



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND

AGM 11th December 2020

INTRODUCTION:

We are now experiencing a period of rapid change full of disappointments caused by the Covid 19 virus and its effects. At the same time we can somehow turn negatives into positives and could with some ingenuity and careful planning find ourselves on the cusp of something new, different, and exciting. Forest Friends Ireland had plans for a detailed program including the coming of a team of interns from Italy for the year 2020.

But that was not to be however the lockdowns of the Covid 19 crisis has given us an opportunity to examine where we are and the potential for making unprecedented steps forward in achieving what we set out to do in the first place when we were founded twenty years ago. Our journey began with a year's discussion and debate by the founders, highly committed environmentalists, Stephen Coyne (now deceased) Joseph Dunne, William Maher, Britt Du Fourney and I.

This resulted in the drafting of our 'Articles of Association' which can be found in English and French languages on our website. These have stood the test of time and it is suggested cannot be bettered. Like the Bible the Koran or any other book of wisdom they need to be revisited from time to time like drinking at the wells of wisdom. Forest Friends began then with the founders in their first fervour which continued in spite of difficulties and has persisted and thrived in spite of ups and downs.

It is time now with existing and new directors to rekindle the spirit of the founders. The challenge is how best to do just that.

OUR FLAGSHIP PROJECT:

Between the year 2,000 and 2013 the initiation of our Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest was conceived and was launched in St. Columba's Park in Derry in 2013. Since then we have liaised with communities in the border counties and planted thousands of trees with them as a way of preparing the ground towards the full implementation of the Peace Forest project. .

Forest Friends now has a detailed plan to be implemented for the Peace Forest. Furthermore, we have given birth to our sister organisation **Forest Friends International** (www.forestfriendsinternational.org) and have a thriving and innovative branch in the South East of Ireland covering several counties including Wexford and Waterford. This is the prototype which we are using and the template for the development of many other branches particularly in the border counties. .

Forest Friends Ireland is fully focused on our goals and objectives. We have detailed records of our activities and achievements which can be sourced on our website and facebook sites and in the 'Newsletters' which are posted there also. Our objectives are realistic and have been achieved to a great extent. Our flagship project the **Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest Project** is now in plan form and shovel ready for implementation **Peace Forest Ireland project plan 2020 - 2030**

Our second main objective is to continue to put pressure on the government to abandon their policy of monoculture plantation forestry centred mainly on a non-native conifer species Sitka Spruce resulting in the use of pesticides which are carcinogenic, persistent and damage the immune systems and seriously affect many of the spawning grounds in our rivers. Forest Friends Ireland have continuously highlighted this fault line in Forestry in Ireland and recently have organised a special seminar the lectures of which can be sourced on our facebook site www.facebook.com/forestfriendsireland The licence for the use of persistent immune damaging carcinogens in forestry has been renewed continuously by the EU in spite of a million signatures requesting that the

licence be not renewed, last time. The licence is coming up for renewal again shortly.

Forest Friends Ireland has a small but vibrant board of directors and activists that fully understand our mission, and has recruited additional new directors recently.

Forest Friends Ireland has a unique offering as indicated above namely the Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest. It has the potential to make a major contribution to community peace in Northern Ireland strengthening the peace process undertaken in the Good Friday agreement. It also has an important role to play in in terms of climate change. **We have a proposal to plant a trillion Irish native hardwood trees.**

Forest Friends is completely focused on our main goals and objectives Climate change is a global problem and we recently set up an international initiative Forest Friends International (www.forestfriendsinternational.org). This is functioning now as an independent organisation and is actively working with the Ethiopian Government in the establishment of a world peace centre based on an existing one in Auroville in Tamil Nadu Eastern India which we have visited and fully researched. This project will have a world peace village located in an existing village and a separate visitor centre. Initial plans have been prepared for this project

Forest Friends Ireland national and International Internship Summer School Third level students from Ireland and various countries in Europe and further afield and students with master university degrees have attended our yearly summer school and have made a major contribution to our work programmes.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND INTEND TO RECRUIT A RANGE OF VOLUNTEERS AT ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT LEVELS WHO WILL BE PROVIDED WITH -JOB EXPERIENCE AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ENNVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS AND WOODLAND CREATION AND MANAGEMENT .

In order to achieve our objectives we need to recruit the personnel who can support the existing directors and volunteers. Here are some proposals to be considered and implemented as soon as practicable: Subject to the APPROVAL OF our AGM 2020

A The setting up a team of four or more volunteers specially to support and work under the supervision of a project manager who will be spearheading the implementation of our Peace Forest Cross Border Project Plan (Peace Forest Ireland project plan 2020 - 2030)

It is intended that these positions will be advertised in the near future so that candidates can apply to be part of the team.

Successful candidates will have qualifications or proven experience in marketing and fundraising, good communications and promotional skills. They should also demonstrate a special interest in trees and forests and be familiar with the work of Forest Friends Ireland. Candidates should send details of their CV and covering letter with relevant qualifications and experience to the Secretary Forest Friends Ireland 40 Lower Drumcondra Road Dublin 9 where the project will be based.

Part of the project it is envisaged will be located in a rural area the exact location of which has yet to be finalised. Candidates will be selected by means of interview. Successful candidates will be involved in **identifying and working with environmental philanthropists who are prepared to sponsor aspects of the plan.**

There is no salary involved at the outset, but limited expenses can be negotiated. Furthermore it will be possible to avail of bonuses where sponsorships are realised in the course of the team's work which will be shared by members of the team on an equal basis.

Closing date for receipt of applications to be finalised.

B. VOLUNTEERS IN ADMINISTRATION.

Forest Friends Ireland needs a team of up to four volunteers to manage the administration of the organisation. Ideally candidates will be from local communities urban and rural. When the positions are agreed and advertised prospective candidates for these non-salaried posts should forward CV and covering letter to the Secretary Forest Friends Ireland 40 Lower Drumcondra Road Dublin 9.

Candidates should have experience in administration, office management, Information technology, the use of social media.

Closing date for receipt applications to be determined

C. Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest Project Manager

Job description - candidates should have knowledge and experience in continuous canopy native forests with particular reference to Ireland, competency and experience in agro forestry, knowledge of the potential role of cooperatives, 'knowledge of the origin development and relevancy of the 'deep ecology' movement, participation in major forestry planning projects experience and management; detailed knowledge of the principles of sustainability and the challenges posed by climate change, proven experience and success in fundraising initiatives; knowledge of EU forestry and other environmental legislation; the know-how and competency to identify and utilise alternative funding streams available through the EU and the Irish Government, trusts, charities and other sources.

Proven experience in dealing with public agencies, environmental non-government organisations and businesses operating in forestry and related ecological spheres: Candidates must be able to identify the main state and semi-state agencies that manage and administer forestry policy in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Applicants should have knowledge of environmental philanthropy and funding availability from that source. The project manager will have detailed knowledge of the history of hemp and its future potential in forest preservation and the uses which this plant has.

The successful candidate will have the main supervisory responsibility for all aspects of the Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest Project. Candidates must send details of their CV and covering letter with details of qualifications and/or equivalent experience to the Secretary Forest Friends Ireland 40 Lower Drumcondra Road Dublin 9

Closing date for receipt of applications not yet determined.

D. Biodiversity and organic and herb projects management.

Forest Friends are planning to recruit one **Biodiversity Officer** and two assistant biodiversity officers who will manage their biodiversity projects, tree nursery and organic and healing garden projects. Candidates will have good knowledge of the national biodiversity plans, the role and protection of pollinators, knowledge of the role of specific insecticides and other pesticides in pollinator destruction, and the multinationals who manufacture and market these products. Recruitment details with regard to the above positions are expected to be announced in the near future.

E. C.E.O.

It is intended to recruit a coordinator for all Forest Friends Ireland's projects: the successful candidate will facilitate and coordinate all the Forest Friends Ireland projects and have an overarching role and supportive of the work of the different elements and personnel in the process. He or she will also have a public relations function liaising with partnership agencies in the process. It is intended to advertise detailed specifications for this position in the near future.

NOTES: 1) When sufficient funding is realised for the Peace Forest Project many if not all of these positions can be salaried based on agreed procedures.

RESTRUCTURING FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND

The following are some suggestions with regard to the possible roles of existing directors and volunteers in the work of Forest Friends and the Cross Border Peace Forest:

1. Facilitators- John Haughton/Jack O'Sullivan/John Fitzgerald
2. Marketing/Project design/fundraising/finance/ John Fitzgerald Charles Kinch EliMcBeth /John Maguire/Edward
3. Event management special promotions, launches Eli McBett, John Haughton, Anne Lynch Donna Cooney
4. Website Webmaster John Maguire: Assistant webmaster Eli
5. Research/ Seminars/Newsletters /press releases Jack Anne, Donna Agnes

6. Office management phone and facebook/social media management
Felix/Edward Agnes
7. Community Development: Community schools Cross Border Outreach
Jack, Eli Donna Dermot Deering/
8. New branches: Formation, development and promotion- Eli /Donna
9. Cross Border Peace Forest Project Ireland development John Haughton.
John Fitzgerald. Jack O.Sullivan, Joe Dunne, Dermot Deering
- 10.Liaising with organisations in Northern Ireland Jack O'Sullivan.
- 11.World Peace Centre: John Fitzgerald. Felix Daramola, John Haughton,
Agnieszka Janeczko . Donna Cooney Charlie Kinch, Kalyani
- 12.Biodiversity projects management Kalyani: Agnieszka Janeczko. Donna
Cooney Charlie Kinch John Fitz. Andrew
- 13.Merchandise design and marketing: Kalyani: Felix Agnes
- 14.Meetings convenors Eli McBett Agnieszka Janeczko.
15. Personal assistant to the Chair./Felix
- 16.Secretary and company secretary Eli
- 17.Volunteers manager: Felix
- 18.Internship program management John H. Felix,
- 19.Transport planning Joe Dunne: Andrew: John Fitz.
- 20.Liaising with other environmental NGOS. national and international John
Fitz. Jack, Andrew:Joe:Eli
- 21.Irish Environmental Network (IEN) representative : Donna Cooney/John
Fitzgerald
- 22.Annual seed collection coordination (end September onwards) John H.
Joe: Andrew, Eli Donna
- 23.Winter Tree planting program : Joe: Andrew: John Fitz. Eli: Donna

The **Centre of Forest Biodiversity is one of our main projects**. It will be based on best practice in Silva culture and Permaculture, a centre for environmental education, incorporating; visitor centre; existing natural woodlands; new tree planting, using 100% native species; commemorative trees; woodcrafts, with local community involvement; an Ogham grove based on the Celtic tree alphabet; tree nursery.

The centre envisaged will be held in trust in perpetuity for community benefit, developing forest skills, capacity building and community development. We are looking for a suitable site for this, maybe on marginal land with some mature indigenous woodland, a river/stream.

It would be educational, include demonstration plots for agro forestry and have an arboretum including each native Irish tree, arboretum/trees of the world, woodcraft demonstrations, and coffee shop/visitor centre. This biodiversity centre would be closely linked to the Cross Border Peace Forest.

We are actively pursuing the possibility of locating this centre at present in a county close to border counties and hope to make an announcement about it very soon.

WORLD PEACE CENTRE PROPOSAL:

In addition to our flagship project the Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest and the innovative **Biodiversity Forest Peace Centre** we have initiated and taken the first steps towards implementing a world peace centre which is planned for Ethiopia. It is a project of Forest Friends Ireland and Forest Friends International. www.forestfriendsinternational.org

Biodiversity Centre- menu of elements to be considered for inclusion

- Apiary
- Roof gardens
- Organic vegetable plots demonstrating crop rotation methods raised beds water capture and no-dig
- Agro/Forestry demonstration plots
- Irish trees arboretum
- Celtic Ogham plot
- Memorial tree plots
- Permanent audio video room
- Members Room
- Exhibition Centre
- Yoga meditation centre
- Herb centres outdoor and indoor
- Pollinator plot (plants for bees butterflies hoverflies etc)

- Reception Information centre/shop
- Bicycle hire
- Permanent Organic workshop demonstration areas
- Residential/retreat accommodation area
- Woodland crafts workshops
- Woodcrafts exhibition area.
- Animal welfare/ refuge
- Flora and Fauna of Ireland permanent information/ exhibition/
- Youth/ community/schools outreach
- Seniors corner/activity centre
- Renewable energy and climate change demonstration projects, solar, wind wave other hydro, biomass
- Orchard native apple trees and other native fruit shrubs and trees
- Meadow
- Wildlife flora area totally unmanaged including nettles weeds on un-enriched soil with any enriched topsoil removed.
- Special needs facilities, including accessibility and brail etc.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Forest Friends are at a cross roads just now. We have been frustrated and are in a stranglehold as a result of the Covid 19 restrictions and our plans for 2020 have neigh evaporated. So far there has been nothing to make up for the losses that resulted

Due to the above and lack of adequate funding and our dependence on the modest offerings of core funding we are not operating even at half throttle.

We need to go actively and enthusiastically after alternative funding streams.

One such option is that having identified environmental philanthropists we discover those who are prepared to sponsor one of other aspect of our programs

Our projects particularly our Cross Border Peace Forest needs to be promoted and presented to would be sponsors in 'attractive packaging'. This is a

promoting and marketing exercise and if we discover that we don't have sufficient expertise to make a success of this then we need to call on professionals to do so and budget for this accordingly.

One of the criticisms of Forest friends has been that our reach in terms of geographic spread is too small. This is true Dublin and Wexford/Waterford are very good branches but we must extend our remit. Opportunities are now opening up for the establishment of branches in Co. Longford and Co. Donegal. If these can be finalised it will give us an extensive reach in North/West South/East and East and the criticism of not having a countrywide remit will no longer apply at least to the same extent.

Setting up 'Forest Friends Ireland Sponsors account'

FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS:

www.forestfriends.ie

www.facebook.com/forestfriendsireland

www.facebook.com/peaceforestireland

email forestfriends.ie@gmail.com

John Haughton Chairman Forest Friends Ireland

9^h. December 2020