beyond Dublin city and county**, targeting those local authorities that are most in need of such services, especially those serving urban areas; the minimum grade of such posts should be Executive Landscape Architect

4.2 Ministerial approval and directive to change **the existing job title, ‘parks superintendent’ to suitable alternative** to be agreed with the ILI and PPN.

4.3 Lift the embargo on **public sector recruitment** in a targeted manner

4.4 Create **senior posts for landscape architects in City and County council Planning departments**, prioritising those planning authorities most under pressure for urban development; the minimum grade of such posts should be Senior Executive Landscape Architect.

4.5 Direct the Local Government Services Board (LGMSB) to recognise the Parks Professionals Network (PPN) as a vocational group within the local government service

4.6 Develop existing and provide **new funding mechanisms** and supports to local authorities that are engaged in the provision of parks & landscape services

4.7 Appoint a **full-time, senior State Landscape Architect** to lead a small, dedicated, multi-disciplinary team in the Minister for Environment, Heritage & Local Government.<sup>6</sup> The unit would make recommendations to the Minister for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention. It would prepare a National Landscape Policy and a National Urban Parks Policy and would lead the development of parks and landscape services throughout the State.

4.8 Appoint landscape architects at senior level to the National Roads Authority, The National Housing Agency, OPW, COILLTE and the Department of Agriculture & Food.

4.9 Appoint nominees of the ILI to state bodies, including An Bord Pleanála, COMHAR, Dublin Docklands Authority, The Heritage Council and the NRA.

## 5. RESEARCH

Establish an independent, national environmental research body whose remit would include landscape architecture, urban design, architecture, engineering and sustainable planning. Such a research body would perform the duties of the former An Foras Forbartha, though in an update format, perhaps modelled on the UK Government's CABE and CABE Space.

Specific areas for research relevant and beneficial to the landscape architects would include:-

5.1 **Parks and greenspace** – much work has been done in the U.K, U.S.A and continental Europe; however very little in Ireland on the Irish situation; studies should include topics such as:

- public participation in greenspace design
- methodologies for 'place-making' in urban design
- river conservation in urban landscapes
- leisure and recreational needs of specific population groups (e.g elderly, teenagers, immigrant groups)
- development of national databases of amenities, parks and greenspaces and sports facilities

5.2 The Irish landscape industry – very little work done, apart from the ESRI's work on the Urban Renewal Grants Scheme and Bord Bia's published statistics on commercial horticulture sector. Studies should include topics such as:-

- Annual statistics on each sector of the industry – landscape architects as consultants, specifiers (projects stats.); landscape contractors' activity (contract stats.) and suppliers production and trading activities

The ILI would be pleased to advise government on the most appropriate research projects that would benefit the landscape profession.

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<sup>6</sup> Modelled on the state landscape architect's role in The Netherlands

## VALUES

- Building cities around quality, **people-centred places**: the quality of urban life is the quality and strength of its public realm. Elements of the public realm relevant to landscape architecture include environment, natural resources and heritage; rights to the city; community assets and public places<sup>7</sup>
- **Community participation**: the role of civil society is an intrinsic part of successful place-making
- Investment and management of **the Public Realm** is essential to a healthy, virile democracy (parks, public spaces, libraries, gardens, community centres, play areas, water and sewerage infrastructure, streets, arts & culture and public transit)
- Equity of access to environmental information
- Leadership and partnership between communities and professionals is a important element
- Energy conservation, reuse, recycling and renewable energies
- Preventative health especially in combating chronic asthma, diabetes and obesity among younger people and the older generation
- Environmental and professional ethics
- Multi-cultural and diversity in Irish society

## REFERENCES and RESOURCES

- Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE-Space)
- Project for Public Spaces (PPS) [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)
- Trust for Public Land (TPL) [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)
- Parks for People
- International Federation of Parks & Recreation Administration (IFPRA) [www.ifpra.org](http://www.ifpra.org); also Dublin IFPRA Congress [www.ifpradublin.com](http://www.ifpradublin.com)
- Open Spaces Act 1906
- Healthy Parks Healthy People, Australia
- The Role of Landscapes in Crime Prevention [www1.brcc.edu/murray/research/cpted](http://www1.brcc.edu/murray/research/cpted)
- The Urban Land Unit (ULI)
- The Aarhus Convention, Denmark
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)<sup>8 9 10 11</sup>
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- COMHAR. October '06. National Conference: ‘Towards Sustainability in the National Development Plan 2007-2013’ and Budget 2007 – ‘Towards Sustainability’. [www.comhar-nsdp.ie](http://www.comhar-nsdp.ie)
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- The Heritage Council. ‘Policies and Priorities for Ireland’s Landscape. Conference Papers - Tullamore, April1999

<sup>7</sup> from Jeff Evenson, Andrew Farncombe: ‘A Conversation on Cities and the Public Realm’, The Candaidan Urban Institute’s ‘The Urban Century’, Spring 2006

<sup>8</sup> Richard D. Rush. June '06. Coevolution in ‘Urban Land: Special Report – Sustainability’

<sup>9</sup> John Fitzgerald. May '06. ‘A dangerous deception. The myth of sustainable development has to be challenged.’

<sup>10</sup> The Guardian. 26.1.07. David Ward. *Village on the road to a carbon-neutral future*

<sup>11</sup> [www.worldchanging.31.1.07.Sarah](http://www.worldchanging.31.1.07.Sarah) Rich.Tales of the Self-Sufficient City