

[https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/11/heritageireland2030\\_updated\\_eng.pdf](https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/11/heritageireland2030_updated_eng.pdf)

*Forest Friends Ireland submission*

**FOREWORD:** Forest Friends Ireland are suggesting that the following would be taken into consideration in the formulation of Heritage Ireland 2030

**Introduction:** Ireland's pristine landscape began as largely a great oak forest which together with our other native hardwood trees formed the ecological sustainable matrix that sustained our landscape and rivers Forest Friends suggests that it is a valid starting point to approach our heritage from the standpoint of the natural environment. The natural environment superseded the manmade and the arrival of mankind. We are now in the middle of the sixth massive extinction and the difference between this one and those which preceded it is that it is totally manmade. Our current perspective is largely anthropocentric regarding humankind as the central or most important element of existence based on the belief that human beings are the most important entity in the universe. Anthropocentrism interprets or regards the world in terms of human values and experiences, goals and objectives. It is based on the belief that human supremacy and power over other forms of life is a valid overriding principle or starting point on which to build programs and actions. There is a valid alternative approach which was formulated in the 1970s based on the concept of Deep Ecology. In 1973, Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer **Arne Naess** introduced the phrase "deep ecology" to environmental literature. Deep ecology is an ecological and environmental philosophy promoting the inherent worth of living beings regardless of their instrumental utility to human needs, plus a restructuring of modern human societies in accordance with such ideas. It is based on the belief that humans must radically change their relationship to nature from one that values nature solely for its usefulness to human beings to one that recognizes that nature has an inherent value and in its own right.

**COMODIFICATION:** .Today our approach to heritage tends towards a comodification of the elements, which can be sold marketed to realise an economic return as a primary objective. From a Deep Ecology perspective however, nature has its own stand alone validity

**THE EDUCATION SYSTEM:** The education system is remiss in failing to provide students with a deeper ecological perspective. Such modules should exist as part of the system at all levels of education: primary, secondary and third level. This could start off with the appreciation of place names many of which are based on aspects of the natural environment, for example the names of trees and forests. This could create a stronger identity and sense of place.

**COMMUNITY INCLUSION EMPOWERMENT AND CONSTRUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT:**

Forest Friends viewpoint is that the above should form a valid starting point in defining what heritage is about so that students could identify the value systems that should underpin the understanding of our heritage. Determinations should be based on inclusivity.

Disadvantaged communities, the marginalised or communities at the peripheries should be empowered to be part of the heritage plan at all stages. One has only to think of the disadvantaged of our inner cities or the travellers, the homeless, the aged sick or infirm who

are excluded from many processes for one reason or another. Inclusiveness empowerment and constructive involvement should be central of achieving desirable outcomes in the establishment of the heritage plan.

**FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND ETHOS** It is Forest Friends |Ireland's contention that trees, forests, the natural environment ecology and environmental sustainability based on the forest ecology of our native hardwood trees should be restored to form the bedrock of understanding of Ireland's heritage. The fact that our natural forests were reduced to about 1% should not be a deterrent in that regard.

: **Mythology** has been central to the understanding of the Celtic value systems and is in danger of being lost or devalued in the increasing materialistic world which tends to reduce everything of economic value only. For example the Celts had a whole mythology of the marine based on the relationships of the creatures of the sea whether seals, dolphins or selkies and humans. Also the mythology of 'shape shifting' was a realistic phenomenon at one stage in our evolution and had meaning for the ancients. The understanding of these should not be lost in seeking to understand our heritage. The derivation of names whether of the natural environment e.g. trees and forests and wildlife and the derivation of names and other vocabulary for example Ósheen or [Cu Cuchulainn](#) deserve attention as to their origin and meaning.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE OF PRESENT FORESTRY PRACTICES:

, Forest Friends Ireland are concerned that a heritage plan might be produced without addressing what we regard as the most serious continuous and far reaching damage to our natural heritage, namely the environmental destruction that is inflicted on our natural environment by the present forestry policy. It is a monoculture forestry system based mainly on one species, the 'alien' species, Sitka Spruce whose survival depends on the utilisation of pesticides which are persistent carcinogenic and damaging to the immune system. This species as well as the other conifer species are acidic and have serious effects on the spawning grounds of our rivers

## LITIGATION:

A recent court case in the US concerned the use of Roundup a pesticide used now virtually universally a huge number of Legal cases are being taken against Monsanto in the first instance and against Bayer since their takeover by Bayer These could have far reaching implications worldwide and suggest action by the EU and the Irish Government based on the precautionary principle.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Our native hardwood trees and forests and the biodiversity associated with them underpinned the natural heritage of our ancestors and moves should be made to restore this rich reservoir and the value systems and mythologies that underpinned them and the natural environment generally before it is irretrievably lost.

There is a danger in today's materialistic worlds that heritage could be defined in monetary terms and based largely on commodification of one kind or another such as selling our natural wonders in the tourism advocacy processes whereby towns villages and the public generally could be to a greater or lesser extent left out of the equation. In that scenario tourism is defined as promoting our natural and manmade treasures as money making where promotional consultants and businesses reap the benefits and apart from very welcome employment local communities could be excluded rather than being central to the whole process. Heritage should be of and for the people mainly

#### THE EDUCATION SYSTEM:

It can be argued that the school curriculums at all levels fail to deliver on proper modules so that our children and students can imbibe the essence of the natural environment in its pristine forms. A proper environmental education system should start off with the appreciation of the place names of the local area many of which bear the names of trees and forests and the many other natural features. Arguably there should be comprehensive environmental biodiversity modules at every level, primary secondary and third level which are not exam focused.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep\\_ecology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_ecology)

John Haughton

Chairman Forest Friends Ireland/Cáirde Na Coille February 24 2019

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